

PLAGUE AND MIRROR: METAPHORS OF EMOTIONAL TRANSFER AND THEIR
EFFECT ON THE ACTOR-AUDIENCE RELATIONSHIP IN THEATRE

by

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DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

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In the last two decades the discovery of mirror neurons led to a flurry of investigations into the role these action recognition cells play in a range of interpersonal exchanges, including emotional transfer. The ability of one person to “infect” another with emotion through their actions, sounds, and words should be no surprise to a theatre practitioner. Indeed, this ability seems like a theatrical given: both the primary purpose and central difficulty of performance. Yet, while this ability may be a theatrical given, it is under-examined. Prompted by the surge of studies into mirror neurons in recent years, this dissertation provides a framework for discussing and analyzing emotional communication in the theatre. Specifically, this study focuses on emotional transfer between actors and audience and how theatre practitioners metaphorically construct this transfer.

While there are many potential metaphors that can describe this emotional exchange, two metaphors frequently persist in theatre: metaphors of infection and reflection. Locating these metaphors as employed by a theatrical practitioner or theorist to describe the emotional exchange between actors and audience is an important step in

illuminating the expected acting style, the relationship an actor must seek with the audience, and the function of emotions in theatre. Once these guiding metaphors are located they must be understood in that artist's cultural context, as a part of the emotional values and norms of expression of their historical moment. This understanding provides nuance to our understanding of a single metaphor's distinctly different use by different artists.

This dissertation begins by examining metaphors of infection at two distinctly different historical and cultural moments. These chapters illuminate the function of metaphor in shaping the early modern theatre of William Shakespeare and the theatre of plague proposed by Antonin Artaud. Chapter IV will bring to bear on acting theory the science that could explain emotional transfer and its inherent metaphor of reflection, demonstrating how cognitive studies and theatre can productively interact. Finally, this dissertation outlines how theatrical practices can be more fully understood by analyzing the metaphorical structures that practitioners use to shape the emotional relationship between actor and audience.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. INFECTION AND REFLECTION: INTRODUCTION	1
Metaphorical Conceptualization and Emotional Communities	15
Areas of Focus: A Plague of Players	23
Artaud's Plague of Theatre	28
Reflection and Other Possibilities	31
II. PLAYERS, PLAGUE AND EMOTIONAL INFECTION: THE TEMPEST TOSS'D SHIP	36
The Great Disorders of Stage Plays	47
An Emotional Refuge	62
Take Thou Some New Infection to the Eye	66
III. A CONTAGIOUS, EMOTIONAL ABBERANCE	79
<i>The Cenci</i>	101
The Failure of the Plague	111
IV. MIRRORS IN THE FLESH	117
Mirror Neurons	127
Dissonance with the Mirror Metaphor: Rapport	135
Meaningless Arm Movements	143
Inexact Transfers	147
V. METAPHORS OF COMMUNICATION	152
Mirror Work	165
REFERENCES CITED	172

CHAPTER I

INFECTION AND REFLECTION:

INTRODUCTION

At the end of a lesson on emotional preparation Sanford Meisner decides that he will take “a few legitimate questions” from his students. The class has been learning about how to come into a scene full of emotion rather than letting it build during the scene itself. One student asks whether the goal of the work they did earlier was meant to help them enter on to the stage as full as they could be with emotion “because we’re in a theater, as opposed to being in a film, where acting is much more contained?” Meisner chooses to answer the question somewhat indirectly by speaking about the force of emotion saying “I’ll tell you this: you cannot escape the impact of emotion, whether it’s in a big theater or a tiny one. If you have it, it inflates you,” abruptly he corrects himself noting that his metaphor of inflation does not completely convey his meaning. He continues, “If you have it, it infects you *and* the audience” (Meisner 87). His corrected metaphor of infection broadens the scope of the exercise of emotional preparation. The purpose of the work done before entering a scene doesn’t only swell the actor’s emotional presence as in the metaphor of inflation; it also spreads that suffusion of emotion into the audience as part of an inescapable force. The actor becomes a carrier of an emotion capable of spreading that same (or associated) feeling into the audience. For Meisner,

without this infectious emotion the actor appears empty and the audience's experience diminishes by the absence of a shared emotional experience.

This very purposeful use of *emotion as infection* is not unique to Meisner. Decades earlier, Constantin Stanislavski wrote very similarly on the infectious force of an actor's emotions. Addressing what he saw as a common mistake made by actors, specifically that only what can be seen and heard on the stage is "of scenic quality," he explained that something invisible and inaudible also permeates the theater during a performance. He wrote "the irresistibility, contagiousness, and power of direct communion by means of invisible radiations of the human will and feelings are great... actors can fill whole auditoriums with the invisible radiations of their emotions" (Stanislavski, *Creating a Role* 106). While Stanislavski's use of contagiousness works in combination with metaphors of radiation and communion, it acts nonetheless as an important characteristic of the spreading force of an actor's emotion. As a force, the radiation of an actor's emotion here is both irresistible as in Meisner's example, and able to multiply itself in the audience; and in so doing allow communion between actor and audience.

The infectious movement of emotion made Bertolt Brecht very leery of the popular Western acting style of his time. His suggested use of the *verfremdungseffekt* directly conflicted with this kind of shared emotional experience. In his essay "Alienation Effects in Chinese Acting" Brecht proposed that a distancing effect of the kind he believed he saw in this very different style of acting could be adopted as a disruption of the experience of contagious emotion in Western theatre. He observed "there is not the same automatic transfer of emotions to the spectator, the same emotional infection. The

alienation effect intervenes, not in the form of absence of emotion, but in the form of emotions which need not correspond to those of the character portrayed” (Brecht 94). In a sense, Brecht suggests here that this distancing effect inoculates both actor and spectator from the contagious movement of emotions, allowing both to feel emotions different from one another and different still from the character.

Whether representing something sought after or purposefully disrupted in practice, the metaphors of *emotion as infectious* or *acting as infection* recur persistently throughout Western theatrical discourse, especially with reference to the emotional exchange between actors and audience. Meisner, Stanislavski and Brecht all used the metaphor to suggest something about the emotional relationship between actor and audience and their expectations of it. These metaphors are not stable from practitioner to practitioner, nor across time and cultural context; they carry different connotations for each of the above-mentioned practitioners and for any other theatre artist, theorist or critic. The metaphor is also grounded in the time and cultural context that it is used in, with notions of infection meaning something very different, for example, for a late sixteenth century Londoner, who lived under a more or less constant threat of plague, than it did for Meisner, Stanislavski or Brecht. Analyzing a metaphor’s connotations at a historical moment alongside a practitioner’s particular use of it illuminates a great deal about that artist’s views and expectations for theatre. In the case of the above, exploring what infection meant for Meisner, Stanislavski or Brecht reveals how they intended to construct and shape the emotional relationship between actors and audience.

Perhaps even more ubiquitous is the metaphor that Hamlet made idiomatic in his advice to the players. Instructing them in the methods meant to please the most judicious

in their audience he gives voice to a growing sentiment about the performance of plays in Elizabethan England, namely that the “purpose of Playing... was and is, to hold as ‘twere the Mirrour up to Nature” (III.ii.20-22).^{*} Like the previous metaphor, *theatre as mirror* and *acting as reflection* have remained in Western theatrical discourse, and Hamlet’s advice has reverberated with faithful repetitions, amendments and resolute counters like Tadeusz Kantor’s:

From the beginning, in my
c r e d o was that art has never been and can never be a
representation of,
or a mirror held up to, the reality of
life.
This primitive creed
was upheld only by the dogmas of naturalism
and materialism.
Art is
An a n s w e r
To reality. (Kobialka 199)

As Kantor suggests, the metaphor of *theatre as mirror* was taken to an extreme at the end of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth. However, what we know about Elizabethan stage practices and especially what we can guess about the style of acting that the scripts demand, Hamlet’s mirror suggested a very different kind of reflection.

^{*} Changes in spelling from the early modern texts are my own and have been made for ease in reading. I do not believe the original choices nor my alterations of them impact the focus of this particular study.

The meaning of a metaphor like *theatre as mirror* is not stable over time or within different cultural contexts any more than the metaphor of infection. Artists use the metaphor to highlight certain aspects of theatrical practice, but not necessarily the same aspects. As this study will discuss further in Chapter IV the Elizabethan use of metaphors of reflection tended to suggest a reportedly didactic function of plays rather than a call for the kind of psychologically grounded acting of the twentieth century. Metaphors of reflection, like those of infection, also set up an expected relationship between actor and audience, an emotional exchange that may be explained in part by scientific discoveries made in the last two decades.

In recent years the metaphors of infection and reflection have begun to commingle within the field of cognitive neuroscience in part because of the discovery of the mirror neuron system in humans, a discovery that directors Anne Bogart and Peter Brook have recently taken note of on separate occasions. After the accidental discovery of this special type of cell in macaque monkeys by a group of neurophysiologists led by Giacomo Rizzolatti in Parma, Italy an explosion of research into mirror neurons began (Iacoboni 8-12). The potential implications of this discovery as it became evident that a similar, if more advanced system, existed in humans led to experiments of all kinds attempting to discern ever more precisely the nature of these cells. The wide range of research being done on the subject led some to go so far as to hypothesize that the discovery of mirror neurons will, in time, do for our understanding of the mind what DNA research has done in the field of biology.[†] The neuroscientist Marco Iacoboni

[†] For relevant studies see: study. Buccino, G., et al. "Action observation activates premotor and parietal areas in a somatotopic manner: An fMRI study." *European Journal of Neuroscience* 13 (2001): 400–404. ; Decety, J., et al. "Brain activity during

predicts that in the coming decades these cells will prompt fields of neuropolitics, neuromarketing and neuroethics (7). Their specific functions and potential relationship to empathetic responses also make mirror neurons a potentially important area of study for theatre.

The mirror neurons that sparked this excitement and subsequent research have two broad and related functions; they serve as the mind's means for action recognition and imitation (often referred to as "inner imitation"). It should be noted early that, while these cells may be the mechanism behind a kind of emotional sharing, mirror neurons do not directly share subjective emotional experiences. Their functioning is entirely related to action recognition and imitation, but it is through these functions that emotions may be triggered and emotional transfer occurs. With respect to recognizing action, when someone performs an action like reaching for a cup of tea and picking it up to drink from it, much like one of the popular experiments of researcher Iacoboni, some of the same neurons that fire to perform this action will fire in an observer just as if that observer were performing this same action. In his *Mirroring People*, Iacoboni explains that this instant response allows the observer to know with some certainty both how to perform this same action and that the person is in fact taking a drink and not getting up to leave or throwing the contents across the table. This is achieved by way of an inner imitation on

observation of actions. Influence of action content and subject's strategy." *Brain* 120 (1997): 1763–1777 ; Fadiga, L., et al. "Motor facilitation during action observation: A magnetic stimulation study." *Journal of Neurophysiology* 73 (1995): 2608–2611 ; Iacoboni, Marco, et al. "Cortical mechanisms of human imitation." *Science*, 286 (1999) 2526–2528 ; Rizzolatti, Giacomo, et al. "Premotor cortex and the recognition of motor actions." *Cognitive Brain Research*, 3 (1996) 131–141. ; Ramachandran, V.S. "Mirror Neurons and Imitation Learning as the Driving Force Behind 'the Great Leap Forward in Human Evolution.'" Edge.org. *Edge* 1 June 2000. Web. 13 November 2006.

the part of the observer, the second half of the mirror neuron's function.[‡] Even when the body of the observer remains perfectly still, the observer performs the same action on a neural level, often leading to some muscular imitation. Further research has shown that these reactions are not linked solely to the visual field either. These neurons will fire based on auditory input as well, provided that the sound is linked to an action in the hearer's mind. As might be expected, the response is much stronger when the action is both seen and heard (Kohler 846-848). When we hear a scream or a voice singing our throats may begin the same muscular activity we would need to scream or sing ourselves. Based on the related functions of action recognition and imitation, researchers believe that these cells may be foundational in the human process of action learning, the development of language and an unconscious empathetic response to being in the presence of enacted emotions.

Throughout *Mirroring People* Iacoboni demonstrates two very important characteristics of the mirroring process. First, mirror neurons are intimately connected to our emotions. Just as they help us to recognize a fairly neutral activity, like picking up a teacup, they help us to recognize the physical signs of an emotion. Beginning in 1982, still more than ten years before the discovery of mirror neurons, Ulf Dimberg found signs in his studies that indicated automatic facial mimicry when a person sees, for example, a smiling or angry face. At times this imitation was so slight as to be detectable only by measuring electrical impulses of the nerves as they stimulate the observer's muscles

[‡] For more information see: Rizzolatti, Giacomo, et al. "The Mirror System in Humans." *Mirror Neurons and the Evolution of Brain and Language*. Maxim I. Stamenov and Vittorio Gallese eds. Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company (2002): 37-62; Iacoboni, Marco. *Mirroring People: The New Science of How We Connect with Others*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux (2008): 74-78.

(643-647). Even when a smile is not met with a noticeable smile, an observer picks up on the muscular pattern that produces a smile and imitates it (or produces what is often referred to as an inner imitation). Our facial muscles synchronize with the facial expressions we encounter.

Iacoboni shows in his studies that mirror neurons are linked to the limbic system, the area of the brain that produces emotion. For this reason, the associated emotions of an action or facial expression may be triggered by the observer's inner imitation of the actions and expressions of others. As the mirroring process is an immediate one, automatically triggering prior to our cognitive functions, the presence of emotional input starts an inner mimicry of emotionally charged actions and expressions quite different from the cognitive associations that lead to a sympathetic ("I understand how you feel") response. The implication Iacoboni suggests here is that we don't *reason* our way into someone else's shoes, we *feel* ourselves in them, and only afterward do we make a cognitive link (110-112). This emotional component of mirror neurons may explain a great deal about the phenomenon Elaine Hatfield and others have termed (in their book by the same name) "emotional contagion," (the tendency for one person to seemingly "catch" an emotion from another through a process of muscular synchronization). The term brings the metaphors of infection and reflection into close contact, blurring their edges.

While the emotional link between people may be an immediate reflex Rizzolatti, one of the first researchers of mirror neuron activity, and Corrado Sinaglia point out two important facts to bear in mind about this emotional exchange. To begin with, while the mirror neuron system seems to be our natural, reflexive way of understanding emotions,

it is not the only way that we understand them. Rizzolatti and Sinigaglia explain that it is possible for emotions to be understood through cognitive associations, “but to quote William James, our perception of these would be reduced to a perception ‘purely cognitive in form, pale, colourless, destitute of emotional warmth’... the emotive colouring, would depend on the sharing of the visceromotor responses [internal movements of musculature or organs] that contribute to define the actual emotions” (189). That is, without the physical and emotional information provided by the mirror neuron response we lose a certain depth of feeling and may have difficulty in identifying emotional nuance or empathizing with others. As well, Rizzolatti and Sinigaglia remind us that emotional mirroring, while it is possibly the root of empathy, does not immediately cause an empathetic response in the observer.

Sharing someone’s emotive state at visceromotor level and feeling empathy for that person are two very different things. For example, if we see that someone is in pain, we are not automatically induced to feel compassion for him. This often occurs, but the two processes are distinct in the sense that the latter implies the former, but not vice versa. (190)

While it may be a bodily response, it is one that we can intervene in, consciously or no. Observing an action or emotion does not immediately induce a full replication of either, and we are still able to recognize and understand both with a small resonation in our bodies. That said, this theory of empathy corresponds to the theory of emotion that William James proposed a century before the discovery of mirror neurons in which James proposed that emotions result from a form of muscular feedback. In *Principles of*

Psychology (1890), the source that Rizzolatti and Sinigaglia cite above, James explains how emotions result from actions:

Common-sense says, we lose our fortune, are sorry and weep; we meet a bear, are frightened and run; we are insulted by a rival, are angry and strike. The hypothesis here to be defended says that this order of sequence is incorrect... that the more rational statement is that we feel sorry because we cry, angry because we strike, afraid because we tremble. (449-450)

Mirror neurons, then, provide the mechanism that induces emotion because of muscular feedback that is precipitated, in turn, by the emotional input received from others. To build on James' theory, we can become sad because we internally imitate the weeping of another who cries, we are angry because we feel ourselves punch when someone else strikes, afraid because we feel another's trembling in our own body.

In their text Rizzolatti and Sinigaglia take time to consider Peter Brook's 2005 comments on mirror neurons. As if to ground the excitement about this seemingly new discovery of emotional transference the authors note that the special means of communication that the research into mirror neurons suggests is not new knowledge, a point made evident by Brook's remarks (xi-xiii). Speaking to Tel Aviv University's theatre studies department, Brook announced that the research on mirror neurons allowed these neurophysiologists to just begin understanding something about the relationship between action and emotion that was already a well-known fact in the theatre world: that the audience joins with the action on stage on a physical and emotional level in the moment of performance. Said Brook, "as one person enters something that is thought to be his deepest subjective experience, there can be an instant recognition, a shared

understanding between everyone else who is watching” (qtd in Ben-Zvi 53). The actor’s inner emotions instantly pass from body to body providing shared emotional experience and understanding of that emotional experience between the actor and all who observe her. For Brook, the theatrical experience provides all the evidence necessary for one to see there is an emotional reciprocity between actors or between actor and audience.

While the phenomenon itself seems to be a certainty, what the exact nature of this emotional exchange is, or is expected to be, remains uncertain.

Anne Bogart made similar observations about the relationship between actor and audience and the potential involvement of mirror neurons in the process. In a speech at the Theatre Communications Group’s national conference in 2006 she admitted that she was only beginning to consider the implications of the neurological research but that she was familiar in her own work with Viewpoints with feeling “that an audience actually feels more open if it’s working well... that as an audience you feel you can breathe better, that there’s a physical change that happens in the audience” (The Role of the Audience”). Two years later in *American Theatre*, Porter Anderson quoted her with an echo of this idea when she said of the “collaboration” between actor and audience in performance “actors are the extension of the audience... Audiences are, in fact, ‘mirror neurons,’ exercising the same neuronal and muscular activity the actors are” (Anderson “The Search for a SITIstate”). Mirror neurons blur distinctions between actor and observer on a neural level so that (on that level) there is little difference between observing an action and performing one. As Bogart’s comments make clear, the feeling is familiar for theatre practitioners; the discovery is somehow unsurprising even as the research meant to explain the phenomenon is in its infancy. Indeed, this exchange seems

like a theatrical given, both the primary purpose and the central difficulty of performance in the theatre.

Despite the recent surge in research on mirror neurons the actor's ability to "infect" the audience with emotion through their actions, sounds and words should be no surprise. Perhaps the ubiquity of emotional exchange in theatre renders this phenomenon an unexamined assumption, but not all forms of emotional transference are the same. As seen in the difference between automatic emotional contagion and the cognitive process of sympathy, the manner in which actors and audience share emotional input does not always follow the same process. While the phenomenon of emotional exchange during performance may be often-expressed as a theatrical given it remains an under-examined given. This study will work to provide ways to understand and discuss emotional exchange between actors and between actors and audience within a theatrical context. This can be achieved, in part, by examining the metaphors of emotional exchange that theatre practitioners use, or that are applied to the theatrical event by others.

As the language emerging to describe the science of mirror neurons begins to blur the metaphors of infection and reflection together, and perhaps even absorb the metaphor of infection into the metaphor of reflection, an opportunity has opened up to examine what these pervasive metaphors mean and have meant for the theatre, a task that may become increasingly important if cognitive studies and theatre arts are to be in productive conversation. At the same time this potential blurring makes it increasingly necessary to acknowledge the ways in which these metaphors have operated as very different constructions within the theatre. While the metaphors may share territory, treating them as nearly synonymous glosses over important distinctions in their historic uses and

implications. Examining how these metaphors have been used within theatre or applied to theatre by critics at different historical moments can yield insight into expected emotional relationship between actor and audience, the function of the actor and the role of theatre within a culture. This exploration, in turn, will reflect back on contemporary practice and facilitate our ability to discuss the nature of emotional exchange and its role in theatre today.

This study aims to locate these metaphors of emotional exchange as expressions of both the relationship between actors and the reciprocal relationship between actor and audience. A theatre practitioner's expectations for the emotional relationship between actors and audience shape a range of other aspects of their theatre including acting style, audience arrangement, constructions of performance space and notions about the purpose and function of theatre itself. Asking what implications different widely used metaphor have had for theatrical performance, and especially what role the audience plays (or is expected to play) as the actors and audience join in this conceptualization of emotional exchange, can allow metaphors to become tools for better understanding performance expectations at different historical moments or for use in current practice.

In the previous examples, Brecht uses the metaphor of infection to say something very different about the role of emotion in theatre than did either Stanislavski or Meisner, and his metaphorical construction reveals a great deal about his notion of his theatre's purpose. Within the context of "Alienation Effects in Chinese Acting" we can assume that Brecht's use of *emotion as infectious* expresses his concern that theatre can create an emotional exchange which dulls the spectator's analytical response, that it can overcome the intellects of both actor and audience while they feel what the character feels but do

not question the sociopolitical landscape that determine the character's environment, their subsequent ability to make choices and provoked the emotions in the first place. His use of infection here highlights both the passivity on the part of the infected spectator, "the same automatic transfer... the same emotional infection," and the danger of everyone in the theatre feeling the same thing by using the deadly potential of disease to express the intellectual deadening of the audience. The metaphor sets him up to suggest the need for a type of acting that can, in a sense, actively inoculate both actor and spectator against direct and automatic emotional transfer. In this way Brecht replaces metaphors of *theatre as infectious* with his preferred metaphorical constructions of theatre: *theatre as scientific investigation*.

Alternatively, Stanislavski and Meisner use metaphors of infection to suggest the potential power of an actor's emotion in an affirmative light. Meisner's use of infection calls attention to the force of strong emotion, emotion as wide-reaching and inescapable. The actor acts as a strong carrier of feeling who cultivates emotion but does not have to concentrate on the exchange of emotion itself. He suggests to his students that the strong emotion will carry itself into the audience. While it takes effort to bring themselves into a state where they are emotionally full, the transfer itself is passive on both the part of the audience and the actor. Similarly, Stanislavski uses contagion to illustrate the force and power of emotion, yet his use is nuanced when he states that this contagiousness is a power of communion, suggesting the audience's role in creating a charged atmosphere in which emotional infection can happen. He follows the previously quoted statement with the assurance that the presence of an audience should not worry the actor because "they encourage this kind of communion, because the atmosphere of a performance, heavily

impregnated with the nervous excitement of the crowd, serves as the most effective channel for an actor's creativeness." For Stanislavski, the emotional activity of the audience creates amicable conditions for emotional infection, and the actor can become emotionally stronger (and more contagious) by way of this communion with an audience (*Creating* 106). Further analysis of each practitioner's use of metaphor as well as the metaphor's implications within their own historical moments and cultural contexts would continue to deepen our understanding of the emotional relationships they sought to establish between actor and audience. This study will provide a means for analyzing metaphors of emotional exchange as they are used in theatre because this transfer is central to theatre, but what the metaphors used to describe it suggest about the relationship between audience and actor is not always clear.

Metaphorical Conceptualization and Emotional Communities

In George Lakoff and Mark Johnson's *Metaphors We Live By*, the authors propose that "because so many of the concepts that are important to us are either abstract or not clearly delineated in our experience (the emotions, ideas, time etc.), we need to get a grasp on them by means of other concepts that we understand in clearer terms" (115). This is the core of what it means to understand things through the use of metaphor and is deeply resonant with theatrical practice. Indeed, very often difficult-to-define concepts are likened to the theatre in order to better understand or explain them ("the United States' role on the global stage," "the debate was classic political theatre," to say nothing of the metaphors that recall the sentiment that in lives we play many parts on a stage as big as the world). The theatre itself could be seen as the ideal grounds for metaphorically understanding the world, constantly allowing one thing to stand in for another or many

others. Just as often theatre must search out metaphors in order to more clearly define itself and its purpose. The theatre has had many metaphors attached to it coming either from the practitioners themselves or imposed upon it from the outside, and many of these metaphorical constructions potentially shape or have shaped theatrical practice and experience. For example, metaphors of possession, often spiritual, speak to constructions of theatrical performance as a potentially dangerous event in which a passionate individual takes control over the will of a crowd. This metaphor is at least as old as Plato's dialogue, *Ion*, in which the philosopher Socrates likens the rhapsode Ion to a magnetized iron ring, drawing and magnetizing his audience into a chain with his performance, a performance fueled by a divine muse that has similarly magnetized him (15). In the last century metaphors of possession inform a combining of theatre with a shamanistic healing function. While there was widespread experimentation with this restorative function of theatre through a purportedly shamanistic possession, as seen in Grotowski's paratheatrical experiments or Judith Malina of the Living Theatre's claim that the actor becomes possessed by the pain of the world before speaking, it seems that this metaphor has had a somewhat less lasting impact on Western theatrical practice.[§] As Herbert Blau notes in *The Audience*, this construction of theatre is typical of a generation (primarily of the 1960s and 1970s) hoping to recombine ritual and theatre, but very often finding it impossible within a cultural context that for the most part had no frame of reference for such experience and so lacked the "initiating energy" for ritual (12-13).

[§] See: Innes, C D. *Avant Garde Theatre, 1892-1992*. London: Routledge (1993): 15-16. ; Cole, Toby, and Helen K. Chinoy. *Actors on Acting: The Theories, Techniques, and Practices of the World's Great Actors, Told in Their Own Words*. New York: Crown Trade Paperbacks (1995): 654.

Lakoff and Johnson explain that, “the most fundamental values in a culture will be coherent with the metaphorical structure of the most fundamental concepts in the culture.” A culture’s dominant values will be expressed in the metaphors it chooses to describe certain abstract concepts. Conversely, metaphorical structures are adopted because they cohere within cultural values (Lakoff 18-22). The metaphor of *theatre as ritual* or *actor as shaman* simply did not permeate Western cultural (and metaphorical) conceptualizations of theatre often enough for a wide audience to engage in this specific emotional relationship.

In a field of metaphors, infection and reflection appear to recur with particular regularity in Western theatre since at least the sixteenth century. *Theatre as plague*, for example, appeared in theatrical discourse with various connotations. Anti-theatrical writers and public officials in England’s early modern period regularly associated plague and theatre, often times blurring the distinctions between whether theatre caused plague or was a plague itself. Centuries later, Antonin Artaud revitalized the metaphor of theatre as plague to very different ends, and in the following decades many inspired heirs of this metaphor tried to make his plague of theatre a reality. *Theatre as mirror* appears often enough in theatrical discourse as to be occasionally given as a theatrical truism to be upheld as a structuring metaphor or antagonized as Kantor’s credo does above. Since they seem to have powerfully affected Western theatre from the early modern public theatres to twentieth century performance this study will investigate these metaphors closely. At the same time, I intend to remain open to the possibility of metaphors that are not widely named but that may be equally potent or useful in terms of viewing performance, especially emotional exchange in performance, in a different light. These metaphors may

be independent, but they may also be used in conjunction with either infection or reflection metaphors as a way of enhancing or subtly shading their meaning as Stanislavski did when he combined metaphors of infection, radiation and force to describe the power of an actor's emotion.

Simply put metaphorical construction is a way of “understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another” (5), and so *Metaphors We Live By* theorizes that we can better understand certain cultural constructions through the metaphors used to both explain and shape them. The text provides several guide posts in this pursuit, certain of which will be useful in framing this study. First, using a metaphor to explain or shape the experience of a thing necessarily highlights some aspects while masking others. The metaphor can never be perfect or it would be the thing itself. As such, when an acting theorist, for example, chooses a metaphor it is for the purpose of drawing attention to some aspect of acting, but it will, intentionally or not, hide or confuse some other possibilities for understanding that same art. Among their examples Lakoff and Johnson show that “argument is war” shapes the way we approach arguments while it hides the collaborative potential of argument because cooperation does not fit well into the particular metaphorical conceptualization of armed conflict (4-5). As such, even though a particular set of metaphors are commonly used to describe a more abstract concept it may become necessary to seek out other metaphorical constructions in order to understand the same concept differently or see its potentially hidden qualities.

Secondly, according to Lakoff and Johnson certain metaphors persist within a culture because they both fit into larger metaphorical constructions and because they have some experiential foundation. Here we might say that metaphors that give the image of

living our lives as acting a role in a play fit in with the larger metaphorical structure of *theatrum mundi*, a metaphor that itself seems to have become popular in sixteenth century England as a result of a growing sense, even unease, that much of public life has an artificial quality, changing in different contexts with an uncertain, unstable core. The metaphor persists in a society that has some anxiety about constructing social selves and whether or not there is a “true self.”

Zoltán Kövecses explains what this means in terms of emotion in his *Metaphor and Emotion*. Looking for ways in which “emotion and language interact,” Kövecses explains that metaphors are shaped by emotional experience but our experience of emotion is also shaped by the metaphors we use to describe them (xi). In this light, *Metaphor and Emotion* theorizes that metaphors likening anger to hot liquid in a container persist in part because of the feeling of increased blood flow that accompanies the emotion. Alternately, happiness is associated with “up” because of an accompanying physical sensation of lift in the experience happiness. The experience of these emotions can also be very culturally specific and so shaped by the metaphors employed in that culture. *Metaphor and Emotion* outlines the example of a sense of happiness that is theorized as very particular to traditional Chinese culture. While Chinese and English do have some overlap in their metaphorical conceptualizations of happiness the Chinese sense of *happiness as flowers in the heart* is a particular metaphorical construction within that specific culture. Here Kövecses notes that this may reflect a cultural introversion with this emotion that contrasts with the English sense of happiness as being up and off the ground, which he says does not seem to exist in the Chinese language and therefore in the experience of happiness (170). Of course, his study does point out that this is not to

say that speakers of Chinese do not or can not experience happiness as a speaker of English might, but each culture's use of metaphor in the conceptualization of emotion demonstrate that these experiences are less common. The interaction of language and emotion is such that emotional metaphors are derived from the experience of emotion and emotional experience is inflected by the prevailing use of a given metaphor. Similarly, this study will investigate how metaphor and experience interact rather than assuming a unidirectional influence of one to the other, and assume that the experience of *theatre as infection* or of *theatre as reflection* are in some measure culturally specific, varying their meaning and emotional experience at different points in history and within specific cultural contexts.

For this reason it will be important to have some grasp of what infection and reflection meant for different groups of people at different historical moments. This study will not, however, constitute a comprehensive study of either metaphor's linguistic roots or the totality of either metaphor's ever-shifting cultural and political contexts. Rather, this study will gather available evidence to determine what the use of a particular metaphor meant for the group that employed it with reference to theatrical performance and audience experience. For this reason, the study will attempt to locate discreet groups within cultural contexts that use the metaphors of infection and reflection in comparable ways. This determined, some conclusions can be drawn as to how these groups or members within these groups used metaphor to shape the experience of theatrical performance for both actor and audience.

Here Barbara Rosenwein provides a useful tool for studying groups of people who seem to experience emotions and construct emotional experience similarly. In her work

Rosenwein attempts to give a foundation for inquiry into the history of emotions in part by finding and exploring the historical artifacts of what she terms “emotional communities.” In *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages*, she defines these communities as “groups in which people adhere to the same norms of emotional expression and value – or devalue – the same or related emotions,” (2). Emotional communities, she explains, vary in size from families to nations or may even cross political borders as in her example of the Catholic Church during the early middle ages. Similarly, they are not necessarily bound by social or economic notions of class, however it does appear to be more likely that these groups will form among groups of people who experience the world from the same perspective, and so differences of in social strata may play a role in how these communities tend to form. Such communities can be studied on a large scale, but can also be usefully explored with one person as exemplar. Rosenwein makes an outline for this type of study by using Pope Gregory the Great who commonly set the emotional tone for his community of clergy. The writings he left behind serve as artifacts for the emotional tenor of his time.

Finally, it should be noted that emotional communities do not always remain stable entities over time or occupy easily defined locations. As in the example above, an emotional community may cross over political borders. As well, several smaller communities might coexist within larger emotional communities, their members overlapping and changing their emotional values and expressions over time. Therefore, over the course of a few years time drastic changes in the emotional tenor of a particular group may occur. Locating particular emotional values, specifically those having to do with emotional exchange, within the work of theatre practitioners will be useful in

determining how the metaphors of infection and reflection are used in shaping theatrical performance.

While locating and analyzing various uses of the metaphors of infection and reflection in the following chapters, this dissertation will demonstrate how the metaphors work within a practitioner's particular cultural context, especially within their emotional communities. This analysis will reflect back on the practitioner's use of metaphor in constructing their expected relationship between actor and audience, the acting styles required to enable such a relationship, and even their notion of theatre's function within society. Investigating the emotional communities within a culture and historical moment will illuminate the emotional values and norms of expression operating within an artist's use of a metaphor in shaping their theatre. This will provide a way of seeing how one practitioner's use of, for example *theatre as infection*, is distinctly different from another's use of the same metaphor. For this reason Chapters II and III, which both explore the metaphors of infection in theatre but at very different historical moments, will focus heavily on metaphors within emotional communities related in some way to the theatre of the time. As this dissertation also aims to suggest the applicability of these investigations to contemporary practice these chapters will also suggest how these historical metaphorical constructions might inform acting and actor training with respect to emotional exchange. These applications will be expanded in Chapter IV when the science that may go a long way toward explaining the phenomenon of emotional exchange, primarily studies concerning mirror neuron research, are brought to bear on acting theory. These studies will also be explored alongside their own implicit metaphorical constructions of *emotion as reflection*.

Areas of Focus:

A Plague of Players

This study will begin by investigating metaphors of infection separately from metaphors of reflection in order to determine how they work differently for particular emotional communities within the theatre (the theorists, actors, playwrights, and audiences) while touching on extra-theatrical contexts (critics of the theatre, political entities, scientists) as well. Here the prevalence of the metaphor of plague at certain historical moments in Western theatre helps to narrow the focus. The next chapter will consider a historical moment in which the metaphor *theatre as plague* figured prominently in discourse around theatre and when *emotion as infection* may have played a role in shaping the acting style, plays and theatrical experience of the day.

With approximately one fifth of London's population dying as a result of the more devastating outbreaks of plague (in 1563, 1603, 1625, and 1665) and smaller outbreaks happening with some regularity in the decades in between these dates, the presence of disease was especially palpable in early modern London (Wear 220-222). This same span of years saw London's first purpose-built, public theaters open and be forced to shut down. As soon as these theatres began to operate they were attacked for a range of reasons with accusations including that they taught immorality, mixed sacred and profane materials, pulled focus away from God and apprentices away from their work, and for not only encouraging the spread of plague but also causing it. The language of a 1584 response to a petition from the Queen's Players to the Privy Council demonstrates this last concern claiming, "to play in plague time is to increase the plague by infection; to play out of plague time is to draw the plague by offendings of God upon

occasion of such plays,” (Pollard 317). This sentiment echoes Thomas White’s 1577 sermon at Pawles Crosse during which he railed against the “common playes in London: “But I vnderstande they are nowe forbidden bycause of the plague. I like the pollicye well if it holde still, for a disease is but bodged and patched vp that is not cured in the cause, and the cause of plague is sinne, if you looke to it well: and the cause of sinne are playes: therefore the cause of plagues are playes,” (Chambers 197).

Accusations like White’s did not solely blame stage plays and the players performing them for the presence of the disease in the city. Often, those that attacked the stage blurred the bubonic plague with a moral plague that infected the manners of those in the audience, altering their behavior and turning them to sinful and idle lives. One of the strongest voices against the theatre, Stephen Gosson, lamented what he saw as the physical (as well as moral) degeneration of his countrymen. In his first major attack on the theatre, *School of Abuses* (1579), Gosson compares the Englishmen of his time to those in an account from Dio Cassius:

Dion sayeth that English men could suffer watching [remaining awake] an labor, hunger and thirst, and bear of all storms with head and shoulders; they used slender weapons, went naked, and were good soldiers; they fed upon roots and barks of trees, they would stand up to the chin many days in marshes without victuals... if they had taken but the quantity of a bean, or the weight of a pea, they did neither gape after meat, nor long for the cup, a great while after: the men in valor not yielding to Scythia, the women in courage passing the Amazons. The exercise of both was shooting and darting, running and wrestling, and trying such masteries as either consisted in swiftness of feet, agility of body, strength of arms,

or martial discipline. But the exercise that is now among us is banqueting, playing, piping, and dancing, and all such delights as may win us to pleasure.

(B8r-B8v)

Anticipating the then fairly common argument that a good Christian cannot be turned to sin and idleness by merely going to a play, Gosson warns his reader that the sight of the players' "effeminate gestures" and the way they "tickle the ear" overwhelm the body, filling it with lust and "if the body be overcharged, it may be helped; but the surfeit of the soul is hardly cured." No matter how strong the moral constitution, human nature simply could not help but succumb to sinfulness following exposure to the physical and vocal charms of players. In order to avoid the "common plague of private offences... the sure disease of uncertain causes" one must avoid at all costs going to plays (B4v, B6v; C5r). Attending the plays, being among a crowd overwhelmed by this infectious degeneration contributed to one's own moral and physical decay. The players were central to this process for Gosson; they altered the audience's moral and physical constitution through their gestures and pleasing voices.

If his first attack on the theatre only began to metaphorically link theatre and disease, Gosson had sharpened his attack three years later. In his *Plays Confuted in Five Actions* he writes:

So will I conclude the effects that this poison works among us. The devil is not so ignorant how mightily these outward spectacles effeminate and soften the hearts of men; vice is learned with beholding, sense is tickled, desire pricked, and those impressions of mind are secretly conveyed over to the gazers, which the players

do counterfeit on stage... And they that came honest to a play may depart infected. (G4r)

He then supports this claim with a story of Bacchus and Ariadne that he claims shows the “force there is in the gestures of players” and which contains what appear to be both physical mirroring and emotional contagion. “When Bacchus rose up, tenderly lifting Ariadne from her seat ... the beholders rose up. Every man stood on tip toe, and seemed to hover over the prey; when they swore, the company swore; when they departed to bed, the company presently was set on fire” (G5r).

Shakespeare’s *King Lear* and *King Henry IV part II* demonstrate that plays of the time themselves reflect a certain awareness of the link between emotions, actions and contagion. These plays obviously do not take Gosson’s hard line against such emotional exchanges. Rather, they engage with the phenomenon and may have incorporated it into the acting as Shakespeare has in the text. Finding an example in Master Robert Shallow, Falstaff muses about the commingling of men’s spirits:

It is a wonderful thing to see the semblable coherence of his men’s spirits and his: they, by observing of him, do bear themselves like foolish justices: he, by conversing with them, is turned into a justice-like serving-man: their spirits are so married in conjunction with the participation of society that they flock together in consent, like so many wild-geese ... It is certain that either wise bearing or ignorant carriage is caught, as men take diseases, one of another: therefore let men take heed of their company. (V.i.66-80)

Interestingly, Falstaff observes here a reciprocity wherein one man affects a group (much as the anti-theatrical tracts complain that actors do) while simultaneously being affected

himself by the company. The relationship is reciprocal rather than unidirectional and a single human's effect on a group is equal to a group's effect on that individual.

Goneril is not so amused by this phenomenon as Falstaff. Fed up by her father's host of unruly men, she confronts Lear about reducing the number of his companions.

She complains:

Here do you keep a hundred knights and squires;
Men so disorder'd, so debosh'd, and bold
That this our court, infected with their manners,
Shows like a riotous inn: epicurism and lust
Make it more like a tavern or a brothel
Than a grac'd palace. The shame itself doth speak
For instant remedy. (I.iv.232-238)

Since the metaphor *theatre as infectious* appears to have been such a pervasive and influential way of thinking about theatre and the exchange of emotions during this period, the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century will provide an appropriate place to begin the next chapter. In this chapter, I will consider the interaction of metaphors of infection and both the experience of theatre and the experience of emotion in an attempt to see how metaphor shaped the expectations of theatrical experience. For this chapter it will be important to consider what metaphors of infection can illuminate about how these plays worked in their cultural contexts; and so ask what emotional infection meant for a society under a constant threat of biological plague? What can metaphors of infection illuminate about the theatrical experience in early modern London both in terms of audience expectations and the interaction between actor and audience?

A better understanding of an infectious mode of performance may inform how these plays can work in contemporary performance. So, once a sense of how the metaphor is at work within the emotional communities related to the in early modern London (its practitioners and detractors alike) this chapter will attempt to find specific references to emotional infection in Shakespeare's plays as an example of this metaphor's influence on a specific theatre artist. Once located within his work, these metaphors will be examined for what they imply about the expected acting style and emotional relationship between actor and audience.

Artaud's Plague of Theatre

Next, this study leaps ahead several hundred years, but this does not mean that these metaphors of infection drop out of the theatrical discourse following the 1642 closing of London's public theatres. For example, in his response to Diderot's *The Actor's Paradox*, William Archer wrote about the "subtle contagion" of sympathy that could so powerfully affect an audience. For him the transfer of emotion could not be described in terms of mimicry alone. "The grief or laughter of another may overmaster us, through the action of sympathy, though we may know nothing of the cause; but this is not imitation: it is infection" (218-220). And Leo Tolstoy, in his *What is Art?*, saw all true art as having an infectious quality when he writes "that sense of infection with another's feeling – compelling us to rejoice in another's gladness, to sorrow at another's grief and to mingle souls with another – which is the very essence of art" (162). While Tolstoy didn't write about theatre specifically, his example of how art should interact with an observer is a story of reenactment:

[A] boy having experienced, let us say, fear on encountering a wolf, relates that encounter, and in order to evoke in others the feeling he has experienced, describes himself, his condition before the encounter, the surroundings, the wood, his own lightheartedness, and then the wolf's appearance, its movements, the distance between himself and the wolf, and so forth. All this, if only the boy when telling the story again experiences the feelings he had lived through, and infects the hearers and compels them to feel what he had experienced – is art. Even if the boy had not seen a wolf... [and] invented an encounter with a wolf. (58)

Yet, while the metaphors of *emotion as contagious* and *theatre as infectious* persisted through the nineteenth century, it was in the twentieth century that Antonin Artaud revitalized the metaphor in a way that had a strong, posthumous influence on theatrical performance and indeed the very purpose of theatre.

With *The Theatre and its Double* Artaud calls for a theatre of visceral assault, an upheaval of the spectator's rational mind by the psychic and spiritual force of the actor, a theatre that he likens to plague. He writes of a theatre that, like his construction of life's sudden upheaval during plague, stirs within the audience dark and revelatory forces. An actor who, suffused with emotions that have nothing to do with reality outside the theatre, fill with a passionate charge, creating images that infect the spectators by means of a total assault on the flesh (15-31). His ideal theatrical experience had nothing to do with illusions of psychological behavior or the logical outlining of arguments addressing socio-political problems. His was to be a theatre in which the spectator "knows that he is to undergo a real operation in which not only his mind but his senses and his flesh are at stake... he must be totally convinced that we are capable of making him scream"

(*Selected Writings* 156-157). The actor was meant to induce in the spectator a metaphysical experience through a direct communication from flesh to flesh.

Unfortunately, aside from (self-admittedly) fairly unsuccessful attempts, Artaud did not produce much of his own theatre and died without seeing the kind of theatrical operation he described in his highly influential text. His writings provide theoretical provocations, occasionally specific suggestions as in those of the first manifesto for a Theatre of Cruelty, (*Double* 93-100). but neither they nor his productions constitute a practical manual or systematic structure. As such, Artaud will be considered, in much the same way that Christopher Innes suggests in his *Avant Garde Theatre, 1892-1992*, as a “theatrical litmus, sensitive to the cultural physiology of the twentieth century” (93), and picking up on the emotional atmosphere created by the expressionist and surrealist movements. The artistic movements that preceded Artaud’s artistic development and with which he was involved provide the emotional values and norms of expression that locate Artaud in specific emotional communities. With this in mind, Artaud’s predecessors will be considered alongside his own writings in an attempt to discern what the use of infection metaphors in this time suggested about the expectations the theatrical practitioners who use them had for the performance event especially as this relates to the actor-audience relationship and the role of emotional exchange in performance.

Artaud will also provide insight into the emotional communities of his time, serving as an exemplary model of his own emotional community and a point of contention for a community opposed to the emotional tenor he represented. In many ways the clash between these two sets of emotional norms and values of expression may hinge on this notion of *theatre as infection*. Did Artaud’s notion of *theatre as plague* actually

hinder the reception of his work in his time? Was this construction of theatre too specific for his own emotional community, making it difficult for him to communicate with the audiences he performed for, much less infect them? And what did emotional infection mean for Artaud? How were the actor or the director supposed to create this infection? If indeed the Elizabethan public theatres were able to make use of an infectious mode of performance, how were conditions different for Artaud that made his infection far less potent in his time?

The discoveries made in Chapter III will also be applied to contemporary performance and actor training (as in Chapter II), but they may most usefully be seen in combination or contrast with metaphors of reflection. For this reason, Chapter III will conclude with an exploration of how Artaud's proposed acting style affected future practitioners despite its influence being somewhat blunted in his own time. Meanwhile, certain of the conclusions about Artaud's theories of acting will be expounded further in Chapter IV, which is where the metaphor of reflection is reintroduced into this study alongside the science of mirror neurons.

Reflection and Other Possibilities

Metaphors of *theatre as reflection* perhaps have been employed more frequently than metaphors of infection to describe theatre since the early modern period. Early modern playwrights often used the metaphor to justify theatre as moral edification against attacks, and the metaphor was well established well before Hamlet's advise to the players. Since then its iterations provided a metaphorical model for many theatre theorists and practitioners whose theatrical aims led them to attempts at creating more or less realistic illusions on stage. Yet, beginning with the early modern model of reflection the

metaphor *theatre as mirror* has not always led to a theatre that presents a reality that directly reflects the day-to-day lives of the audience. Only relatively recently in theatre history have attempts been made at a theatre of reflection that present such an illusion of reality.

With Chapter IV, this dissertation will expand on recent cognitive studies related to the neural mechanism that facilitates emotional exchange between people, the mirror neuron system. This chapter will demonstrate how cognitive studies and theatre can productively interact within the previously established context of metaphor and emotional transfer. Of particular importance will be the inherent metaphors of reflection in mirror neurons. As with any metaphor *theatre as mirror* or *emotion as reflection* both highlight and obscure important facets about emotional exchange. This chapter will point out important aspects of the emotional exchange enabled by mirror neurons that may be obscured by the metaphor of mirror itself, but that are important to contemporary acting theory. In doing so Chapter IV will revisit the previous chapters in an attempt to locate metaphors of reflection and question whether these metaphors work in ways other than to suggest that theatre is a copy of the audience's reality. Bearing in mind recent theories of emotional mirroring this chapter will see how *emotion as infection* and *emotion as reflection* interact, how they overlap, illuminate one another, and where they may diverge. These metaphors may nuance our understanding and perspective of what happens between actor and audience in theatrical performance.

Mirror neuron studies open up a range of questions for theatre that do not fall into the purview of this dissertation, but one should be addressed as a way of both limiting this study's scope and establishing some basic assumptions about mirror neurons that

should be investigated under different circumstances. The question: do mirror neurons respond only to genuine emotion or can accurate simulations of emotion trigger emotions in others without the presence of genuine emotion? In a way this question is not fully answered by those studies engaged with mirror neurons simply because sincerity of emotion does not appear to fall within the parameters of experimentation and observation. Neither in the above mentioned studies nor in those to come in Chapter IV does the relative sincerity of emotion seem to factor in to the mirror neuron system's automatic response. Ann Marie Barry takes the somewhat extreme example of video games while Vittorio Gallese refers to Gian Lorenzo Bernini's sculpture to make the point that while the conscious mind may differentiate between reality and simulation of reality, the on an unconscious level the brain makes no such distinction. Barry observes that the brain, unconsciously at least, takes in all sensory input without differentiating between reality and simulation. On this level all is "real" (79-89). These examples are extreme, but they illustrate the point that mirror neurons make no more apparent distinction between genuine or simulated emotion than they do between the dynamic expression of human emotions and the static ecstasy of Bernini's St. Theresa. What seems to matter is that the mirror neuron system is able to recognize the motions and expressions of emotion. Even when the observer's internal imitation is nearly undetectable there remains the possibility that through muscular feedback the observer will "catch" the emotions of the observed.

Here, Susana Bloch's work with the physical expression of extreme emotions may provide some insight. Bloch's work aimed at observing the emotional reactions of subjects under hypnosis for the purpose of determining the physiological basis of

emotions for the purpose of developing a system for training actors to replicate these emotions. For Bloch's actors whether they felt the emotion or simply intended to simulate them remained relatively unimportant. Even so, Bloch noted that by enacting "effector patterns" (the breathing, postural and facial expressions associated with a particular emotion) actors found that "the subjective feeling can be triggered by what appears to be a sensory feedback mechanism," and so these actors were able "to evoke a particular emotion either in the actor and in the observer or only in the latter" (*Acting (Re)Considered* 199-200). These findings correspond to the research done concerning the inner imitation of actions and emotional input provoked by mirror neurons. The imitation of the breath, posture and expressions of an emotion are typically enough to trigger an emotion in an actor however sincere her simulation is, but even if the actor remains emotionally cold, an observer's mirror neurons may still respond to the physical aspects of an emotion. The mirror neurons then produce an inner imitation that may cause the observer to feel the enacted emotion whether or not the actor does.

A great deal more investigation to this question may and should be done, but the current study does not include this question within its scope. Instead, this dissertation assumes that the relative sincerity of an emotional expression does not significantly impact emotional transfer. This assumption points out early how metaphorical conceptualizations obscure certain aspects about emotional exchange. Specifically, unlike a biological virus an actor can essentially infect an audience with an emotion that she may not have herself.

Finally, this dissertation will propose a framework for future explorations into acting theory, providing new tools for understanding how the relationship between actors

and the audience is shaped by the metaphors used to conceptualize it. This dissertation will create a useful basis for studying, for example, the previously mentioned work of Sanford Meisner whose method of actor training doesn't fall into the purview of my current project but seems to work with its own notions of infection or reflection. Hopefully this dissertation will provoke a reevaluation of the language used historically and currently with respect to the emotional relationships between actors and between actor and audience. It will call into question and provide nuance to assumptions like Peter Brook's, a common enough assumption for people who perform, that physical and emotional reciprocity occurs between the actor and the audience in the moment of performance because it is important to make distinctions in the nature of that emotional exchange. The metaphor of plague suggests a far different relationship than that of mirroring, and metaphorical structuring of any kind can provide a range of ways for thinking about "audience."

CHAPTER II

PLAYERS, PLAGUE AND EMOTIONAL INFECTION: THE TEMPEST TOSS'D SHIP

In the previous chapter this study began to locate the metaphor of infection in the works of Shakespeare as well as the indictments of the public playhouses and stage players of his time. As this chapter will demonstrate playwrights, anti-theatricalist writers and city officials all make use of *theatre as infection*, but the notion of infection in early modern London differs importantly from the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century than a sense of infection steeped in contemporary Western medical practice. The seeds of modern medicine can be located even previous to this period, but there remained a distinctly different sense of the body and the causes of disease in early modern London.* In order to determine how metaphors of infection worked in relation to emotional exchange in theatre this study will first outline an early modern conception of the perceived inner workings of the body in relation to both disease and emotion and how those inner workings affected the outside world. This sense of how the passions moved from body to body is embedded in the works of a playwright like Shakespeare and may therefore be explored as a way of providing nuance to our understanding of how he constructed the relationship between actor and audience in his own time and the possible

* See Nutton, Vivian, et al. *The Western Medical Tradition: 800 B.C.-1800 A.D.* Cambridge, Eng: Cambridge University Press, 1995. Print.

acting style that his plays called for. Despite the difference's in our contemporary notions of infection from early modern ideas, knowing how Shakespeare conceived of the emotional relationship between actor and audience reveals can enrich productions of his plays today. Even without trying to recreate the conditions of an early modern playhouse these explorations may influence the way actor engage with one another and the audience. First, we must consider the question: how did early modern London conceive of the passions and their movements and how did these conceptions relate disease and to the theatre of the time?

Among the myriad allegorical images in Henry Peacham's 1612 collection, *Minerva Britanna*, is an emblem and poem pairing under the title "*Nec igne, nec unda*" (Neither fiery, nor billowing). The image shows a towering stone jutting out of a turbulent ocean, beneath a stormy sky. The poem beneath tells us that this "mightie Rock" with its "ruggie brow" endures the upheavals of earth, sea and storm all the while maintaining an austere cliff-face, never altered by the force of its surroundings. The poem tells us that this immovable stone "is Manlie Contancie of mind, / Not easly mov'd, with every blast of wind." Near the stone sails a three-masted ship, all in flames and perhaps on a course to smash itself into the tall stone pillar. The poem explains that this "goodly ship to drowne," piloted by pride and desire, is opinion, which the world tosses about on every wave while passions consume it in the form of tall, wild flames (Peacham 158). The allegory is fairly simple, offering icons of an explicitly masculine stoicism and an implicitly feminine, emotional chaos. In her essay on humoral knowledge and governance Katherine Rowe notes that the image of passions as a turbulent sea when unresisted was already fairly recurrent at the time *Minerva Britanna* was published.

Thomas Wright had used it in 1604 for *The Passions of the Minde in Generale* and Rowe points it out in Shakespeare's *Macbeth* as well. This trope, she observes, had close associations with a kind of emotional contagiousness between people that was in direct conflict with growing social demands for emotional regulations (Rowe 171). Apparently rooted to the ocean floor, the stone's face remains unperturbed by any outside influence, however forceful, and avoids the emotional danger that will, by fire or by storm, soon wreck the ship. It is the impermeable contrast to the ship that is at the mercy of both internal and external forces. The stone defies emotional contagion.

The notion of a stony constancy as an ideal emotional norm was fairly incompatible with sixteenth and early seventeenth humoral conception of the body and its passions, and so any prescription for emotional governance with this closed-off, stoic stance as a goal had to contend with the "open" view of the body that Gail Kern-Paster describes in *The Body Embarrassed* (1993). Specifically, with the widely held conception of the humoral body that was "a semipermeable, irrigated container... porous and thus able to be influenced by the immediate environment" (8-9). Certainly, this openness refers to a great many external influences that could affect and upset the balance of the body's internal humors including the quality of air or one's dietary habits, but the body, and so its mutable humors, was also open to what might be the more subtle influences of other human beings: their spiritual forces and their infectious emotion.

While some competing views of the body were emerging and gaining acceptance during the sixteenth and early seventeenth century, the dominant perception of the body and its functions for Elizabethan and Jacobean London was deeply rooted in Galenic theory, which chiefly attributed disease to an imbalance in the body's four humors:

sanguine, phlegmatic, choleric or melancholy. Along with their physical components (hot, cold, moist or dry), each humor was associated with emotional qualities. Passions and humors corresponded to one another's movements so that an excess of one pointed to an excess of the other. The hot, sweet and moist sanguine humor corresponded to amours and joyful passions while the cold, dry and sour humor melancholy carried sorrow with it. Robert Burton observes that for better or worse (and he certainly suggests that this is more likely for the worst) the mind and the immaterial soul are often influenced if not overruled by the body by way of the humors within. He writes "as wine savours of the cask wherein it is kept, the soul receives a tincture of the body... sanguine are merry, melancholy sad, phlegmatic dull, by reason of abundance of those humors, and they cannot resist such passions which are inflicted by them" (375). Ben Jonson's "humoral comedies" take this notion of the body/passion relationship as a foundational premise for the action of the plays. In the introduction to *Every Man Out Of His Humor*, Asper echoes this notion when he explains a man's humor:

As when some one peculiar quality
Doth so possess a man, that it doth draw
All his affects, his spirits, and his powers,
In their confluents, all to run one way,
This may be truly said to be a humour (Prologue 105-109)

The physical aspects of the body and its humors could have a profound affect on one's entire emotional being, so much that one's physical humor and the corresponding attitude could be conflated as Asper does above.

Much of Thomas Wright's *The Passions of the Minde in Generall* addresses the concern that the carnal forces and allurements of these passions, a part of the soul that he often reminds his readers humans share with beasts, could unseat reason in her throne (8-9). For Wright, the body threatened at all times to overthrow the mind. Of course, neither Wright nor Burton suggest that this is a one sided exchange. In fact, Burton gives over several sections of his *Anatomy* to the power of the mind over the body, a power that can produce miraculous alterations in the body or inadvertently cause death (250, 256). Wright too acknowledges that emotions can be stirred within oneself by a force of will, something that he recommends for judicious Christian orators who would presumably use this ability to stir the emotions of their auditors to some moral purpose. Wright carefully aims his *Passions* at such a virtuous reader as the knowledge of the passions and how to stir them in others could prove very dangerous. Apparently, stage players were not the type to be entrusted with Wright's insights. Claiming that his study of passions will prove valuable to both physicians of the body and of the soul he explains that an excess of passion could disease the body as he writes:

there is no Passion very unvehement but that it alters extremely some of the foure humors of the bodie; and all Physicians commonly agree, that among diverse other extrinsecall causes of diseases, one, and not the least, is, the excess of some inordinate Passion... the spirits wait upon the Passions, as their Lords & Masters. The Physitian therefore knowing by what Passion the malady was caused, may well inferred what humour aboundeth. (4)

The humors were not passions themselves, yet they somehow carried with them particular emotional qualities so that where a certain passion was prominent one might

expect the corresponding humor to be in excess, and possibly at dangerous proportions. Burton illustrates this connection in his description of sorrow and its physical aspect melancholy. He writes that the two “beget one another, and tread in a ring, for sorrow is both cause and symptom of this disease” (259).

Neither were the humors or their corresponding passions seen as a disease in the contemporary sense of the word. Rather, their imbalance disordered the body causing illness. In the early modern view of the body there was a constant exchange between the emotional life, the mind, and the body. Emotions seemed to arise as easily from an agitation in the body as one in the mind, and the strength of passion could be a determinant factor in personal health of either body or mind. Typically issues of health and disease were handled by way of regulating those things which could affect the balance of humors, not only emotions but diet or sleeping habits for example, at times leading to extreme measures of regulation like blood-letting (Nutton 141). What was considerably more difficult to exert control over was the effect that another person’s emotions had on the balance of one’s own humors. Here we can begin to see the link between disease and theatre. If the passions of another body could transmit to one’s own, upsetting the humoral balance, then the public theatres and their highly emotional players held the potential to disease great masses all at once. The question then is: to what degree, in the early modern conception, is one’s body a closed system? Do passions leak into and out of a body? Is this how players affected their audience?

Peacham’s ideal of manly constancy was ultimately at odds with early modern notions of the body primarily because the body and its humors were not imagined as sealed off from their environment. The stone presents an exterior that no force could

breach or alter, but the physician Helkiah Crooke outlines a very different notion of the body in the 1615 *Mikrokosmosgraphia*. For Crooke, the liver illustrated a potential problem since all parts of the body were believed to be able to draw air for themselves in a similar way that they could draw nourishing spirits and humors to themselves. He explains, “all bodies are *Transpirable* and *Trans-fluxible*, that is, so open to the ayre as that it may easily passe and repasse through them, though not so abundantly as it doth by the winde-pipe” (175). This openness of and within the body allowed the humors and the more rarified spirits of the body to pass in and out of the organs (like the liver) as well as potentially out of the body itself. So, the permeability of the body did not simply extend to the passage of air in and out of the body. Rather, as Sir Francis Bacon noted in his *Sylva Sylvarum* (1625) the body continually emitted spirits, some very light and innocuous, such as odors while others carried infectious emotions. Bacon observes in a section concerning the emission of spirits by the working of the affections or the imagination:

There are conceits, that some men that are of an ill and melancholy nature, do incline the company into which they come, to be sad and ill-disposed; and contrawise, that others that are of a jovial nature, do dispose the company to be merry and chearful... Certainly, it is agreeable to reason, that there are at least some light effluxions from spirit to spirit, when men are in presence one with another, as well as from body to body. (195-203)

These emissions of the spirits, if not resisted, could enter the body and drastically alter its relative health or emotional state. Players, who could create passions within themselves, then could dispose an audience to adopt their emotional attitudes by the transmission and

mingling of spirits. This is the same “coherence of spirits” Falstaff saw in Shallow above, a catching disposition that spread between people like disease (*King Henry IV part II*, V.i.66).

Such emotional power, though it could be seen in other passions, Bacon thought best illustrated in two particular passions. To Bacon, emotions “make the spirits more powerful and active; and especially those affections which draw the spirits into the eyes: which are two; love and envy” (*Sylva* 203). In envy Bacon writes that there is an “ejaculation or irradiation of the eye,” which when turned on another could cause sudden illness, especially if the one looked enviously upon “is beheld in glory or triumph; for that sets an edge upon envy: and besides, at such times the spirits of the person envied do come forth most into the outward parts, and so meet the blow” (*The Works of Francis Bacon* 103-104). The emotionally charged mingling of the spirits may not even happen through a conscious effort on either parties’ part, such was the uncontrolled force of imagination and of passion.

For Marsilio Ficino, whose *Commentary on Plato’s Symposium on Love* (1474) seems to have been well known enough in England for Burton to cite liberally from it, the infectious power of love was a more apt subject than envy in describing the movement of spirits. He explains:

wherever the continuous attention of the soul is carried, there also fly the spirits, which are the chariots, or instruments of the soul. The spirits are produced in the heart from the thinnest part of the blood. The lover’s soul is carried toward the image of the beloved planted in his imagination, and thence toward the beloved

himself. To the same place are also drawn lover's spirits. Flying out there, they are continuously dissipated. (121)

He then warns that without fresh supply, the blood thickens and turns black and melancholic, changing the disposition of the lover. Throughout his work, Ficino demonstrates the movements of the spirits as they enter or leave the body, giving special attention to the same portal Bacon considers most important.

Ficino and Bacon's accounts attest to the primacy of the eye in the exchange of emotionally charged spirits. Even as both agree that the entire human body emits rarified humors or spirits they both quickly reaffirm as Ficino does that the eyes most easily send and receive these spirits. Ficino writes that once the spirits, which he describes as blood in so thin a form as to be an invisible vapor passing from one body to another, have entered the beloved they congeal again and infect the blood already there. For evidence that the blood moves in this manner Ficino observes that "bleary and red eyes, by the emission of their own ray, force the eyes of a beholder nearby to be afflicted with a similar disease. This shows that the ray extends as far as that person opposite, and that along with the ray emanates a vapor of corrupt blood, by the contagion of which the eye of the observer is infected" (160). This infection of the blood has two major effects on the beloved which Ficino explains with the example of the lovers, Lysias and Phaedrus.

First, once in the heart and mingled in the beloved's blood, the foreign blood seeks to return to the body in which it originated causing the beloved to feel a desire to draw ever closer to the body that was the foreign blood's point of origin. Theoretically, because the emission of amorous spirits moves both from Lysias to Phaedrus and Phaedrus to Lysias the bodies of both lovers will mutually seek one another out as if

some part of them is trying to return home again. Secondly, this infection of the blood, carrying with it an impression of the body from whence it came, like a stamp alters the beloved, “so that eventually Lysias will seem to have become like Phaedrus in some colors, or features, or feelings, or gestures” (160-165). Burton concurs with this theory of infectious transformation writing of love that “it gets in at our eyes, pores, nostrils, engenders the same qualities and affections in us, as were in the party whence it came” (85). Love could simultaneously alter behavior and alter the lover’s very body.

Again, while the passions above yielded for the authors a ready framework to describe the movement of emotional infection love and envy were not the only infectious emotions. As Bacon suggested above, the emotions of one radiated out in the form of spirits, altering those around. In the early modern view of emotion the passions not only stirred the humors within, they escaped the body in all directions, potentially infecting all those around them. And as Joseph Roach has observed in *The Player’s Passion*, the stage player was able to manipulate these same forces within and around him. Even if only in a fiction, the actor’s “motions could transform the air through which he moved, animating it in waves of force rippling outward from a center in his soul. His passions, irradiating the bodies of the spectators through their eyes and ears, could literally transfer the contents of his heart to theirs, altering their moral natures” (27). Moving through the stage space and audience were conceived to be invisible yet potent forces containing powerful, infectious emotions able to affect other actors and the audience.

Carla Mazzio, in part to explain the potency of language on the early modern stage, attempts to understand the early modern actor’s ability to touch his audience in context. In doing so she considers the connotations of the word “touch,” specifically its

“affective and physiological forms of receptivity,” based on its root as laid out in 1578 by Thomas Cooper in *Thesvrvs lingvae romanae & britannicae* (Mazzio 160). Cooper takes touch from the root “tango” and lists among its various definitions: “to move or greeue.” For Mazzio the close association of physical touch to emotional touch is important, especially as an anti-theatricalist like Stephen Gosson focuses so much of his attack on theatre’s ability to touch the assembled audience, themselves in close contact with one another. She notes not only Gosson’s accusation that theatre tickles the senses of the assembled but also his point that it “flatters” these senses, which because of its derivation suggests a stroke or a caress (178). For Gosson this evidenced the theatre’s immoral temptations for a pleasure seeking public, but he wasn’t concerned only with theatre’s sensuous appeal, though a considerable portion of his assault is given over to attacking theatre’s ability to “ravish the sense” or to “whet desire.” He makes it quite clear that his concerns run even deeper as he compares, within an abundant mix of metaphors, the public theaters to the Trojan horse, and players to wolves in sheep’s clothing (*Schoole* B6v). Gosson, it would seem, was equally concerned with what this flattering touch carried from the players to the audience as he was with the touch itself.

In fact, many of the anti-theatrical attacks on London’s stages, and even some condemnations from London’s Privy Council, continuously warned of the player’s ability to infect his audience.[†] Taking Mazzio’s cue it seems necessary to look at what connotations “infect” held. Cooper’s definitions show the close association of infection

[†] Examples include Gosson’s *Plays Confuted in Five Actions*, Anthony Munday’s *A Second and Third Blast of Retrait from Plaies and Theaters*, and a polemic which cites the “infectious sight of player” in its subtitle, William Rankin’s *A Mirrour of Monsters*. The Privy Council’s condemnation can be found in: Pollard, Tanya. *Shakespeare's Theater: A Sourcebook*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub, (2004): 317. Print.

with alteration and transformation. He defines infection from the root word *inficio* “to die cloth: to staine: to infecte: to corrupte: to colour,” and adds “Infected: died: stayned: poysoned.” Given the humoral conception of the body with its susceptibility to outside influence from other bodies, to say that the audience at a public theatre risked infection by the players meant that the audience faced possible a bodily alteration that could lead to deadly disease, as either the imbalance of humors could bring on or as Cooper’s association of infection with poison suggests. This interaction between actor and audience could also lead to an alteration of the audience member’s very being, the actors leaving a stamped impression of themselves, not unlike Ficino’s description of a lover’s impression on the beloved, within the audience’s bodies as staining, coloring and corrupting suggest. The power of their passions, to some degree under their direct control, radiated out from their bodies as they moved, shot forth from their lively eyes, and entered into the permeable bodies of the audience, transforming them with an infectious touch. In the context of the above-established idea of the body and Cooper’s definition of infection, players on the early modern stage not only had the power to move their audience, touching them even at a distance. Furthermore, they transformed through infection the bodies that they touched, perhaps irreversibly. This altering touch from the actors troubled anti-theatrical writers deeply, and they centered many of their attacks around the infectiousness of the players at public theaters.

The Great Disorders of Stage Plays

Anti-theatricalist writers and city officials alike concerned themselves with the illicit opportunities that attending the London theaters afforded, often paying special attention to the dangers for the city’s young apprentices and for London’s women. Their

condemnations provide detail to the emerging picture of how emotions were thought to travel between bodies, transforming them. They also define an emotional community with values and norms of expression in direct opposition with those who created or attended the public theatres. Examining this group helps us define by contrast the emotional community that they opposed. Certainly, these attacks can be hyperbolic in demonizing their opponents, but these expressions of their fears and disgust yield insight into the emotional relationship that actors established between themselves and the audience, the experience that the theatre in early modern London provided.

In writing about these “occasions and loadstones to draw people to wickedness,” John Northbrooke closely relates the Theater and the Curtain to the nearby stews and brothels as he insists that they excite lust and teach inordinate desire. With his 1577 *Treatise Against Dicing, Dancing, Plays, and Interludes, with Other Idle Pastimes*, written the year following Burbage’s construction of the Theater, Northbrooke warned that a woman in the company of so many men would be thrust into moral peril for “what safeguard of chastity can there be, where the woman is desired with so many eyes...she must needs fire some, and herself also fired again, and she be not stone; for what mind can be pure and whole among such rabblement, and not spotted with any lust?” He suggested that women avoid such public exposure to mass desire much as Gosson would later advise “if you do but listen to the voice of the fouler, or join looks with an amorous gazer, you have already made yourselves assaultable, and yielded your cities to be sacked,” he adds “Being pensive at home if you to theaters to drive away fancies, it is as good physic, as for the ache of your head to knock out your brains.” Instead, Gosson suggests several activities that the good women of London may do to keep them at home

and isolated, he especially suggests the solitary habit of reading or at the most engaging in sober conference with one's neighbors (Pollard 5-14, *Schoole* F2v-F3v). Anthony Munday lays out what he seems to believe are the certain consequences of women attending the stage plays in his 1580 treatise *A Second and Third Blast of Retreat from Plays and Theaters*. In it he claims that such women "on their death beds with tears confessed that they have received at those spectacles such filthy infections as have turned their minds from chaste cogitations, and made them of honest women light housewives," and the consequences affected both body and soul as it brought "their bodies into sickness, and their soul to the state of everlasting damnation" (Pollard 70).

To these writers, all men, the power of lust filled an audience and they could not imagine a woman venturing into such a crowd without being overcome by it, or infected by it, and so turned to lustful desires herself. Just as the theater's audience was sure to yield willing partners, its environs afforded opportunity. In addition to what has been written about the construction of gender in these tracts, we can see in these tracts a sense that the female body is inherently susceptible to emotionality.[‡] This effeminacy was not limited to women however. Stephen Gosson and William Prynne especially point out that theatre and the players themselves made their audience less masculine and, in their views, more susceptible to emotional contagion. This can be seen in Gosson's previously cited accounts where he shows great concern that London's men no longer have the strength and resolve of their forbearers. Prynne, as will be elaborated on soon, continually refers to the effeminacy of players' gestures and actions and their infectiousness. For these anti-theatricalists the effusion of passions in the public playhouses literally altered the bodies

[‡] See especially: Barish, Jonas A. *Anti-theatrical Prejudice*. London: University of California Press, (1981): 203. Print.

of the audience, opening them wide to the influence of emotion. This inability or unwillingness to govern one's emotions in a public playhouse had political consequences that London officials found dangerous for their potentially revolutionary nature.

A 1574 Act of Common Council, which intended to severely curtail theatrical performances, shows that London officials already strongly disapproved of the droves of citizens spending their time at plays and interludes prior to the first purpose-built, public theaters opening. Laying out the reasons for limiting theatrical performance, the act takes issue with the opportunities for "evil practices of incontinence" due to the adjoining "secret places... and galleries, inveigling and alluring of maids, specially orphans, and good citizens" much like the anti-theatricalist tracts would later complain of, but the act also reveals a concern for the great number of youths often withdrawing from their work as apprentices in order to come to these plays. There they could not only indulge in these same illicit practices but they also might become the cause of "occasions of frays and quarrels," or hear the "uttering of popular busy and seditious matters" (Pollard 305).

The act has a rather wide attack, but the complaint that the corrupting of youths is not only a sexual matter but a politically subversive one echoes Elizabeth I's initial proclamation against playing which forbade those few licensed plays to address "either matters of religion or of the governance of the estate of the commonwealth being no meet matter to be written or treated upon but by men of authority, learning, and wisdom, nor to be handled before any audience but of grave and discreet persons" (Chambers 263). Doubtlessly, the office of the Master of Revels, created to censor the content of plays, reduced the direct criticisms contained in the plays, at least within the official text of the plays. Still, according to the Lord Mayor and the London's aldermen, apprentices and

servants in 1597 associated the playhouse with politically subversive acts. A letter to the Privy Council against stage plays reports that such youths “have confessed unto us that the said stage plays were the very places of their rendezvous appointed by them to meet with such other as were to join with them in their designs and mutinous attempts” (Pollard 321). Even when seditious material was not directly presented on stage, it may have been well known that discontented youths could meet like-minded people in the crowd gathering in and around theaters. Though city officials complained with anti-theatricalists against the sexual liberties associated with public theatres they also saw potential for political destabilization and social disorder in an audience that could be comprised of a large number of angry youths.

In her reexamination of the Elizabethan “Documents of Control,” Barbara Freedman illustrates the correlation between gatherings at public theaters and coinciding riots and prison break-ins while carefully disabusing theatre historians of the idea that the power of the theatrical performances themselves incensed the audience of youths. Though she considers the idea of riot-causing performances something of a doubtful fantasy, Freedman does acknowledge a pattern of theatre closures that correspond to times of public “disorder,” closures that were routinely explained as necessary for public health and the prevention of plague even when no outbreak of plague could be accounted for in city records. She observes:

In theory, any summer presented the possibility of plague, which the English experienced as a late summer, early fall phenomenon. Yet in fact, none of the precautionary playing restraints for the 1580s and 1590s fits the bill. None was

accompanied by the usual precautions taken in times of plague. All, however, coincided with riots and disorder within the week at or near the theaters. (207)

Freedman's essay illustrates what she calls the "recurrent pattern whereby London mayors' requests for playing restraints due to disorder were immediately met with Privy Council documents that impose playing restraints due to plague – when there was demonstrably no threat" and shows that these restraints on players were likely aimed obliquely at either their audience or those that gathered around the theaters as a gathering place prior to riots but were not necessarily audience members themselves (193). It also shows a deep intertwining of concerns about public performance and the language of public health aimed at the "base assemblies" gathering before and near by the open stages. Through these attacks, complaints and restrictions the shape of a targeted emotional community begins to emerge. This community seems to have had in common certain emotional values that conflicted with an emerging austere (if not ascetic) set of normative emotional values, or to borrow William Reddy's term "emotional regime"[§] connected to a powerful political and religious force, but found refuge at the public theatres of early modern London.

In some respects the emotional community that formed within and around theatre goers and practitioners in late sixteenth and early seventeenth century London can be seen by contrast to the stoic emotional values held by groups at odds with (among other things) the emotional tenor of public theaters. Before Peacham ever published the collection of allegorical images that contained the emblem of the ship and the stone under

[§] See: *The Navigation of Feeling: A Framework for the History of Emotions*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2001. Print.

the title “*Nec igne, nec unda,*” Gosson already lamented the loss of manly constancy and resolve in his homeland. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Gosson’s *Schoole of Abuses* remembered through Dio Cassius a construction of the masculine Englishman as one who supposedly endured the pains of all elements, labored with only the most meager nourishments sustaining him, and honored physical strength and agility. He believed that all too often his countrymen were given over to idle delights, led by desire for pleasure to the playhouses where “these outward spectacles effeminate and soften the hearts of men” and from the players who embody this weakness and vulnerability to passions “those impressions of mind are secretly conveyed over to the gazers, which the players do counterfeit on stage... And they that came honest to a play may depart infected” (*Plays Confuted* G4r). At the playhouse Christian masculinity was infected by vice, softened and made effeminate by the display of emotion. In Gosson’s view, the stone face of manly constancy had severely eroded. In his time it desperately needed reconstitution, and the theatre of London was an infectious source of this mass softening.

Gosson was not alone in associating theatre with infections of idleness and femininity. With respect to the effeminating effects of theatre, Jonas Barish has noted that attacks on the theatre have historically been coached with a decidedly anti-feminine rhetoric, femininity being associated with susceptibility to emotions and desires that conflicted with Christian dogma (203). This rhetoric ultimately aimed at condemning the idle dalliances and the indulging in worldly pleasure associated with players, something that women were supposedly either more inclined to by a nature “much infected with vice” (Pollard 9), or at least more prone to due to an supposed inherent susceptibility to outside influence as Bacon claimed. He wrote that women’s minds and spirits were as

susceptible as those of children when it came to the kind of emotional infection of spirits he wrote of in *Sylva Sylvarum* (196). Open to the world, as were all humoral bodies, yet somehow less capable of mitigating external influences, the female body was thought to be particularly in need of internal governance and regulation to keep the humors and their corresponding passions in balance, a subject more thoroughly dealt with in Gail Kern-Paster's *The Body Embarrassed*.

While the anti-theatrical discourse of London's late sixteenth and early seventeenth century reinforced this image of feminine weakness with repeated condescension like Gosson's separate section of *The School Abuse*, addressed to the gentlewomen of London (F1v), it also shows a particularly persistent concern that play going made men more like "the weaker vessel" by a form of transference. In addition to Gosson's claims that the players effeminate their audiences, regular warnings that cited Old Testament proscriptions dogged the theatre. These admonitions of clothing told of the abominable dangers of young boys and men not only in women's attire but also adopting their habits and gestures. Yet the attacks did not limit themselves to the consequences of confusing the external signs of gender. Accusations also cropped up that players, on the whole labeled as effeminate, purposefully moved passions in their audience and in so doing they infected their audience with this same emotionality typically associated with femininity.

The vehement Puritan Thomas Beard, one time the schoolmaster for Oliver Cromwell, makes just such an objection in his *The Theatre of God's Judgments*. His 1597 work objects to the theatre and plays of his time stating that they have:

no other use but to deprave and corrupt good manners, and open the door to all uncleanness. The ears of young folk are there polluted...their eyes are there infected with many lascivious and unchaste gestures and countenances; and their wits are there so stained and imbrued with so pernicious liquor that (except God's good grace) they will ever savor it.

And he reasserts that theatre has “no other purpose but to make the people idle, effeminate, and voluptuous” (Pollard 167). Only two years later John Rainolds reaffirmed the dangers of theatre, likening the transformation that occurred there to disease once again. He notes in his *The Overthrow of Stage-Plays* that during the theatrical event “senses are moved, affections are delighted, hearts though strong and constant are vanquished by such players,” then adding “an effeminate stage-player, while he feigneth love, imprinteth wounds of love” (18). He continues with a declaration that none can venture before the open stage without risk of infection saying “the manners of all spectators commonly are hazarded by the contagion of theatrical sights” (162-163). This intertwining of the language of infection and the perceived “effeminating” of the playhouse audiences by players continued for decades eventually being propounded by one of the most adamant (or at least most verbose) anti-theatricalists prior to the 1642 ordinance that closed London's theatres, William Prynne.

Prynne had already declared his concerns about the state of London in his time, showing a particular distaste for the “effeminacy of long hair in men,” when he began writing his more than one thousand page assault on players and playing (Pollard 279). With *Histiriomastix: The Player's Scourge*, Prynne displays a particular fear of femininity in players and consequently the audiences at the public theaters. He rails on

the effeminacy of stage players at every opportunity, an effeminacy that he is careful to remind the reader is not found only in those young boys playing women's roles but also "sometime in their masculine parts" (Prynne 171). He targets especially those players with amorous parts whose playing he describes as especially full of life, though he dares not fully describe how lively they play "for fear it should infect, not mend reader" (166). The power of the infectious, effeminate actions of actors Prynne thought so powerful that even describing them carried a trace (if diminished) of the player's plague in written description.

In Prynne's view the actors "emasculate, metamorphose, and debase their noble sex... affectedly, to unman, unchristian, uncreate themselves... and all to no end but this: to exhilarate a confluence of unchaste, effeminate, vain companions" (172). Prynne's fixation on the effeminacy seems to represent a deep-seated fear of a chaotic emotionalism associated with femininity overthrowing what is in this construction a masculine rationality, a revolt of carnal pleasure over sober, Christian reason. His attack, as Barish observes, may be "pathological," but it is also merely the extreme example of resentment and anxiety that was nonetheless present in early seventeenth century London (85-88).

The plays themselves Prynne found could be acceptable in certain circumstances. While he railed against the public theaters he did concede in his prologue that the play text itself might fruitfully be read and even acted among students, but he also laid out several limitations including that neither female roles nor effeminacy be included in either the play or the performance of it. Indeed, anti-theatricalists before Prynne also show ambivalence toward the value of the play text itself, but for the most part agree that

the theatrical event itself is the primary source of corruption and danger. Michael O'Connell observes that even the fictions these plays were derived from did not become the source of comparable attacks. These indictments of playing O'Connell attributes to "a deep suspicion of the powerful visual appeal of theater" (11, 16). It should also be pointed out, however, that these attacks focus on a collective emotional experience rather than the solitary experience that reading provides. The anti-theatricalists repeatedly anchor their attacks on the presence of others' bodies, their gestures, voices and passions inherent in the theatrical experience. The presence of the player that alters himself and through an infectious touch alters the audience presents the central problem. The visual appeal that O'Connell points to is powerful because of the enacted passions that accompany the spectacle and make it a shared emotional experience. If the fictions themselves, the particular content of the plays and the stories they derived from, were of less concern than the playing itself, then these arguments are primarily with the mode of representation. The plays themselves, which were fundamentally an enacted and shared emotional experience, were the problem.

Prynne targeted the presence of an actor's body and the base assembly that they performed when he wrote that "Stage-playes may be privately read over without any danger of infection by ill company, without publike infamy or scandal... or without participating with them [the players] in their sinnes." For Prynne this is because

Stageplayes may be read without using or beholding any effeminate amorous, lustfull gestures... when a man reads a Play, he ever wants that *viva vox*, that flexanimous rhetoricall Stage-elocution, that lively action and representation of the Players themselves which put life and vigor into these their Enterludes, and

make them pierce more deeply into the Spectators eyes, their eares and lewde affections, precipitating them on to lust. (930-931)

The presence of actors and the crowd they drew provided the potential for emotional infection. Their lively display of passions, more than the words of the play text itself, held the potential for a physical corruption of the audience. The actors alter their bodies, practice to stir their own passions, and in so doing do more than teach the audience to do the same to themselves, they infect their audience. Players could overwhelm the masculine rationality Prynne so prized, throwing the audience into the chaos of their own permeable bodies, tossed like Peacham's ship on a sea of passion. Like Gosson and others before him Prynne demanded that good Christians not hazard their souls for the sake of indulging this communal pleasure and at all costs avoid exposure to this player's plague by occupying themselves in solitary activity or in serious religious pursuits that end in more internalized emotions or at least are directed at a divine object.

The anti-theatricalists of early modern London made it very clear that their assault on public theatres was aligned with a more or less specific religious dogma, primarily a Protestant, sometimes Puritan, Christianity. From this source grew a work ethic that is often cited as being a necessity in the emerging capitalist society and a corner stone of both religious and civic complaints against theatre. After all, the public theaters didn't just draw people away from religious observation, they pulled young apprentices from their work when a functioning economy required a dedicated core of workers. From this same source combined with a growing academic and philosophical interest in classical writings, including those from stoic philosophers, also comes a set of emotional values filtered through philosophers and church leaders that similarly formed a basis for anti-

theatrical writing. Usually this found expression in some form of dividing the human being into mind (the seat of reason) and body (source of desires and passions), or the soul into corporeal aspects and immortal aspects as Wright and Burton have implied above. In between was a continual warfare of the kind Prynne described with the body always threatening to overwhelm the mind. For the most part these emotional mores called for a stifling of passions, the aristocratic mind, “Princesse in her throne” controlling the base body with its passions and senses “like two naughty servants, who oft-times beare more one to another, then they are obedient to their Master” (Wright 8-9). They did not, however, always necessitate complete abstinence from feeling. Rather, while most passions had to be in some manner controlled, those passions that were directed toward a divine end could be more freely indulged. Typically this manifested in adoring love of God or fear of the same, but charity and compassion toward fellow human beings also comprised ways of emotionally relating to others. Still, the emotional relationships between humans were highly suspect as they could easily lose their religious tinge or be bogged down in corporeal desires.

In *Plays Confuted* (1582) Gosson complains that playwrights and players alike dedicate themselves to subverting the emotional governance that good Christian citizens should strive for. He writes, “the poets that write plays, and they that present them upon the stage, study to make our affections overflow, whereby they draw the bridle from that part of the mind that should ever be curbed, from running on ahead: which is manifest treason to our souls” (F1v). The emotionalism on display at the public theaters doesn’t simply set a bad example for its audience, the overflow infects their behavior and confounds their own ability to govern their emotions in a manner befitting Gosson’s

construction of a Christian emotional ideal. Theatre allows the audience to indulge their passions, allowing delight in the bodily emotions that are ever in danger of overriding the mind and corrupting the immortal aspect of the soul, but Gosson claims:

a Christian knoweth how to delight in death... as Christ died, and after ascended up to heaven, so he persuaded us to die, that is to mortify this flesh with the delights thereof, and to seek after those things that are above... Our life is not his except we crucify the flesh, with affections and concupiscences of the same; we crucify not the affections of the flesh when we resort unto plays to stir them up, therefore running to plays we live to ourselves, and not to Christ. (F7v-F8r)

Gosson's comments resonate with Wright's reasoning for writing his *Passions of the Minde*. Wright made it very clear that he wrote about passions for the benefit of those who could, in his opinion benefit productively from knowledge of the passions or use his text to learn how to be ruled by reason rather than passion.

For Wright then the proper use of his information on passions is largely restricted to physicians who could use it to diagnose humoral imbalances in their patients or Christian orators who are among the very few who Wright deems responsible enough to move passions in themselves and others because Wright believes these men (for the most part Preachers of one kind or other) will do so for the purpose of directing emotions toward divine rather than mortal objects. Otherwise, his work is largely dedicated to the restraint of passions. He therefore dedicates his second chapter to outlining the "Meanes to mortifie Passions," in which he advises ways to moderate passions and chasten one's "rebellious flesh." Amongst the various proscriptions in this chapter Wright advises the reader to avoid occasions where passions may be excited, especially being in the

company of others who do not attempt to bridle their affections. Equating emotion with disease he writes: “he that willingly without necessity dealeth with infected persons, may blame himself if he fall into their diseases: so he that is given to laciviousnesse, and useth riotous company, may condemne his owne wilfulnesse, if his passions rebel and overcome him.” In this same section Wright also notes that certain emotions are acceptable, but as a general rule he advises the reader to avoid those passions that “Nature more than willingly would follow” (83). For Wright, only a select few can be entrusted to play with their passions; others must realize that they are naturally inclined to passions that tether them to worldly desire, corporeal delight or otherwise mortal objects and resist the pull of emotion. Of course, Wright does not directly attack theatre in his work, and perhaps his close association with Ben Jonson, who wrote a sonnet in praise of the author to preface *Passions of the Minde*, shows that Wright wasn’t entirely against plays and players.

In this particular Christian emotional value-set humans are constantly imperiled, in danger of being led astray by earthly passion and desire. Since, in this view, most people have difficulty or are entirely incapable of distinguishing those emotions which are beneficial and those which bring them to vice, the many of the above writers suggested that it would be best for most to actively suppress emotion and avoid occasions that make it possible for passions to overcome one’s reason, an expression of a larger emotional regime that would assert further control over people’s lives in the coming civil war, especially those for whom the public theatre figured prominently. A good Christian within this somber emotional community should not willingly venture to a place like the

public theatre where players purposefully excite the passions in themselves and others and where one would risk infection by the company surrounding the stage.

An Emotional Refuge

Those that willingly go to the theaters seem to have been seeking what Reddy has termed an “emotional refuge,” a place where people can engage in the relaxation of prevalent emotional norms, particularly those of an emotional regime (Reddy 129). There, emotions could be openly displayed and reciprocated within the large assembly that comprised the audience. Emotional restraint could be lifted, even if for only the span of a few hours. In the view of the growing emotional regime though the players and the audience were purposefully or negligently exposing themselves to an emotional infection that threatened to destabilize the positions of those invested in that same regime. For example, repeatedly in the attacks on theatre the writers make reference to what must have been a popular defense of theatre at the time. That is, young people drawn away from church services in favor of a playhouse claimed repeatedly that “by the preacher they may be edified, but by the player both edified and delighted” (Munday 91). Appalled anti-theatricalists regularly attacked this axiom in all its variations, but it took root in the theatre. Often playwrights built the defense of theatre into the play’s text. As the player in Thomas Randolph’s *The Muses’ Looking Glass* claims when confronted by a pair of Puritans trying to convert him by condemning his lifestyle:

There has been more by us in some one play
Laugh’d into wit and virtue, than hath been
By twenty tedious lectures drawn from sin
And foppish humors. (Klein 87)

Or as Shakespeare notes in *The Taming of the Shrew*, “No profit grows where is no pleasure ta’en” (I.i.39). In a sense, players threatened to supplant preachers as fountainheads for popular morals and edification. Players presented the same profit while simultaneously satisfying an emotional need for delight. This notion repulsed the anti-theatricalist writers who typically claimed that no good message could come from a play, or at best a moral kernel could only be polluted by the context and manner with which it was expressed. The argument grew great enough to concern officials like The Lord Mayor John Whitgift who wrote to the Archbishop of Canterbury concerning the troubles that theaters presented the city with in 1592, and city officials did impress strictures on playing that meant to ensure that plays would not conflict with church services, though this apparently resulted only in many leaving prayer early to ensure that they got to the plays on time, running “straight from prayer to plays, from God’s service to the devil’s” according to the Privy Council (Pollard 317). Within an increasingly stern emotional environment the public theatres allowed for release and shared expression. In many cases this may have been as simple as the rush of a loud communal (contagious) laugh.

Alternately, as seen above, the theaters provided the gathering grounds, or at least the excuse to gather, for large groups of disaffected youths. While Freedman may be correct in contending the doubtfulness that the plays presented actually stirred revolt, it may also have been that the kind of shared emotional experience found in the public theaters and in riot were linked in the minds of the youths that gathered there. The theatre produced the basis for an emotional community with the common value of mass resonant emotional experience, an emotional experience that may have solidified an otherwise disparate group. Certainly, various city officials made such a link between “players &

plays, & the disorders which follow thereupon” through the late sixteenth century, a connection they closely intertwined with the language of infection (Chambers 308). This emotional community that valued shared emotional experience then also threatened to spread social unrest. The physician William Clowes’ treatise on Morbus Gallicus (Syphilis) seems to suggest that London’s upper classes risked infection from such groups too.

Clowes, of course, is writing about a biological infection rather than an emotional one, but his treatment of Syphilis suggests a prejudice against London’s base poor that resonates with notions of emotional infection. Clowes admits that the disease does seem to be spread often by sex with “uncleane women,” but because the genitals of many persons infected with the disease showed no signs of it while other parts of the body did, he concluded that the disease can be just as accurately attributed to the company one keeps. As such, he states:

to the great danger of the common wealth, and the staine of the whole nation: the cause whereof, I see none so great as the licentious, and beastly disorder of a great number of rogues, and vagabondes: the filthy life of many lewd and ideal persons, both men, and women, about the citye of London, and the great number of lewd alehouses, which are very nests and harbourers of such filthy creatures: By meanes of which disordered persons, some other of better disposition are many times infected, and many more like to be. (Bi-Bii)

While Clowes doesn’t write directly about the public theatres the accusations very closely resemble those of anti-theatricalists, especially when Clowes makes it clear that he did not intend for his treatise to help cure people when they were afflicted only to have the

newly cured rush back to old habits and haunts. He recommends that the reader amend their life and restrict the company they keep as a measure of prevention. Not only did this emotional community threaten the religious order, it threatened to corrode social order. To those concerned with its danger the theatre was corrupting a generation of youths to seek emotional excess, to lose respect for their social superiors and reject the road to salvation that required abstinence from the same and redemption through work. It made men effeminate and women immodest, and it threatened to become a church of passions all its own where, among other things, a different set of emotional values reigned.

With the regular closures of theaters for the purpose of stopping the spread of plague, even when little evidence suggests that this was always the root reason for the closure, the metaphor *theatre is plague* became less and less figurative. That the infection theatre presented was figured as one of conflicting emotional values with a growing emotional regime is perhaps best evidenced in the 1642 “Ordinance of the Lords and Commons” which closed down London’s theaters for nearly twenty years:

And whereas public sports do not well agree with public calamities, nor public stage plays with the seasons of humiliation, this being an exercise of sad and pious solemnity, and the other being spectacles of pleasure, too commonly expressing lascivious mirth and levity: it is therefore thought fit and ordained by the Lords and commons in this Parliament assembled, that while these sad causes and set times of humiliation do continue, public stage plays shall cease and be foreborne. (Pollard 333)

With the Puritan emotional regime securely in power (for a time) the expressions of emotion that the playhouses cultivated did not fit with the ruling emotional tenor of sad

solemnity. The closure of theatres, while certainly an enforcement of a moral code, also imposed an emotional value system that did not tolerate collective mirth.

Prior to the 1642 closure there was a definite emotional community that held as a primary value the collective experience of emotion. This preference for experiencing mass emotions, transferred from the stage into and among the audience, made them highly suspicious to moral and civic authorities. This did not stop a large segment of the population from attending these plays in droves and on a very regular basis.** This emotional community exerted its desires on the theatre artists of the time. In the next section this study will begin to outline how these artists metaphorically conceptualized emotional contagion and how they may have fulfilled a demand for shared emotional experience through infection. Exploring Shakespeare's use of the language of infection this dissertation will begin to draw some conclusions about how metaphor shaped the relationship between actor and audience as well as how this relationship was established and maintained by the actors.

Take Thou Some New Infection to the Eye

The jealous Kately in Ben Jonson's *Every Man in His Humor* gives some evidence that the playwrights of late sixteenth and early seventeenth century London were not unfamiliar with the association of passions with infectious disease, nor were they reluctant to use the metaphor. His wife calling him in before he falls ill, Kately begins a jealous rant to the audience:

A new disease! I know not, new or old,

** For statistics see: Gurr, Andrew. *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004.

But it may well be call'd poor mortals' plague;
For, like a pestilence, it doth infect
The houses of the brain. First it begins
Solely to work upon the phantasy,
Filling her seat with such pestiferous air,
As soon corrupts the judgment; and from thence,
Sends like contagion to the memory:
Still each to other giving the infection.
Which as a subtle vapour spreads itself
Confusedly through every sensitive part,
Till not a thought or motion in the mind
Be free from the black poison of suspect.
Ah! but what misery is it to know this?
Or, knowing it, to want the mind's erection
In such extremes? Well, I will once more strive,
In spite of this black cloud, myself to be,
And shake the fever off that thus shakes me. (I.iii.55-72)

And in both *Massacre at Paris* and the first part of *Tamburlaine the Great* Christopher Marlowe makes reference to infections of grief (I.iii.26-29; V.i.258). Still, Marlowe makes comparatively little use of the metaphor of emotion as infectious and Jonson's comedies show that he is more interested with distempered humors contained within individuals for the purpose of satire and perhaps purgation rather than the spread of those emotional imbalances between people. In determining whether the metaphors of *theatre*

as infectious or *emotion as infection* shaped the theatrical event from within, William Shakespeare perhaps provides the most ready and rich evidence.

While London experienced periodic outbreaks of plague, taking a heavy toll on the population, and both anti-theatrical critics and civic authorities increasingly employed the language of disease when attacking London's theaters, Shakespeare used especially potent metaphors of infection to describe passions and emotional exchange for an audience deeply enmeshed in the reality of that metaphor. Although often used to describe amorous passions in Shakespeare's work he did not limit his use of the language of infection to these emotions. Ulysses, for example, describes a crippling fever of envy, disdain and disaffection in the Athenian army that keeps their troops too weak to conquer Troy in *Troilus and Cressida*. The source of this fever that has infected so many of their soldiers Ulysses explains as the contemptuous Achilles in his tent. This disdain manifests theatrically when Achilles calls on Patroclus to, "like a strutting Player" mimic the Greek generals for his amusement (I.iii.535-595). Achilles and Patroclus spread this emotion to the surrounding camp, rendering the army incapable of military success. Fear spreads contagiously throughout Act I Scene iv of *Richard III*. First from Clarence, terrified by his dream, to his keeper who exclaims "No marvel Lord, though it affrighted you, / I am afraid (me thinks) to hear you tell it" (I.iv.900-901). Then this fear infects one hired murderer and spreads to the other as they debate whether or not to kill Clarence.

More prominently, the infectious spread of amorous emotions pervades in Shakespeare's work. Following her first meeting with a disguised Viola, Olivia finds herself overcome with passions that are difficult to calm. She asks:

Even so quickly may one catch the plague?
Methinks I feel this youth's perfections
With an invisible and subtle stealth
To creep in at mine eyes. (*Twelfth Night*. I.v.298-301)

Her language not only echoes the previously discussed theories of the movement of passions, she also constructs an infection of love that, while different in tone, recalls Gosson's warnings that actors, by exciting the senses with their effeminate gestures and pleasing voices, "slip down into the heart, and with gunshot of affection gall the mind, here reason and virtue should rule the roost" (*Schoole* B6v-B7r). *Love's Labours Lost* makes even more out of likening love to disease. Following the first meeting between the King of Navarre and the Princess of France the lord Boyet comments:

If my observation (which very seldom lies
By the hearts still rhetoric, disclosed with eyes)
Deceive me not now, Navarre is infected.
Princess: With what?
Bo: With that which we Lovers entitle affected.
Prin: Your reason.
Bo: Why all his behaviors doe make their retire,
To the court of his eye, peeping through desire.
His heart like an Agot with your print impressed,
Proud with his form, in his eye pride expressed...
All senses to that sense did make their repair,
To feel onely looking on fairest of faire:

Me thought all his senses were locked in his eye. (II.i.732-746)

Later, Berowne, who has already confessed to being “sick at the heart” for Rosaline and subject to “a plague” imposed by Cupid (II.i.677-681, III.i.967-968), confesses:

bear with me, I am sick.

Ile leaue it by degrees: Soft, let us see,

Write *Lord have mercie on us*, on those three,

They are infected, in their hearts it lies:

They have the plague, and caught it of your eyes:

These Lords are visited, you are not free:

For the Lords tokens on you do I see. (V.ii.2350-2356)

Here, Berowne overtly references the quarantine practices of Elizabethan London in which the homes of families who had members thought to be afflicted with plague were marked on their doors with “Lord have mercie on us” to let others know to avoid the home. As well, the jealous Leontes of *The Winter’s Tale* believes that he sees the reciprocal infection of love between his wife and dear friend, the king of Bohemia. He rants to Camillo:

Were my wife's liver

Infected as her life, she would not live

The running of one glass.

Camillo: Who does infect her?

Leontes: Why, he that wears her like her medal, hanging

About his neck, Bohemia. (I.ii.401-405)

Though his overpowering jealousy has caused him to misinterpret what he sees between Hermione and Polixenes, Leontes paints a picture of adulterous love couched in the language of emotional contagion.

Often the anti-theatricalists condemned these very displays of love on the stage for their contagious effect on the audience. As with Gosson's previously mentioned example of Ariadne and Bacchus, the performance of love bound not only the performers together in emotional desire, the whole of the audience was infected with their passion.

Shakespeare not only acknowledges the infectiousness of passions, he draws attention to it by repeated use of metaphors of emotional contagion. This dissertation proposes that the emotional community within the audience sought the opportunity to experience collective emotion with one another and with the players. Gosson condemned exactly what the audience may have expected, what Shakespeare provided. Given the prevalence of metaphors of emotional contagion in Shakespeare's work, the playwright appears to have been very aware of the conceptualizations of passions and their movements outlined above. This conception of emotion pervades his plays and may well have had a pervasive influence on the playing itself. This dissertation will begin to theorize about how this embedded metaphor of *emotion as infection* shapes the expected relationship between actor and audience along with the acting style. Potentially, contemporary performances of Shakespeare's works will benefit from a deepened understanding of what might be called an infectious mode of performance built in to his plays, a way of engaging the audience through emotional contagion.

Much of what was attempted on the early modern public stages required the engagement of the audience for the simple purpose of imaginatively filling in the gaps of

a relatively sparse stage as *Henry V*'s self-conscious chorus evidences. More than this, Robert Weimann notes in *Shakespeare and the Popular Tradition in the Theater* that the relationship established and tended to throughout the performance was integral to the function of the play itself. The players and their playwrights constructed meaning through the interplay of actor and audience (7). Weimann explores the relationship between actor and audience largely to expose the social dimensions of theatre, how theatre spoke about and shaped the society that created it. Looking into this same relationship we can also deepen our understanding of an emotional community that valued infectious emotion and both created and supported the public theaters to supply exactly that.

Michael Drayton's "Sonnet 1605" paints the picture of watching a play "With those the thronged Theaters that press" where "in heat of blood a modest mind might move: / With shouts and claps at every little pause, / When the proud round on every side hath rung" (Drayton 48). While his sonnet ultimately describes his feeling of solitude within the crowd it also clearly shows an audience accustomed to making their presence known and in so doing participating in the theatrical event. The crowd surrounding the stage appears to react as one organism, voicing its approval of the play. In this collective one may drop out of the emotional participation but may more easily be swept up into it. The very visible, very audible presence of an audience giving immediate feedback to the actor's performance most certainly affected the performance as well as the actor's relationship with the audience, something that John Stephens derides in his description of a "common player." Amongst his complaints Stephens notes how often the player will break the illusionistic presentation of a scene and direct his lines to the audience for the purpose of inciting a response stating that "When he doth hold conference upon the stage;

and should look directly in his fellows face he turns about his voice into the assembly for applause-sake, like a Trumpeter in the fields, that shifts places to get an echo” (Chambers 256). This very complaint may give some insight into an expectation of the acting on the public stages aiming to fulfill the demands of an audience that values collective feeling within the audience over the illusion of reality on stage. Perhaps in this kind of interaction lies the kind of infectious mode of performance that periodically broke through the enacted fiction with the specific purpose of creating collective audience response, an “echo.” Presumably, any actor could make such a break in the action, but the practice is most readily apparent in the characters whose traditional function was to sustain a direct rapport with the audience. For this reason the related roles of the Clown and the Vice will be explored below.

Hamlet warns the visiting troupe against the behavior of perhaps the most infectious players, the clowns that “will themselves laugh, to / set on some quantity of barren spectators to laugh / too” (III.ii.977-981). Indeed, by many accounts these performers were far more beholden to the audience’s mirth than even the text of the play itself. The famous clowns Tarlton and Kemp, for example, had no qualms with adding to the text for the purpose of stirring laughter or stopping it all together as Tarlton was reported to have done. The clown would apparently drop character and scene and, as Tarlton the performer, single out an audience member to ridicule for the purpose of humoring the rest of the audience (Halliwell-Phillipps 14-15). The clown could deftly maneuver between the illusion of the scene and bridge the divide between performers and audience. That the improvising clown was so prevalent is perhaps best seen in the Cambridge student play *The Pilgrimage to Parnassus* during which a clown is literally

dragged on stage and told “Why, what an ass art thou? Dost thou not know a play cannot be without a clown? Clowns have been thrust into plays by head and shoulders, ever since Kemp could make a scurvy face” (Mann 55). To the occasional chagrin of the playwright, the audience demanded this manner of rapport. They not only expected mirth, they expected it to come from a performer with only one foot in the already easily seen through illusion of the on stage fiction.

Shakespeare’s particular blend of this character, Weimann notes, in part came from the traditional Vice character of morality plays (22). The player in the Vice role was “able to establish a direct rapport with the audience and maintain the performance through any mishaps, as well as exploiting any opportunities for spontaneous fun that might present themselves” (Mann 22). He could erase the distance between the audience and the on stage action by ensuring that the audience was, in a sense, part of the play. Weimann suggests throughout his work several ways that Vice maintains this engagement of the audience including not only direct address but the kind of wordplay that “corrupts more than words: it corrupts, as it were, the dramatic illusion of conversation. The result is not merely verbal in nature: it affects the actor’s relation to both the scene and the audience” (150). The word play used by the Vice invites the audience to see both the fictional reality of the scene and, through the double meaning, deepen the connection with the witty character.

Of course, Weimann also observes that the clowns were not the only descendents of the traditional Vice character as even though he does so within a tragic context, Shakespeare’s Richard III assumes many of the Vice’s attributes: his tongue-in-cheek wordplay, his direct engagement of the audience, and his intentional breeches of morality

all echo the Vice (160). Gloucester even likens himself to this role in an interaction with his nephew the young prince:

Richard: So wise, so young, they say doe never live long.

Prince. What say you Uncle?

Rich: I say, without Characters, Fame lives long.

Thus, like the formal Vice, Iniquity,

I moralize two meanings in one word. (III.i.1658-1662)

Through this character, himself a “diffused infection of a man” (I.ii.246) we may see the possibility of a mode of acting shaped by metaphors of infection.

From the moment the play begins Gloucester sweeps the audience into his confidence, making his disquiet our own with a string of “our”s:^{††}

Now is the winter of our discontent

Made glorious summer by this sun of York;

And all the clouds that lour'd upon our house

In the deep bosom of the ocean buried.

Now are our brows bound with victorious wreaths;

Our bruised arms hung up for monuments;

Our stern alarums changed to merry meetings,

Our dreadful marches to delightful measures. (I.i.1-8)

and turning the audience into his coconspirators as he entices us with hints of the deadly “plots” he has set into motion. He invites us to watch and enjoy his cunning and skilled deception, and as his plans fall into place he both invites the audience to share his pride

^{††} It may be noted that this is his somewhat premature use of a royal “we,” but the effect could also be characterized as his functionally conspiring with the audience.

and entices them with the promise of future mischief as he does after overcoming Lady Anne's contempt. He provokes the audience asking, "Was ever woman in this humour woo'd? / Was ever woman in this humour won? / I'll have her, but I will not keep her long" (I.ii.425-427). Gloucester does not only maintain this connection with the audience via direct addresses, but like the Vice he doubles the meaning of his words in a way designed to draw attention to the secret knowledge shared by the audience and himself. As if with a bloody smile and wink to the knowing audience Gloucester reassures Clarence "Well, your imprisonment shall not be long" (I.i.117). Even talking to other characters he seems to "hold interlocutions with the audients" as clowns were so often accused of doing.^{‡‡} Gloucester is not the sealed off, individualistic character that Weimann describes as being so trapped within their egos that they are incapable of relating to "the plebian audience and its collective understanding of the world" (237). Gloucester encourages a collective emotional response in the audience with himself as the provocateur of bloody-minded passions.

Perhaps yielding some insight on early modern constructions of the relationship between actor and audience Bridget Escolme contrasts two contemporary performances by Anthony Sher. The first she finds "strangely cold" as Sher plays a Leontes turned in on himself for almost the entire performance. She compares this to a performance of Macbeth which she finds by far more engaging. Sher's Macbeth "takes every opportunity to address us directly, shares with us what even Lady Macbeth must not know, pulls us into his deed without a name by confiding, confronting, joking with us." This Macbeth Escolme ultimately finds difficult to judge him because "I feel partially responsible for

^{‡‡} See: Brome, Richard. *The Antipodes*. II.ii.

the figure he becomes in the act of performing to me” (3-4). Sher establishes an emotionally charged and direct relationship with the audience. He engages them, stirring in them emotions resonant with his own so that by his downfall Escolme is not wholly relieved at his death as she feels his transgressions are partly her own.

We cannot know for certain whether, for example, Richard Burbage’s Richard III invited the audience to take part in every murderous moment like Escolme reports of Sher’s conspiratorial Macbeth. However, the direct provocations of the audience written into *Richard III* make this a compelling possibility. It also seems likely that there was an awareness, at least on the playwright’s part, that Richard III could be an emotionally infectious character. Certainly, Lady Anne is aware of the contagiousness of Gloucester in the second scene of the play. In their confrontation commands him, “Out of my sight! Thou dost infect my eyes.” To this he returns “Thine eyes, sweet lady, have infected mine” (I.ii.331). Given the perceived movement of spirits in early modern London, Gloucester’s very presence could be conceptualized as constantly emitting malice, infecting others, altering their natures or making them fearful of him. He then feigns love to Lady Anne, winning her over with this false display of love and repentance where logical argument could not. It is as if his simulated emotions creep into her, alter her or at least weaken her resolve against him. Anne’s sudden shift at the end of this scene seems difficult to justify based on our contemporary conceptions of psychological behavior, but perhaps he wins her over by infecting her spirits. And his seduction does not stop there. He may stir also a bloody excitement in the bodies of the audience, infecting us with his own emotionalism. In this light, “direct address” seems rather lacking as a description of the actor’s work. From the moment we see him he invites us to feel his discontent and

entices us to be party to his deadly devices, and in the early modern view it seems this may not have been seen as done with words and winks alone, but with a creeping emotional contagion, touching the bodies assembled around the stage and potentially altering them from within.

Chapter IV will elaborate on this preliminary outline of the infectious relationship of actor and audience. So far, this dissertation proposes that the passions and their movements from body to body were understood in part through metaphor. Understanding early modern conceptions of infection informs our understanding of the metaphorical structuring *emotions as infectious* and how these notions of emotional contagion in turn shape of theatre. An emotional community that sought shared emotions sustained early modern theatre, and the theatre artists of the time must have found ways of providing this pleasure. An infectious mode of performance, like that seen in *Richard III* or the *Vice/Clowns*, may have been one way of establishing this emotional rapport. If so, portions of these plays were constructed around facilitating this relationship to the audience. Contemporary practitioners can benefit greatly from exploring this relationship, which is based on the metaphorical conceptualization of emotional contagion.

CHAPTER III

A CONTAGIOUS, EMOTIONAL ABERRANCE

On an evening in March, 1933 Anaïs Nin walked through her moonlit garden with the gaunt and mercurial man she describes as the “surrealist whom the surrealists disavowed, the lean, ghostly figure who haunts the cafés”—Antonin Artaud. According to her diary, he was suddenly moved and began talking about the magic around them that night. Soon he wanted to talk to her about theatre, which she notes for him was “a place to shout pain, anger, hatred, to enact violence in us” where a “violent life can burst from terror and death.” She writes that soon:

He talked about the ancient rituals of blood. The power of contagion. How we have lost the magic of contagion. Ancient religion knew how to enact rituals which made faith and ecstasy contagious. The power of ritual was gone. He wanted to give this to the theatre. Today nobody could share a feeling with anybody else. And Antonin Artaud wanted the theatre to accomplish this... He wanted to shout so people would be roused to fervor again, to ecstasy.

In her diary, Nin confesses that while she listened to him she wondered whether, rather than the contagiousness of ritual, people had simply lost the capacity to feel at all. Instead of expressing this, she remarked to Artaud, “In my world of hallucinations I am happy,” to which Artaud replied “I cannot even say that. It is torture for me. I make superhuman efforts to awake” (186-187). This conversation took place two years after the colonial

exhibition that brought a Balinese dance troupe to Paris. Artaud saw there the series of traditional Balinese dances that inspired him with a notion of what he believed Western theatre had lost and must reclaim based on what he interpreted from their performance. At the time of their conversation, Artaud had already written an essay on the Balinese theater, his manifestos in which he proposed a Theatre of Cruelty and much of the material that would eventually be collected into his *The Theater and its Double*. As he and Nin walked through the garden, Artaud, lamented the loss of the magical contagiousness of emotions in theatre. He may have still been formulating and testing out his most powerful metaphor for theatre on Nin. The metaphor that would form the center of the essay Artaud would complete in the next month: *theatre as plague*.

Artaud's work provides a rich example of how metaphor shapes the theatrical event and reflect a practitioner's expectations of performance. Exploring Artaud's use of specific metaphors will provide a way of understanding how Artaud conceptualized the emotional relationship between actor and audience and nuance our sense of how he conceived the function of theatre. His particular use of metaphors of infection will also illuminate why he arrived at certain conclusions about what is required of the actor in performance and the director in shaping the *mise en scène*. In order to come to some conclusions about Artaud's theories it will be important to analyze his metaphors in the context of the emotional communities he was involved with, specifically the emotional values and norms of expression associated with the artistic movements he either took part in or was influenced by. These emotional communities led Artaud to adopt and seek out modes of expression that would be at odds with the prevailing artistic style of his time, especially psychologically grounded realism. These expressions did, however, resonate

with his preferred metaphorical structuring. Seen in conjunction with his metaphorical conceptualizations of theatre, we will have a more detailed picture of the modes of expression that Artaud developed, why he had such difficulty producing the theatre he sought in his time and how other emotional communities received his theatre. First of all, this dissertation will explore his metaphors in an attempt to see how they correlate to his preferred modes of expression and emotional values.

The metaphors of *emotion as contagious* and *theatre as infectious* recur in various forms throughout Artaud's writing as he tries to evoke a theatre that would destroy language laden, discursive and psychological theatre, returning it to what he saw as its "primitive" function. *Theatre as plague* is his oft-cited metaphor, but Artaud also draws on metaphors of magic, fire, magnetism and chains to explain the effect of theatre on spectators. Even when he uses the terms of diseased infection as he does when describing in the essay "The Theater and the Plague" Artaud makes it clear that the plague that concerns him is distinctly independent of the microbial bacilli responsible for the physical disease. In a sense he keeps scientific explanations at bay in favor of keeping plague in a place between magic and metaphor. Following the story of a viceroy of Cagliari who, after having a portentous dream, refused to let the *Grand-Saint-Antoine* dock, Artaud contends that "it cannot be denied that between the viceroy and the plague a palpable communication, however subtle, was established: and it is too easy and explains nothing to limit the communication of such a disease to contagion by simple contact." The plague carried by the *Grand-Saint-Antoine* was able to infect the viceroy with a psychic force that manifested itself as a terrifying vision while he slept. This same psychic force, while powerful, did not result in any physical infection of microbes

because the psychic component, in Artaud's view, affected the viceroy independently of the disease's physical manifestation. There was no physical infection because the psychic infection did not rely on physical contact to spread into its victim. In this event Artaud sees "a malady that would be a kind of psychic entity and would not be carried by a virus" (*The Theatre and Its Double* 17-18), thus the paradigm for his theatre. In "The Theatre and the Plague" he writes:

just as it is not impossible that the unavailing despair of the lunatic screaming in an asylum can cause the plague by a sort of reversibility of feelings and images, one can similarly admit that the external events, political conflicts, natural cataclysms, the order of revolution and the disorder of war, by occurring in the context of the theater, discharge themselves into the sensibility of the audience with all the force of an epidemic. (*Double* 26)

Like the lunatic screaming behind asylum walls, Artaud's actor is "entirely penetrated by feelings that do not benefit or even relate to his real condition" (*Double* 24). They are emotions unrelated to a reality beyond the theatre space. Through a rhythmic and ritualized presentation, his *mise en scène* weaves together powerfully vibratory sounds, intense visual effects, and actors who move, not as copies of psychologically grounded behaviors, but as living "hieroglyphs." The actors in conjunction with this pulsing space were to create a force that assaults the spectator's psyche and flesh in one, transferring its contents into their psyches through physical sensation. The wars and cataclysms of the *mise en scène* create a separate reality in the theatre, not an illusion of reality, whose force infects the audience and makes them experience a metaphysical transformation. Artaud's use of magic, fire, magnetism and chains often reflects this same sense of a

psychic or metaphysical transference between the actor, the *mise en scène* and the spectator. This constellation of metaphors comprises the overarching metaphor of *theatre as contagious*. However, *theatre as plague* became the most influential of Artaud's recurring metaphors, ultimately shaping his proposed theatre.

Christopher Innes helpfully constructs Artaud as a “theatrical litmus” more than an innovator. He was “sensitive to the cultural physiology of the twentieth century” (93), and this dissertation will add to *the emotional tenor* of the early avant garde. His desire to create a revelatory metaphysical experience through ritualized gesture, emotional masks and forceful incantation for an audience being smothered by civilization and reason has its roots in the early avant garde. His contemporaries, even when they clashed ideologically, typically shared corresponding modes of emotional expression. He had an audience that shared and even emulated his emotional values as the actor and director Jean-Louis Barrault did. Paule Thevenin recounts that even in his later life, during his nine-year internment in a series of asylums, Artaud had an emotional community that did not consider him sick and even accepted the term “eccentric” grudgingly. As a young man Henri Pichette and his friends would visit Ivry where Artaud lived after being released from Rodez and where he would teach the young men about using their “screaming boxes” (throats). As best they could they would imitate his gestures and vocal patterns. In the documentary footage of *Artaud: The True Story of Artaud the Momo*, Pichette reads his “Poem Presented Beyond Time to Antonin Artaud” and in him some trace of Artaud's emotionalism (his tight growls, his spitting, percussive words, his tense gestures that alternately wave in rigid lines or curve inward as if to tear at his skin or pull

open his ribcage) yet lives.* Despite a dedicated following of friends and fellow artists embracing or emulating him, Artaud was not able to construct a theatrical event that completely satisfied his ambitions and so had little direct effect on avant garde theatre in his life.

Exploring the way in which metaphor and emotion interact to create Artaud's concept of theatre could go a long way toward explaining the theatrical event that Artaud hoped to create, especially since the theatre that Artaud actually created in his life presents a fairly limited field of study. Not even his production of *The Cenci*, which was supposed to be the first play representative of his Theatre of Cruelty, fulfilled his ambitions. Artaud noted in an article released five days before opening night to prepare the public for his production that *The Cenci* performed at the Folies-Wagram "is not Theatre of Cruelty yet but is a preparation for it" (Blin 103). Although Artaud was unsuccessful in realizing his vision, it is helpful to consider the influences on and precursors to Artaud and his work in order to more fully grasp the relationship between metaphor and emotion in the theatre of his time, especially as it relates to expected relationship between actor and audience. One such probable influence that Christopher Innes has noted is that of the German Expressionists.

In his illustration of German Expressionist acting, Christopher Innes uses a picture of the actor Fritz Kortner as Richard III as an example of the facial masks and exaggerated gesturing that exemplified this style. He explains that this acting, growing

* See: Barber, Stephen. *Artaud: The Screaming Body*. London: Creation Books, 1999; and Mordillat, Gérard, Jérôme Prieur, Denis Freyd, Yves Jeanneau, Sami Frey, Marc Barbé, Julie Jézéquel, Valerie Jeannet, and Jacques Prevel. *Artaud: The True Story of Artaud the Momo*. Issy-les-Moulineaux: Arte Vidéo, 2005.

out of the expressionist desire to return the theatre to what they believed were its primitive foundations, was marked by faces “transformed into ‘masks’ (again with all the primitive connotations) by the rigid tension of facial muscles,” as well as hands that “stretched into talons, arms curved sinuously as swans’ necks to form exterior ‘signs’ of psychological states” (44-46). Beneath his crown Kortner’s eyes bulge widely revealing much of their whites above the irises in the intense glare beneath an arched and drawn brow. The angle of his arm, an elbow pointing out at shoulder height out of frame, ensures that his tight-lipped sneer and flaring nostrils sit only inches above his hand as he seems to strain away from whatever it is that his eyes have found. Kortner has the hand itself rigidly fixed with a tensely bent thumb and sharp little finger bracketing three clawed digits. His face and body form a physical sign of Richard III’s animosity. Kortner perhaps looks exaggerated to sensibilities accustomed psychologically grounded behavior, even “over the top,” but within expressionist norms of emotional expression his acting was probably exemplary.

Selected by Susan Sontag for a collection of Artaud’s writing, the image of Artaud as the Father in his adaptation of *The Cenci* captures a mask that would be a near twin to Kortner’s Richard III. The expression on his face seems to have a similar rigidity except that Artaud faces out with wide eyes fixed above him and tight, scowling lips. His outstretched right arm looks as if it would twist in its socket and his upper body leans back and toward it, as if his spine would begin to wrap around the axis of his arm (*Selected Writings* 44). In all, the expression and his body give the impression that Artaud would become one of the fiery hieroglyphs he describes in *The Theatre and its Double*. The similarities of these images in different roles from different times hint at the deep

correlations between the German Expressionist acting and the acting that Artaud sought. For this reason we can look at these artistic precursors to give us some sense of the emotionalism that Artaud sought in actors (and his own acting) and begin making connections between these expressions and emotional values and his metaphorical structuring of theatre.

In Germany, Expressionism largely grew out of a reaction both against the idealism of romantics and neoclassicists as well as against the newer conventions of psychologically grounded, naturalistic theatre in the early twentieth century. Their revolt against traditional society, Walter Sokel observes, typically allied those who were categorized by critics as expressionists in protest against World War I or in the revolutions of 1918 and 1919. Many of those that survived the first world war and the rise of Nazism did so in exile from their homeland, and so carried their ideas to Russia, Italy, and in the case of Yvon Goll, France. Abroad, these artists no doubt influenced the nascent artistic movements of their adopted nations (ix-x). Artaud quite likely had some contact with either these artists or others who were similarly influenced by them.

Fed up with the complacency that he sees in society around him, the Expressionist Ludwig Rubiner repeatedly demands a fiery intensity from the theatre in his “Man in the Center” (1917). He writes “We want to bring, for one brief moment, intensity into human life: We want to arouse by means of heart-shaking assaults, terrors, threats, the individual’s awareness of his responsibility in the community!” Like Artaud, Rubiner remains somewhat vague as to what precisely he means even as he gives image after image of excited emotionalism or names the despised of society as his comrades, but he is clear that about his intention to invert traditional society with an emotional intensity,

both creative and destructive, that “proceeds solely from the liberation of psychic forces. Transformation of inner images into public facts... The name disturber is an honorary title for us; for us destroyer is a religious concept, inseparable for us today from creator.” The image Rubiner creates of a fiery spirit that suddenly consumes (presumably) the actor (Sokel 3-5) presages Artaud’s artists who throw aside the intricacies of traditional form and become “like victims burnt at the stake, signaling through the flames” (*Double* 13). While the specifics remain uncertain, the writing does present a need for burning emotional intensity that expands beyond the individual into the environment making the “air quiver about us” and spreads between individuals into a large-scale effect (or perhaps affect) (Sokel 4).

The proposed expressionist theatre comes slightly more into focus with Yvon Goll’s “Two Superdramas.” In the preface to *the Immortals*, Goll sets the theatre of the early twentieth century against the drama of the ancient Greeks, the primary disjuncture of which he sees first as a matter of scale. Goll, dissatisfied by the limited scope of the psychological theatre of his time, cites the scale of the dramas that were once a conflict of man (and he means all humans, or at least all men by this) with the gods. In this context “drama meant enormous magnification of reality, a most profound, most enigmatic Pythian immersion in measureless passion, in corroding grief, and all that colored in surreal tints” (Sokel 9). For both Goll and Rubiner psychological theatre proved inadequate because it painted only with the detailed strokes of individual psychologies while neglecting the “community.” Goll despised the theatre of the last century for being incapable of expressing anything beyond the ordinary reality of everyday life and so sought a theatre that could penetrate beyond surface reality. Modern man, epitomized for

Goll in the “fat bourgeois,” was insulated against the metaphysical by the barriers created by civilization. Goll believed that only grotesque emotional magnification could break down these boundaries. He writes: “the dullness and stupidity of men are so enormous that only enormities can counteract them. Let the new drama be enormous,” and for an example he cites masks. For Goll the mask, a depiction of emotion enlarged beyond the scale of psychological realism to the proportion of archetype, presented a precise example of what theatre should be, amplified to the point of terror (10-11). Only through this mode of expression could surface reality be penetrated and matters metaphysical handled in performance.

While Goll and Rubiner tend to address theatre in generalized terms, Paul Kornfeld addressed the actor specifically. In an appendix to his tragedy, *The Seduction* (1913), Kornfeld dissuaded the actor from reproducing behaviors modeled on observations of life. Kornfeld notes that actors go out into the world to study the behaviors of others as if they are ashamed that they can only feign reality and must learn how to feel and act from others. For Kornfeld this study of “real-life” people is antithetical to theatre for two reasons. The first is that the people an actor can observe drinking at a bar, dying in a hospital, or elsewhere outside the theatre will dampen what they feel. Not wanting to externalize their emotions, the observed will only present a small shadow of expression, a hint of their internal psychic struggle. More importantly, other forces, especially other emotions, will always muddy the expression of a human being outside of a theatrical context.

Kornfeld counts the nuances of psychological behavior, especially the confluence of different emotional tensions, as a hindrance to the actor's ability to express a singular experience in a manner that is "crystal-clear." Instead, he writes:

If the actor builds his characters from his experience of the emotion or fate he has to portray and with gestures adequate to this experience... he will see that his expression of a feeling which is not genuine and which has really been artificially stimulated is purer, clearer, and stronger than that of any person whose feeling is prompted by a genuine stimulus. (Cole 299-300)

For Kornfeld, the actor actually performs more truthfully by expressing their own subjective experience, but that expression of emotion cannot be multiple, the actor must not be a complex. The emotions Kornfeld wanted to see on the stage were all the more potent for being distilled into a pure expression of a single passion. Yet, it was the hallmark of German Expressionism that these pure emotions could not be expressed in a manner that reflected the ordinary experience of life. Even as Kornfeld called for the actor to descend into his own inner life to find a pure emotional experience that was wholly his own, the expressionists valued certain conventional expressions of emotion. Just as the texts used in their drama yielded characters that were "unidentifiable individuals... bizarre, idiosyncratic, and distorted archetypes made ugly and perverse in order to devaluate the neo-romantic concept of the beautiful," the emotional expressions they valued were similarly distorted through amplification or made to conflict with the beauty of neo-romantic ideals through, for example, harsh vocal patterns epitomized by the "*screi*" "the scream – an uninhibited, unmerciful howl that exemplified and expressed their agonized vision" (Croyden 20-21). As an emotional community the German

Expressionists devalued expressions of emotion that did not breach a threshold of naturalism or that could be construed as beautiful expressions by the standards set by what they saw as traditional or romantic values. Goll and Rubiner's separate references to awakening a feeling of "community" through the theatre also suggests value of emotional expressions that have a sufficient intensity to spread from the actors into the audience. Indeed, the emotional qualities sought after by the Expressionists were thought to be of a universal nature that once experienced by the actor would transfer into the spectator by way of accessing a psycho-spiritual human core.

Innes notes that the German Expressionists saw no contradiction between the need for a deeply subjective experience by the actor and the apparent necessity of expressing that emotion with mask-like faces, stylized gestures, or the accompanying convention of harsh, staccato and emphatic vocal deliveries. In part, this was because they believed that their actors, through these extreme expressions, were reaching toward a universal emotional truth at the core of all human experience. It was this core that Western civilization had lost touch with and these Expressionists, and the Avant Garde movement in Europe more generally, imagined only remained in the art and rituals of "primitive" cultures. It should be noted that the movements within the European avant garde used the descriptor "primitive" sweepingly to connote peoples as diverse as the cultures of South East Asia, Africa, or certain tribes in the Americas. Despite the universalizing of, among other things, the emotions of diverse peoples, Expressionists nonetheless held "the belief that personal emotion, if intense enough and expressed in archetypal forms, would release primitive responses and automatically evoke the same emotional state in the spectators" (Innes 45). Kortner's mask of Richard III accompanied

by the requisite fiery intensity in voice and body was meant to unlock a psychic core within the actor because this expression responded to shared, though concealed, forms in the collective consciousness of all humans. In this conception of theatre the actor penetrates the superficial veneer of the world and creates the same experience for the audience in doing so, suffusing themselves with extreme emotions and spreading their experience into the entire theatre. Such a conception of theatre constitutes an early step toward Artaud's metaphorical construction of *theatre as plague*. Unfortunately for these artists, however, both the style of acting that developed and the requirements of many expressionist texts forced the actors into an emotional high pitch that rarely, if ever, relented. This emotional fervor, Innes observes, more likely fatigued both actor and an audience unaccustomed to this sustained emotional intensity (46). This will be an important point to bear in mind when considering the reception of Artaud's theatre by emotional communities other than his own. Accounts of Artaud's acting paint a similar picture in terms of extreme expression and give us a clearer sense of the manner in which Artaud intended to create his plague.

Charles Dullin, founder of the Atalier and one time teacher of Artaud, described Artaud's acting in terms that very closely resemble expressionistic performances. He writes that "Whenever Artaud had to move he tensed his muscles, he arched his body and his pale face turned hard with fiery eyes; like this he would advance using arms and hands as well as legs; he would zig-zag, stretching out his arms and legs and tracing wild arabesques in the air" (Innes 85). Jean-Louise Barrault, a great friend and fellow artist of Artaud's, tells a story of Dullin and Artaud arguing over their conflicting character interpretations during a production in which Artaud played Emperor Charlemagne.

Although he could not have seen the exchange as it would be ten years before Barrault joined Dullin's company and Artaud had left it by then, Barrault writes the anecdote as if he witnessed it firsthand. Artaud took offense when the director tried to explain that his entrance into the throne room on all fours was too extravagant an interpretation of Charlemagne. Barrault reports Artaud's indignant reply to Dullin, "Ah! if it's realism you're after, well...!" and explains that Artaud would not remain a part of the Atelier long (*Memories* 53 n1). Whether he heard the story from Artaud, Dullin or some other source as Artaud's legend grew remains uncertain, but the story provides insight into the schism that would eventually provoke Artaud to leave the Atelier (Deák 353). Artaud was already looking for modes of expression that were amplified beyond what an audience might accept as psychologically grounded behavior.

Though the two conflicted over the extremity of the actor's choices, Artaud was still apparently very enthusiastic about the training he was receiving through his apprenticeship at the Atelier from 1921 to 1923. František Deák shows that the main conflict may have been that Artaud saw no reason not to bring the discoveries he made in workshops involving improvisations of self-discovery and consciously unrealistic mask work into his performances. Dullin's attempts to train an actor's complete instrument probably led Artaud to extreme discoveries both physically and vocally, but Dullin never intended these discoveries to be seen by the public. Still, Deák suggests that Dullin was by no means a naturalistic actor or director himself and observes that he held on to elements of the melodramatic tradition of fringe theatres where Dullin began his training. Artaud, who Deák suggests apparently saw a certain value in this dying tradition, notes:

In Avant-Garde theatres they amused themselves by imitating the mannerisms of great actors. They imitated Paul Monet's throaty resonant voice, the full heavy voice of Cerbbre... But in my opinion, in spite of their idiosyncrasies, those tragedians were the last to possess the heroic tradition in theatre... Sylvain had a laughable way of rolling his arms one over the other on the level of the solar plexus. Besides that he had the habit of accentuating certain syllables by a slap in the middle of his chest. De Max, without realizing the meaning of his gesture, pointed to his solar eye with his index finger. With it he searched to rediscover the survival of the third eye and the place that in Indian metaphysics is called the pineal gland. In all these extravagant gestures we must see the instinctive survival of a magic, the meaning of which we are no longer aware. (350-351)

Where others saw these ludicrously grandiose performances as part of a tradition to be mocked into oblivion, Artaud extracted what he believed was a magical thread leading back to the roots of theatre. Like the German Expressionists, Artaud sought to recover the primitive, metaphysical function of theatre. He saw in this melodramatic acting style, in the quasi-symbolic gesturing and the sonorous voices, a glimmer of what could return theatre to this purpose.

After leaving the Atelier, Artaud found artistic camaraderie within the Surrealist movement. Though he would sever his ties to the Surrealists in two years, this association marked Artaud's artistic development, and the Surrealists had deep correlations to Artaud's own emotional values and norms of expression, serving as an apt emotional community for him. Margaret Croyden observes that the explosion of revolutionary "isms" around the turn of the century and into the early twentieth century might give the

impression that all of Europe was engulfed in a kind of radical overthrow of old aesthetic and political forms. Indeed, according to Croyden many were affected with an air of “dissatisfaction and despair,” but by and large “a return to ‘normalcy’ had been advocated by the population at large, and by 1900 the atmosphere was apathetic and depressive,” and the bourgeoisie were fairly satisfied with the status quo. Others, not so apathetic, were drawn to the cafés, like those Artaud haunted after moving to Paris in 1920 (41-42). Around the turn of the century and into the early part of the twentieth century, the Paris salons and many theatres, especially Boulevard theatres, were not acceptable emotional refuges for the rebellious youth described by Ruby Cohn and Paul Arnold:

In the very depths of the art theatre, the new generation did not really try to "continue the Cartel," as Gaston Baty would have wished. Not only revolutionary, but actively rebelling, this young, giddy, rude generation was seized by a hope as high as it was vague, a hope that glistened with the last sparks of the explosion of surrealism. Opposed to those who created with the masterliness of Goethe, there were others who preferred the eruptive genius of Buchner or Gerard de Nerval. Opposed to Renoir, they preferred Van Gogh. More was at stake than a cabal of artists, a quarrel of schools. A whole culture, a new civilization hung in the balance. It was no longer merely a matter of reform, whether prudent or brutal: it was a question of ending any utilitarian orientation in art and in life; of ending all aesthetic pragmatism; even better, of ending the logical mentality in order to bring about the triumph, or rather the resurgence, of the "primitive" prelogical

mentality. It was a question of profiting at last from the message of Arthur Rimbaud. Of such hopes Artaud became the standard-bearer. (16)

While the various artistic movements within Paris or influencing the artistic scene there may have had, or would develop, divergent ideologies and artistic styles, they shared certain emotional values and norms that place them within an emotional community. This community was opposed, often violently so, to the emotional regime represented for them in bourgeoisie, traditional culture. This rebellious attitude of the early twentieth century was typically characterized with a rejection of rationalism, an urge to destroy the traditional values of the bourgeoisie, and an intensity of expression with which artists attempted to shock the sensibilities of cultural and social elites. With Artaud's emotional predecessors established, these artistic movements provide a sense of the emotional tenor in which he was enmeshed and provide context for his theatrical plague.

Beginning with a meeting in the emotional refuge of a café in Zurich, Tristan Tzara, Hans Arp, and Richard Huelsenbek found expression for this destructive urge in an anti-art, anti-rational movement they would dub Dada. Five years after Tzara's 1918 manifesto set Dada up in revolutionary opposition against all accepted values, André Breton urged artists to break away, as he did, from Dadaism whose often violent attempts at shock Breton found increasingly empty but for their self promotional effect. While less bent on shock and destruction, the movement Breton founded still held a resonant emotional tenor. Not only did the artistic movement clash against traditional style, Naonmi Greene observes that:

André Breton himself found close affinities between Surrealist thought and so-called 'primitive' thought in that both sought to 'suppress the hegemony of

consciousness... in order to concentrate on the conquest of revelatory emotions.’

Breton was convinced that contemporary society could be revitalized through an examination of the myths of primitive people. (Greene 128)

Like the German Expressionists before them, the Surrealists believed that primitive cultures could provide a path toward the revelatory emotions that would cut through the everyday reality exemplified in, for example, the psychological and logos-centered theatre. The Surrealists also held on to the revolutionary emotional aesthetic of the Dadaists, and accompanying their desire for revelatory emotional experiences with their art, this rebellious quality shaped the way they acted in life. Like the Dadaists, they “disrupted meetings, screamed down opponents, used profane language, and confronted their adversaries with shocking and violent behavior” and they created personas for themselves that echoed their art, making the way they created art as important as how they presented themselves as artists (Croyden 50).

Croyden notes that while the Surrealists’ behavior often had comic, if sardonic, tones, “Surrealist artists were ruled by a sense of tragedy and dominated by feelings of despair. Perceiving the world as an empty wasteland, they expressed their consternation through defiance, through manifestos and fist fights, and through a steadfast contempt and excoriating savage sense of humor” (50). Maurice Nadeau provides examples of this spirit in action, as well as the subsequent fall out, in *History of Surrealism*. He pays special attention to the Surrealists’ disruption of a banquet in 1925 (the year Artaud first became associated with the Surrealists) that remained, according to Nadeau, infamous for decades. Nadeau explains that at a banquet held in honor of the poet Saint-Pol-Roux, whom the Surrealists admired and took part in honoring, the poet Rachilde (for whom the

Surrealists bore no love) announced very loudly that a Frenchwoman could never marry a German. The French Surrealists, Nadeau explains, “were mad about Germany; first of all because this nation represented for the French bourgeoisie the hereditary, incompletely conquered enemy whom the chains of the Versailles treaty could not keep from trying to rise again” (112). The Surrealists were hopeful that Germany represented a force “called upon to destroy Western civilization” and at the time the Surrealists would have been happy to help. Breton, apparently taking Rachilde’s comment as a slight on Max Ernst, stood up and noted the insult of his friend who was in attendance. There is apparently no reliable source as to just how forcefully Breton objected to Rachilde as every witness seems to have a different story, but what seems certain is that a riot, beginning in a food fight and escalating from there, erupted with tables being upended, plates smashing, fistfights breaking out and “Philippe Soupault, swinging from the chandelier, kicked over plates and bottles on the tables.” In the midst of the sudden chaos:

The Sage of Camaret, like the pilot of a boat foundering in a gale, appaled by these incidents, attempted to restore order. His words of appeasement were by his official friends. It was too good an opportunity for reducing ‘those surrealist provocateurs’ to dust. And since this proved impossible, recourse was had to those natural defenders of flouted poetry: the police, who were directed to the miscreants deserving of a trouncing. While shouts of “Long live Germany! Bravo China! Up the Riffs!” echoed out, Michel Leiris, opening a window overlooking the boulevard, shouted at the top of his lungs, “Down with France!”... The riot continued out on the Boulevard Montparnasse. Leiris, continuing to defy both police and mob, was nearly lynched.

Following the uproar, Nadeau explains that a wave of newspaper publications took the occasion to attack the Surrealists and paint them as “German agents.” The *Action Française* released an “Open letter to all literary editors’ that the surrealists be quarantined.” The letter suggests that sanctions of silence be imposed on the Surrealists for as long as they “are not content with merely writing” (Nadeau 112-114).

Nadeau’s use of the word “quarantine” turns out to be a fitting description of the many French critics’ response to the avant garde in France, especially those critics associated with the *Action Française*. Constance Spreen traces a history of critical quarantines, which often use metaphors of plague and contagion to describe those artistic and ethnic influences that threaten to corrupt or even overthrow the established French culture. She sees a pattern of, “exclusion carried out by the Action Française, a reactionary, nationalist movement under the ideological leadership of Charles Maurras. These proponents of “total nationalism” [*nationalisme intégral*] strove to locate Artaud’s theater of cruelty, along with the avant-garde in France, outside French aesthetic values.” Classicists and cultural conservatives, these critics were wary of the encroaching foreign influence, especially German, on French culture as much as they were concerned with artistic movements that valued high emotionalism and had little or no regard for “orderly literature” as the avant garde certainly did not. Spreen writes, “enlisted by advocates of the Action Française, the metaphors of contagion and bacillus were central to the Maurrassian articulation of a politics of culture, defining the boundaries between what was considered French and, consequently, non-French in both art and politics” (71-96). For Gérard Hupin the Germans were, “par excellence, a carrier of the germs of destruction decomposition, and anarchy. He experiences a natural penchant for all the

revolutions that oppose the order of Rome” (Spren 76). In the rebellious youth of Paris these critics doubtlessly saw a sort of German virus expressing itself in the brawls like the one Nadeau recounts. Certainly Artaud carried this destructive germ. Spren notes the Maurrassian critic André Villeneuve in particular for finding Artaud’s written propositions for a Theatre of Cruelty specifically characteristic of the threat to French tradition as its language was extremely emotionally charged and yet its argumentative reasoning remained unclear; it was as if the ability to clearly express passion was secondary to the passion itself (79-80).

For these critics, Artaud and the French avant garde presented precisely the threat from within that Germans presented from without. First, the avant garde refused to acknowledge the importance of words, their “indispensability for expressing human passions and, most important, for preserving civilization” (Spren 88). Indeed, Artaud like many others within the avant garde, was appalled by the notion that words carried in themselves the content of the things, ideas or emotions they were used to represent, and saw the tyranny of a decaying civilization in the reverence others held for words. In his preface to *The Theatre and its Double* Artaud writes that “at the root of this confusion is a rupture between things and words, between things and the ideas and signs that are their representation” (7). Rather than rely on words to bridge the gap, he adds that for the language of the stage “it is not a question of suppressing the spoken language, but of giving words approximately the importance they have in dreams” (94). Based on his suggestions that words be used for their sonorous and vibratory qualities rather than some imagined intrinsic meaning, Artaud presumably means here that language not be valued for the discursive argument it could lay out, nor certainly for its capacity to capture and

hold the emotional charge it represents, but for how the specific sound affects the organism.

Secondly, the avant garde posed a threat to the stability of an established emotional regime with specific values of emotional expression. Not only did these anarchic youth deride and dismiss the importance of the word for expression, their emotional values and norms of expression undermined the established sense of when and how emotions were expressed, which was especially dangerous as these passions often led to actions that could turn violent. What was worse, this manner of emotionalism was catching. Both Dadaists and Surrealists claimed the language of contagion to describe their respective movements, as Tzara did in his 1922 when he depicted the Dadaists as “a virgin microbe that insinuates itself with the insistence of air into all the spaces that reason hasn’t been able to fill with words or conventions” (Garner 9). The artists, much as their critics, characterized themselves as infectious agents, and because both movements actively blurred and destroyed boundaries between art and life, it is not hard to imagine that emotional contagiousness figured into their values of expression as a way of revolutionizing the psyches of others. This threat to the current emotional regime was all the more dangerous for its blatancy, and so those with a vested interest in the status quo sought methods of containment. Where the police could be relied on to curb outbreaks like the 1925 riot, other means employed against incursions like Artaud’s first attempt to introduce elements of his Theatre of Cruelty to the public. The 1935 production of *The Cenci* presents a moment when two emotional communities clashed and, for the most part, the audience was either baffled, in a sense not speaking the same emotional language, or actively moved to counteract or contain this emotionally aberrant

performance. Exploring the event in the context of Artaud's emotional community, especially with respect to the type of expression that figured into his attempts to create an infectious performance, will demonstrate how Artaud's metaphorical conceptualization of *theatre as plague* began to manifest in performance.

The Cenci

Among his influences in life and his artistic development, Jean Louise Barrault counted Artaud as one of the primary forces that shaped him. Artaud, who didn't seem to have a distinct border between his own everyday life and the theatre, had as much influence on Barrault with both the vibrancy he displayed on the stage and in the cafés. Barrault recalls, "Artaud, no doubt dissatisfied with the artificial joys provided by the stage, carried his own theatrical ability into life. He genuinely loved the part he played, and he and it wore themselves out together. He became theatre. His life is precisely a tragedy." Describing the attitudes and expressions of this tragic actor Barrault writes "His mouth, like the whole of Artaud, preyed upon itself... His voice, rising up from his innermost caverns, bounded towards his head with such rare force that it was dashed against the sounding board of his forehead. It was both sonorous and hollow, strong yet immediately muted" (*Reflections*). Elsewhere Barrault writes "The frequency of the vibrations of his diaphragm made his voice strike against the outer frontal regions of his resonators. His voice was at the same time hoarse and shrill. A child who has set himself on fire. For we had childlike pleasures" (*Memories* 82). Perhaps Barrault is referring, in part, to the evening after his adaptation of *As I Lay Dying* opened when he refers to this child-like exuberance. Following the opening, in which Barrault played both the bastard son and the dying mother, the actor recalls that Artaud waited as the audience departed,

“drunk with enthusiasm” and together “the two of us went down the Boulevard Rochechouart, and together we started off on two imaginary horses, galloping as far as the Place Blanche” (*Memories* 70). The playful memory acts not only as an illustration of their friendship and shared excitement, but an indication that whatever their artistic affiliations (Artaud had long since left the Surrealist movement and Barrault was about to be adopted by it) the two remained in an emotional community with values of expression opposed to the more restrained sensibilities of the cultural elite.

For a time, Barrault writes, that he emulated Artaud “to the point of resembling him exactly.” It was through Artaud and the books he encouraged his friend to read that Barrault first developed a concept of emotional contagion, that “the irradiation of our fleshy being carries far further than the contours of our skin. The infinite resources of muscular contraction and of breathing make a man into a battery, producing magnetism” (*Memories* 83). Artaud and he shared ideas on acting, developing them together, so much so that as Barrault writes he reports having difficulty knowing whether the ideas he lays out are his at all. He finds it impossible to disentangle his ideas from Artaud’s. In “An Attempt at a Little Treatise on the Alchemy of the Theatre” where he asserts that the difference between speech and gesture “are not like pear and apple, dog and cat, but one and the same fruit, like a garden peach and a wild peach” and that acting, like all art comes from struggle as brush rubs canvas, pen scratches paper, chisel chips stone, hammer strikes string: “In the theatre: a Human Being struggles in space” (*Reflections* 48-61). Everything about Artaud seemed to branch out from this sense of struggle. Indeed, following a bout of childhood meningitis, Artaud struggled his entire life with chronic pains that would come in unpredictable and often unbearable surges. In *Antonin*

Artaud: Man of Vision, Betina Knapp contextualizes Artaud with this pattern of pain directly as the background and basis of all his work. His difficulty in seizing an idea long enough to commit it to paper before the pain began again, his fear of and his dependency on drugs that threatened to sap his vitality and his lucidity, in short his own day-to-day physical struggle colored everything he created. This process of introspection hovering between moments of pain, Knapp suggests, can be seen in a 1924 poem that depicts Artaud's creative moment, his attempts "to seize one idea from the maze of emotions, to clutch it, before it falls back into oblivion – the void" (Knapp 15). The first and last stanzas of the poem, "Cry," read:

The little celestial poet
Opens the shutters of his heart
The skies collide. Oblivion
Uproots the Symphony...
The little lost poet
Leaves his celestial place
With an idea from beyond the earth
Pressed to his long-haired heart. (*Selected Writings* 37-38)

Artaud brought this personal and physical interrelation between struggle and creation into his acting and his theatre. In fact, in a 1927 letter to Abel Gance, Artaud writes that he is perfectly suited to play Usher in an upcoming film adaptation of Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher" precisely because he suffers just as Usher does. He demands the role writing, "My life is the life of Usher... I have a plague in the marrow of my nerves and I suffer from it" and this personal suffering uniquely qualified him for the role (*Selected*

Writings: 167-168). For Artaud, like the German Expressionists, the actor expresses his own inner subjective experience rather than describing through theatrical fakery the psychology of a character. This, however, often proved to be a rule more for his own acting than for the actors he directed, whom he typically directed in a very strict choreography of sounds and detailed movement, as his notes for *The Cenci* indicate. A section of the blocking notation for the orgiastic banquet scene contains directions that indicate a tight control over the actor's movement: "Camillo stands up, moves his left shoulder back" or "Andrea moves forward, trembling. (One foot forward, then the other foot to meet it, etc.)" One section reads:

The guests walk in circles, some of them quickly, others more slowly. Among these last ones, D. follows the evolutions of a dwarf, who stops from time to time; then he suddenly cries out. At this cry, B. bursts out laughing. E. and Andrea meet; E. slaps Andrea, then sobs (3 sobs) with head in hands; B. follows A. by the left shoulder; J. dances with one of the dummies. Cry Laugh follows 2 seconds after the first. Sob A. marches like a knight, G. imitates him, but with little steps.
(Blin 113-119)

The often rhythmically patterned movements and sounds that result from his tight control of the actor-instruments likely stems from his attempts to reconnect to the ritual function that he interpreted from his experience with the Balinese dance troupe at the Paris Colonial Exhibition in 1931. The actors may have been encouraged to use their own emotional experience to fuel this movement and expression, although Raymond Rouleau's recollection of Artaud directing *Dream Play*, which he called "a kind of introspection" during which Artaud listened to his subconscious and then wrote

meticulous notes for the actors to repeat, might indicate that Artaud attempted to inject his inner experience into the actors as a director just as he did his characters as an actor (Innes 64). In his first manifesto for the Theatre of Cruelty Artaud shows an ambivalence to the role of personal agency in the actor. In a section meant to elucidate the various elements of the Theatre of Cruelty and their functions he writes:

The actor is both an element of first importance, since it is upon the effectiveness of his work that the success of the spectacle depends, and a kind of passive and neutral element, since he is rigorously denied all personal initiative. It is a domain in which there is no precise rule; and between the actor of whom is required the mere quality of a sob and the actor of who must deliver an oration with all his personal qualities of persuasiveness, there is a whole margin which separates a man from an instrument. (*Double* 98)

For Artaud, the difference is situational. Certain actors must bring forth their own emotionalism in performance, as Paul Kornfeld had encouraged Expressionist actors to do. Meanwhile, other actors (the instruments) need only be given the notes to play. The actors that do qualify as men and not instruments, however, are not exhorted to create a performance based on their observations of the everyday or on whatever knowledge they have of psychological behavior. Like the German Expressionists before him, Artaud expects the actor to fill a role with his own personality, his own amplified emotionalism. Otherwise, the director (Artaud) injects the actor with elements of himself, reproducing the results of his introspection.

Artaud's own sense of struggle, rigor, and control inform both his emotional values and color the way Artaud saw best to express emotions on the stage. The rigid

facial masks and stylized movement of German Expressionism, the emotional pitch and hard expressions, its grating and shrill vocal expressions would have held an allure for Artaud, all the more powerful for him because it purported to recover the ancient purgatory function of theatre and facilitate the creation of a metaphysically revelatory moment. Combined with Artaud's own training, his affinities for certain extravagancies of melodramatic actors, and his personal idiosyncrasies, his valuation of certain emotional expressions in performance is clarified. Reviews and images from *The Cenci* with this information construct a fairly illuminating image of Artaud on stage. *Le Temps* gives a sense of movement to the frozen image referred to above, reporting that Artaud "displayed sunken and swarthy cheeks and feverish eyes; the viperine ways of the old Taillade." Roger Blin reports that Artaud had nearly lost his voice with shouting in rehearsals, but a few days after opening he seems to have recovered since Henry Bidou suggests that Artaud, who "shouted in a penetrating voice, could have been improved by not cutting off every three words as if he were being slapped in the face" (Blin 136), a criticism that recalls the harsh staccato of German Expressionism.

The *Action Française* also complained with a review that noted of the performance there is "more shouting than acting" in *The Cenci* and in a comment that reveals that Artaud's emotionalism was not in line with the values of expression held by Artaud's largely conservative audience, the critic adds "M. Artaud plays the lead with romantic passion: He is so bad that he finally becomes interesting." Unfortunately, the blithe delight offered by Artaud's performance was not enough to sustain the critic who claims to have been overall bored by the whole event. Many of the reviews indicate that a sizable portion of the audience that came to see *The Cenci* came for the purpose of

deriding it, showing their contempt from the audience. Raymonde Latour noted the “snobbish atmosphere” of the opening night performance, something he expected from the society people who he nonetheless found oddly quiet and very nearly apathetic even during the intermission. A review from Guermantes confirms this atmosphere commenting on the people of society in attendance he writes, “I did not see that his play was particularly cruel, but the public who came to see it certainly was... I assure you that many of the guests listened without indulgence. They were there (dressed to the nines) hoping this tragedy would become comic, and they were not going to forgive the author or actors for a single misstep,” and the reviews report that the play was met with laughter and a degree of bored indifference from its detractors (Blin 129). Although the play had its supporters too, though the reviews often characterize them as a smaller and undesirable segment of the audience. The reviewer for *Comoedia*, Armory, was particularly displeased on the second night of performance to see:

Everyone that Paris considers as snobs, as spics, as homosexuals, as enemies of our French lucidity, as systematic demolishers, as anarchists of thought, as confused minds, morphine addicts, cocaine addicts, ether addicts, false aesthetes, sapphics, decomposers of music, imported Frenchmen, servants of tiny coterie and of obscure formulas, writers of the left and extreme left, cubists, essayists, and other distressing products of the international mire, were there, submerging and wishing to impose their law, their argot, their incoherence on the ordinary habitues who generally come... Ah! The public ridicule! The troublesome friends, these intermissions where one hears all languages spoken, German chiefly and French with such an accent! (Blin 130-131)

At least in this reviewer's mind, Artaud's first attempt at a Theatre of Cruelty drew to it the undesirable and potentially contagious elements of Paris, foreign bodies, whether French or not, threatening to infect polite society. Radical writers and artists, or rather those who decomposed and destroyed art, who were or brought with them an array of social undesirables brushed up against a class of cultural elites who considered the Folies-Wagram and gala openings their territory. The reviewer does not, however, blame Artaud, but rather seems to see him as an artist of great potential. Though he does not use the word directly, he suggests that Artaud's art suffers because he is infected by "this deadly ambiance, from these hybrid admirers, indiscriminate worshippers and captives of a burlesque snobbishness, demoralizing by their false conception of things" without whom he "he could become a very fine man." As such he laments Artaud's poor artistic choices that allow moments of "profound thought" to be mired in poor technique and suggests that a "stricter observance of the unalterable laws of theatre" would greatly improve Artaud's effort (Blin (130-132). For this reviewer, Artaud is yet another mind corrupted (perhaps infected) by foreign influences, primarily German, and the artistic and emotional deviants of Paris. The man may be cured only through a return to traditional theatre, an "inoculation" of classicism perhaps, that would allow him to abandon the embarrassing emotionalism of his peers and ascend into a place where profound thoughts flow uninhibitedly in clear language.

Indeed, the inability to clearly understand the thoughts and emotions of characters through their words was repeatedly cited as a major problem in several reviews, especially of Artaud and Lady Ilya Abdy who played Beatrice in her thick Russian accent. Apparently over-laden with emotion Artaud was simply unintelligible. A notable

exception to this complaint, Latour thought Artaud's diction was "impeccable" to the point where his accompanying brutal ardor made his speech feel like Artaud was "hitting us in the face with the most searing words and passionate phrases, like slaps or battle cries" (Blin 128). Despite Latour's overall enthusiasm, most critics were far less forgiving; after all words were the "indispensable" means for expressing human experience and emotion. Without words to shape them, what was the audience supposed to understand from Artaud's vehement expressions, his staccato voice and his viperine gesturing? Lady Abdy came under fire not for an excess of passion, but for her means of expressing. Though some noted her inexperience as an actor, the reviewers seem to confirm, as Henry Bidou did for *Le Temps*, that she was "beautiful" in her fits of terror, madness, and despair, but her mouth was apparently incapable of forming pleasing French and several critics agreed that if she would not erase her accent "she should not speak" (Blin 137). Her emotional expression, at least physically, was far more pleasing than Artaud's, not because it necessarily moved the spectator, but because the expression itself was done with some amount of grace and beauty. Fortunant Strowski, who wrote that he was moved by Abdy, was equally happy to report the "harmonious" nature of everything she did, and nearly every critic that mentioned her mentioned her beauty. In either case, the loss of clear speech upset the critics, but with Abdy the critics were not offended by an excess of violent passion as it was presented with a pleasing visual display of graceful expression.

Even the dialogue that was clearly understood, however offensive Artaud thought he had made it, did not seem to upset the critics as much as the manner in which the ideas were expressed. Once he finished the script and began rehearsals for *The Cenci* Artaud

wrote to André Gide and explained that the “dialogue of this tragedy is, if I may say so, of the most extreme violence. And there is *nothing* among the traditional notions of Society, order, Justice, Religion, family, and Country, that is not attacked.” He added “I am, therefore, expecting some very violent reactions on the part of the spectators.” Rather than let the audience be shocked and outraged, as the Dadaists or Surrealists might have done, Artaud wanted to make sure that no such incident occurred. For this reason he tried to tell the public in advance, through press releases, that these institutions would be targeted in the text. Even the letter to Gide was a plea for help in ensuring that the public not take his purpose to be a generalized call to arms against social institutions. His aim was, after all, not social but metaphysical (*Selected Writings* 340). Apparently there was no need for Artaud to worry though. Those reviewers that mention Artaud’s tirades seem unimpressed by their content and more repulsed, as are Strowski or Colette, that Artaud’s villainous father isn’t portrayed with more moderate expression. Colette advised that, “We accord more credit to a cruel person if he is calm, even jovial, and if he is charming and reserved. We will believe him to be all the more unrelenting-look at Richard III” (134). No doubt, Colette was not referring to Kortner’s facial mask and clawed hand with his remark.

These reviews reflect the insistence of a stylistic hegemony noted through Spreen above. Its defenders saw foreign influences and the germs of anarchy in the artistic movements of a generation determined to overthrow stylistic, and it seems we can add *emotional*, norms of tradition. If words were the bearers of meaning and of culture, the only means of preserving or expressing either, then their abuse by an upstart generation that found no intrinsic meaning in them, not to mention their corruption by foreigners,

destabilized the foundations of that culture. While Artaud and his production of *The Cenci* posed a threat to style, both were representative of a shift in emotional norms and values. For one thing Artaud, and the crowd he drew to the theatre, represented an emotional community with riotous and collective emotional behaviors. Often these collective behaviors, inflected by their antagonism toward traditional culture and social elites, turned physically violent and so the violent emotionalism of an artist like Artaud all too easily called to mind the riots of the Dadaists and Surrealists. Secondly, the emotionalism of the author of “The Theatre and the Plague” had a specifically contagious purpose. The reviews of these conservative critics may be seen, therefore, as gently or not so gently corrective suggestions for an artist who could be brilliant were it not for the influence of his radical associates, but underneath the stylistic dispute is also an attempt at emotional containment and amelioration. If Artaud wanted to achieve brilliance in theatre these critics suggest that he must first moderate his passions so that he is more believable (within their system of emotional expression) and more able to articulate his passion with the logical order of clear speech. If he wanted to make a point, he had to make himself understood. Then again, Artaud probably didn’t intend to be *understood*. The Theatre of Cruelty was supposed to be an infectious revelation, conjured in the bodies of the performers in combination with the rest of the *mise en scène* then transferred directly into the spectator, mind and flesh. Artaud meant to *infect*.

The Failure of the Plague

Ultimately *The Cenci* failed. It had neither commercial nor critical success, but Artaud also was not able to realize much with respect to his Theatre of Cruelty. He had hoped to change the very function of theatre, to change the relationship that the spectator

had to the art, but his ambition soared well above his ability to meet it. The play brought two emotional communities into conflict with one another. In the audience were those of the emotional regime represented by the “society people” with the reviewers “who only mirror in advance and on the whole the opinion of their reading public,” as Artaud complained. Uncomfortably rubbing up against them was the emotional aberrant community Artaud supported by the array of undesirables Guermantes described. No evidence exists that Artaud was able to do more than irritate individuals within the emotional regime, which on the whole seems to have displayed an ability to absorb the agitation or deflect it with steadfast boredom. Unfortunately for Artaud, *The Cenci* as an emotionally revelatory infection may have been doomed from the start, and part of its failure to communicate may have been the foundational metaphor *theatre as plague*.

In “The Theatre and the Plague” Artaud points out that the most important correlation between the plague and the theatre is not that both are contagious, but that both are revelations. Both events reveal possibilities that were hidden in the darkness lurking of the human psyche. They are events in which the strictures of civilization, the oppressiveness of reason, and customary divisions dissolve. Nature takes over with all the dark forces that civilization once caged up and human beings see themselves as they are, including their “latent cruelty.” Artaud does not intend to simply unleash these cruel forces into the world, however. While the theatre reveals these “gigantic abscesses,” it has also “been created to drain abscesses collectively” it is an “avenging scourge... redeeming epidemic” (*Double* 31). Artaud proposed that the theatre’s purpose is to reveal the darkness of human nature so that it may be exorcised in the same event instead of

repressing any dark impulses through a civilized refusal to acknowledge anything that undermines accepted social mores.

In order to receive the curative benefits of the theatre, the spectator had to go through an operation, to risk pain, to risk their bodies. For this revelation to occur the theatre must begin by infecting its audience, and this infection begins in the flesh. Artaud writes:

The theater is the only place in the world, the last general means we still possess of directly affecting the organism and... of attacking this sensuality by physical means it cannot withstand. If music affects snakes, it is not on account of the spiritual notions it offers them, but because they are long and coil their length at almost every point: and because the musical vibrations which are communicated to the earth affect them like a very subtle, very long massage; and I propose to treat the spectators like the snakecharmer's subjects and conduct them by *means of their organisms* to an apprehension of the subtlest notions. (*Double 81*)

Artaud did not trust in the reasoned logic of precisely chosen words to convey anything meaningful, but he did not abandon the use of words in theatre. Instead he toppled the traditionalist hierarchy that made words the indispensable head of expression and tried to put words on level footing with other elements of the *mise en scène* in an effort to directly affect the organism. Artaud meant for words to be selected, as would be other human and non-human noises, for the vibratory qualities they had, the way they sound and the way they feel in the body. This search for a vibratory effectiveness led Artaud to attempt to immerse the audience in a vibratory field by blaring recordings of 30-foot bells from four directions around the spectators of *The Cenci*, though he would have preferred

the actual bells themselves. In “An Affective Athleticism” Artaud tells the actor to learn the musculature that corresponds with each emotion, the breath that corresponds with feelings and to explore rhythms that allow the spectator to “identify himself with the spectacle, breath by breath and beat by beat.” In becoming an “athlete of the heart” the actor is not only becoming more in tune with his own emotions but learning to reforge an emotional link between spectator and actor (*Double* 133-141).

When used to give abstract ideas more concrete qualities, every metaphor both illuminates and hides some aspects of these concepts. In terms of the interrelation of emotion and metaphor, the physical sensation of emotion invokes the metaphor but the metaphor also shapes the experience of that emotion. When that metaphor becomes a prevailing metaphor in the construction of a given emotion then the experience of that emotion is shaped by the highlighting of some aspects of the experience and the inadvertent negation of others (Kövecses *Metaphors*). Certainly many factors contributed to *The Cenci*'s failure to meet Artaud's expectations, but not all of them are necessarily due to his inability to create the ambitious conditions he set forth in Theatre of Cruelty. Within Artaud's work is a fundamental desire to create sensation of *emotion as contagion*, an emotional exchange that emanates from the actor and, much as the altering “inficio” of the Elizabethans, touches the audience in a way that alters them. Anaïs Nin remembered him expressing this urge to her in her moonlit garden in 1933 while she worried whether anyone was capable of feeling at all. *Emotion as contagion* inadvertently masks the resistibility of emotion through conscious thought. Also obscured is the fact that many emotions may be universal but the way individuals and groups value them, construct them, or express them are not. *Theatre as plague*, while an incredibly powerful

metaphor, may have guided Artaud to failure. The need to create a drastic change in a large group of people implied by the epidemic language of this metaphor brought him in front of an emotional community who, in many cases, were predisposed toward derision before even arriving at the theatre. They came to watch it fail, not undergo an operation. If Artaud was creating something emotionally infectious, a large segment of his audience had come immunized. *Theatre as plague*, more so than *emotion as contagion*, also implies violent emotionalism and violent expression despite Artaud's insistences that a Theatre of Cruelty has nothing to do with bodily harm or death. The sense seems to be that only the most extreme of expressions are going to be able to affect the human organism directly. This probably led to the high and unrelenting emotional intensity that often made German Expressionism difficult to endure. The emotional effect may have been powerful to those in the audience who shared his values of expression, but to a large segment of his audience his wild eyes, large gestures, and staccato screams simply didn't resonate with their more subdued values of expression. It's possible that they didn't even register as emotions at all. The problem wasn't that people simply didn't have the capacity to feel, as Nin worried, but that Artaud's emotional values and norms of expression differed so drastically from many in *The Cenci's* audience that there was almost no common ground. Artaud was not speaking in an emotional language that the "society people" Guermantes described understood, or rather *felt*. As such, they treated him with amused tolerance or disdain, effectively putting up the kind of emotional barrier that Artaud does not seem to have anticipated. Only in the years after his death would the kind of emotionalism and relationship to the audience gain a wider acceptance, influencing a generation of theatre practitioners. Both this emotionalism and the

conceived function of theatre for its audience grew out of Artaud's metaphorical conceptualization of theatre and correlated to the emotional communities that influenced him.

In an attempt to further explore the relationship between metaphor and the experience of theatre this dissertation will now turn to the emerging science that may provide insight into how emotional transfer happens between an actor and the audience or between actors. These studies of mirror neurons have an implied metaphor often attributed to theatre, the metaphor of reflection. In the sense that metaphors of reflection attributed to theatre can imply a theatre that present an illusion of reality like the audience's day-to-day experience of the world, Artaud would doubtlessly outright reject this conceptualization of theatre. Looking at this metaphor alongside studies on mirror neurons may, however, give new insights into Artaud's proposed emotional relationship to the audience. At the same time, the experience of theatre will reveal some of the potential blind spots of the current mirror neurons science created by the metaphor of reflection.

CHAPTER IV

MIRRORS IN THE FLESH

Among Artaud's final writings is a letter to Paule Thévenin dated Tuesday, February 24th, 1948. In the letter, Artaud admits that his recent recording of *To Have Done with the Judgment of God* (which was prohibited from being broadcast on French Radio earlier that month) conflicted with the medium of radio itself. He notes that the technology intervenes with his work, distorting if not annihilating it. Finding it an unacceptable corruption he decides that he is done with radio:

and from now on will devote myself
exclusively
to the theater
as I conceive it,
a theater of blood,
a theater with which each performance will have done
something
bodily
to the one who performs as well as to the one who comes to see others perform,
but actually
the actors are not performing,

they are doing.*

Though Artaud is certain that this theatre will come to be, he admits that his vision of it on the afternoon of his writing was of those that would come after him (*Selected Writings* 584-585). Indeed, Artaud would never follow through on his renewed commitment to theatre as he succumbed to cancer less than two weeks later.

Although Artaud suggested that his Theatre of Cruelty partly began to emerge in *The Cenci*, he never managed to fully realize this vision of a theatre of blood and bodily experience. In his life, however, he did see glimmers of it in the works of others. Notably, he cited the Balinese theatre as having the means to directly affect the human organism, but he also praised Jean-Louis Barrault in his achieving a physical communication between bodies through “direct physical appeal” and exercising the “irresistible expressiveness of gesture” that he thought only the Balinese Theater retained (*Double* 145-146). This praise refers to Barrault’s adaptation of *As I Lay Dying* (*Autour d’une mère*) and specifically to the performance’s powerful, transformative effect on the audience.

Barrault describes in detail his work on this adaptation (alone and with the other actors) as well as the opening performance in *Memories for Tomorrow*. Like Artaud and so many within the avant garde, Barrault challenged the primacy of words in this production. Unlike Artaud, he did so by significantly reducing the amount of spoken text in favor of exploring expression through physicality (“poetry made flesh”) and nonverbal sounds. In approximately two hours of stage time, the play contained thirty minutes of spoken text. Far from excited by this prospect, the audience had come to the movement-

* Format follows Artaud’s verse in *Antonin Artaud: Selected Writings*.

centered *As I Lay Dying* in anticipation of watching a failure. Barrault describes a hostile feeling in the air as the crowd gathered, and noted that it only deepened when the curtain rose to reveal the cast (nearly naked) who were met with “a storm of laughter and animal cries” (*Memories* 70). This initial mockery settled, and as the play progressed Barrault describes the growing feeling that the audience warmed to the performance, that after a time “they were with us.” This sense seems to have been confirmed with one scene in particular: the mother’s death scene. Barrault gives his most detailed account of the performance in describing this sequence, the same sequence that Artaud notes in praise of his friend’s work.

The play centers around the dying mother’s request that the son build her coffin in her presence. At the moment both Artaud and Barrault reference the entire family looks on as the son builds. Because the actor cast to play the mother abandoned the show as opening night approached, Barrault played both the bastard son and the dying mother he refers to below. He recalls:

The mother is nearing death. Her eldest son is making the coffin. The wheezings from her chest fit in with the rasping of the saw. All the rest of the family, like an enormous jellyfish, contracts and relaxes in union with the mother and the carpenter. The whole theatre is in death throes – a pump rhythm, an octopus rhythm – and all of a sudden, at the climax of a breath: total stoppage. The mother’s hand, which had been raised as when someone wants to look out into the distance, falls slowly in silence, like a water level going down. Life emptying out. The movement is prolonged throughout the body until the rigidity of a corpse is reached. She is dead. (*Memories* 66-67)

When Artaud describes this same moment he likens the actions of Barrault and the other players to the incantations of witch doctors “when, before the exhausted sick man, the witch doctor gives his breath the form of a strange disease, and chases away the sickness with his breath.” Artaud too notes an antagonistic feeling emitting from the gathered audience but says that the “atmosphere is so transformed that a hostile audience is suddenly blindly immersed and invincibly disarmed, it must be hailed as an event” (*Double* 145). Through their actions and by a direct physical communication the actors change the emotional tenor within the audience.

Though Artaud describes the performance in terms of disease, what is striking about this moment in Barrault and Artaud’s respective memories is that they suggest a potential mirroring that happened between the audience and the actors. For Barrault, the mirroring branched out from the performers and into the audience. The sound of the saw established a rhythmic breathing pattern that followed the mother’s labored attempts to draw in air. This rhythmic breath spreads into the surrounded family whose movements, jellyfish-like, pulse in this same pattern until the whole theatre adopts the pattern of the mother’s dying breaths until the sudden moment of stillness as the mother slowly crumples. For Artaud, the performers mirror the audience, adopting their sickened breath, for the purpose of engaging them with a direct physical appeal. They draw the sickness from a repressed civilization by unifying the whole theatre in a purgative breath pattern coupled with the irresistibility of expressive bodies. In light of Artaud’s other writings we might assume that what Artaud saw in Barrault’s pulsing jellyfish was the infectious spread of intense emotions brought on by breathing patterns and living hieroglyphs. The

performers were able to affect the audience, like the snakecharmer's snake, by means of direct communication between bodies.

In Barrault's memoirs he does not try to suggest that every audience was so overcome during the run of *As I Lay Dying*, nor was every member in any particular audience as he recalls. Still, both reports of the opening night suggest that an antagonistically predisposed audience began to respond bodily to the performance and change through this interaction. Admittedly, there is a great temptation to romanticize this moment, taking both accounts at their word despite their respective proclivities for poetic and hyperbolic writing. In this light, it is also important to point out that this chapter engages with the field of cognitive science from an outside perspective. There is a danger of making premature associative leaps between theatre and cognitive studies or accepting without question certain scientific findings and trying to apply these complex findings to an equally complex art with broad strokes. So, this chapter cautiously proceeds by suggesting that the accounts above constitute an intersubjective exchange between actors and audience that can be understood as a commingling of infection and reflection both as metaphor and as metaphorically structured modes of performance. These modes of performance can be illuminated by recent neuroscientific and cognitive studies, and the material in the previous chapters can also illuminate these studies. That is to say, an investigation of the metaphors of infection and reflection can deepen our understanding of the cognitive functions at play in moments like the above, and draw attention to what the use of metaphor in cognitive studies may obscure about the emotional exchange between actors and actors and audience. To understand the potential interaction of these metaphors this chapter will first outline how the metaphor of

reflection can work in performance and in cognitive studies. This established, the conclusions drawn about acting and metaphor will detail our understanding about the emotional relationships that theatre can establish.

This study has already made reference to Hamlet's advise to the player's, observing that the purpose of play was to hold up a "mirror to nature." The prince continues, explaining that this mirror is meant to "show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure" (III.ii.20-24). The notion of showing images of virtue and vice that Hamlet refers to here echoes the purported function of English theatre coming out of the middle ages, a didactic function intended to present a template for virtuous behavior while also showing the penalties for the alternative. David Klein explains in his expansive review of early modern plays, *The Elizabethan Dramatists as Critics*, that many playwrights held on to this teaching function of theatre as a justification for theatrical performance that echoed its roots in the church, some employing the same metaphor as Hamlet to promote theatre's potential for moral reflection (Klein 91-92). The title page of Gascoigne's *Glass of Government* (1575) promises, as does the play's prologue, that this play was "so entitled because therein are handled as well the rewards for virtues as also the punishment for vices" (Klein 93). Lodge and Greene likely intended *A Looking Glass for London* (1589) to achieve similar ends. Finally, in his introductory scene to *Every Man Out of His Humor*, Ben Jonson has Asper explain his purpose on the stage:

Well, I will scourge those apes,
And to these courteous eyes oppose a mirror,
As large as is the stage whereon we act;

Where they shall see the time's deformity

Anatomised in every nerve, and sinew,

With constant courage, and contempt of fear. (Prologue 118-121)

For Jonson, his play is an opportunity to boldly show his audience the warts of the time as a kind of instructive correction. What Klein observes about Hamlet's advice, however, is that the mirror is not specifically didactic, nor does Shakespeare describe theatre's purpose as such elsewhere. Instead, when Shakespeare writes of the function of theatre he more readily fits the growing sentiment that theatre's primary function is to stir mirth, so much the better if the audience profits from the performance too (92, 272-273).

Embedded in a larger proscription for moderation in voice and action on the part of the players, Hamlet's advice may seem to call for an onstage reality that resembles the day-to-day experience of the audience. Shakespeare's very theatrical plays contradict this precept. They involve supernatural events, characters from the past or from distant (or invented) locales, and have the actors speaking in poetic language. The acting itself could not have been entirely realistic in a contemporary sense, with characters at once addressing, then suddenly oblivious to, the surrounding audience and all female roles played by men. If we assume that the playwright meant to guide the actors to draw wholly from the observable behaviors and experiences of early modern London's play-going audience we would mistake Shakespeare's use of *theatre as reflection*. Yet this theatre of reflection did become the project of a great many theatre practitioners from the late nineteenth century onward. While a great deal could be said, and has been said, concerning the difference between the mirror that Shakespeare describes through his Danish prince and the reflections of reality produced as a result of naturalistic drives in

theatre of the nineteenth and twentieth century, cognitive studies of the last twenty years present a new opportunity to reconsider the role of reflection in theatre.

In *Engaging Audiences*, Bruce McConachie reports that relatively little theatrical scholarship has engaged with cognitive studies in recent years, and even less scholarship has addressed the specific discoveries concerning mirror neurons. Despite the surge of evidence mounting in the field of cognitive science that demonstrate the mirror neuron system's role, or potential role, in interpersonal experiences such as action understanding, learning, the development of language, understanding intentions, and most potentially important for theatre empathy, McConachie writes that as of his 2008 writing he is aware only of himself and Amy Cook's article in *Theatre Journal*, "Interplay: The Method and Potential of a Cognitive Scientific Approach to Theatre" directly considering the possible implications mirror neurons may have for theatre (20-21). Since publishing *Engaging Audiences*, more works have engaged with this aspect of cognitive studies, notably Rhonda Blair's work, but a great deal remains to be considered concerning the emotional exchange between actors and between actor and audience that mirror neurons play a role in, especially with respect to the inherent reflective metaphor that structures this exchange.[†] McConachie, for instance, primarily considers how the audience receives theatrical performance, and for the most part considers mirror neurons in terms of how spectators share emotion within the audience. Blair deals with the actor's work on a role, but she is more interested in other aspects of cognitive studies, especially conceptual

[†] See: Blair, Rhonda. *The Actor, Image, and Action: Acting and Cognitive Neuroscience*. London: Routledge, 2008. Print. ; Blair, Rhonda. "Cognitive Neuroscience and Acting: Imagination, Conceptual Blending, and Empathy." *TDR: The Drama Review*. vol 53.4 (2009): 93-103. Print.

blending,[‡] which keeps her focus primarily on the individual actor rather than the emotional exchange between actors or the actor and the audience. As a result the phenomenon of emotional mirroring and the metaphorical structuring of this exchange remain fairly open for exploration.

McConachie and Blair do not deny the value and usefulness of established theoretical approaches of engaging with theatre practice in favor of cognitive studies. Blair acknowledges that a healthy postmodern skepticism and, borrowing Elizabeth Wilson's term, a compulsive-antiessentialism has been extremely fruitful in contemporary critical fields. Blair believes this has also made scholars overly wary of scientific input. In turn, this wariness slowed theatrical scholarship's interaction with fields like cognitive science that investigate what is potentially a biological basis for emotion and human engagement with others. This, Blair believes, is due in part to a theoretical aversion to universals and suspicion of scientific studies that tend to universalize. This effectively and unnecessarily constrains the way some scholars examine the actor's art (*The Actor, Image, and Action* xi-xiv). Mirror neuron research provides a provocative window into how human beings interact, and because they seem to be foundational in the way that we respond to actions and share emotions they may well provide a field of interest for any who are concerned with the actor's art.

At the same time, the need for caution in applying the early discoveries of one field directly to the workings of another should be reiterated. It is unfortunate if the skepticism and antiessentialism that Blair mentions prevents theatre scholars from

[‡] The cognitive integration of different ideas. McConachie gives the example of *actor* and *character* merging in the mind of the spectator during a performance so that both are conceptualized as one and the same (*Engaging Audiences* 18).

engaging with cognitive neuroscience, but this is not to say that we jettison a certain amount of skepticism as we proceed. McConachie rightly notes that on the level of cognitive processes our biological natures and our cultural specificity are not easily separated. Who we are as a part of a species, as part of a culture and as an individual are distinct yet deeply interrelated things (*Engaging Audiences* 4-6). With this in mind, this study will consider the implications of mirror neurons for the emotional exchange between actors and between the actor and the audience in light of previously considered information concerning the interaction of metaphor and emotion as well as the role of emotional communities within a society. Just as Hamlet's mirror held up to nature suggested a very different mirror than those mirrors produced by naturalistic theatre, emotional infection and reflection in performance are not likely to be received the same across cultures, at different historical moments, or even within the same culture in concurrent emotional communities.

Mirror neurons may provide an underlying, biological basis for emotional exchange, but Zoltán Kövecses reminds us (Chapter I) that while some emotions seem to be universal, cultures construct the experience of these emotions in ways that are not always so translatable across cultures, especially evident through varied metaphorical constructions. Even when there are similarities in the physiological aspect of an emotional experience, different conceptualizations and perceptions of these emotions lead to subtle or overt differences in the experience of emotion. Kövecses notes, in reference to a 1998 study concerning Zulu metaphors of emotion, that while a speaker of Zulu and a speaker of English can experience anger similarly to one another, cultural differences in their metaphorical conceptualization of the same emotion (what aspects of the emotion

metaphors focus on or emphasize about the experience) make it likely that they will experience the emotion differently (Kövecses 167-169).

Just as the experience of an emotion may differ cross-culturally, and for that matter across emotional communities within a culture, so too we can assume does the experience of emotional exchange. We might assume that both anti-theatricalist writers in early modern London and the apprentices who left work to attend public performances had the same internal mechanism for emotional exchange, but they valued this shared experience very differently. Conversely, the audience that attended Barrault's *As I Lay Dying* may have included many of those who had previously attended Artaud's *The Cenci*, hoping to laugh at a failure. They may not have valued the mode of expression Barrault and his actors employed, minimal dialogue and non-realistic expressive gesturing by nearly naked actors, but something in the pulsating movement and rhythmic breathing of the actors in the mother's death scene drew the audience in to an intersubjective moment in which some level of enjoyment manifested, possibly as a result of synchronous movement that resonated in the bodies and breathing of the audience. For a better understanding of how this information can inform contemporary practice this study will revisit the initial sketch of the mirror neuron system provided in Chapter I.

Mirrors Neurons

Since the accidental discovery of mirror neurons in macaque monkeys, researchers have found evidence of a similar, though more complex, mirroring system in humans. As previously explained in Chapter I, mirror neurons are a specific type of neuron that function both as receivers of sensory input and initiators of motor output. That is, they function as action recognition cells, taking in visual and auditory input from

another's actions, and help to predict with some certainty what the goal or intentions of that action will be. These predictions can be made because simultaneously, the neurons initiate a corresponding action pattern in the observer, prompting a physical imitation of that action even if the observer never actually moves. Initial studies showed that these neurons varied widely. For example, some fire only for a specific action, like the particular grip of the hand on a cup and no other kind of grip (strictly congruent). Other sets (broadly congruent) fire when any action meant to achieve the same goal was observed. These broadly congruent neurons, then, would fire at any attempt at gripping a cup. Because of these particular cells many of the scientists involved in this research have noted that, on the neurological level, there is little to no difference between observing an action and performing it.[§] Of course, not every action that we observe induces a fully enacted response, nor necessarily a resonant emotional experience. What control we have over our own mirror neuron system is uncertain, but neurologist Marco Iacoboni proposes that this may be due to what he calls "super mirror neurons," an as yet undiscovered type of mirror neuron that potentially inhibits or modulates the activity of the mirror neuron system (*Mirroring People* 202). This seems like a logical theory given that the unconscious and automatic inner imitation created by mirror neurons does not

[§] For additional information on mirror neuron functions see: For more information on the functioning of mirror neurons I recommend the following: Iacoboni, Marco. *Mirroring People: The New Science of How We Connect with Others*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2008. Print; Stamenov, Maksim, and Vittorio Gallese. *Mirror Neurons and the Evolution of Brain and Language*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Pub, 2002. Print; Rizzolatti, G, L Fogassi, and V Gallese. "Neurophysiological Mechanisms Underlying the Understanding and Imitation of Action." *Nature Reviews. Neuroscience*. 2.9 (2001): 661-70. Print; Rizzolatti, Giacomo, and Corrado Sinigaglia. *Mirrors in the Brain: How Our Minds Share Actions and Emotions*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008. Print.

always manifest itself in action and so some mechanism could be in our neurological structure to perform this function.

Initially studies focused on action and observation, but interest quickly grew as to whether these neurons play a role in empathetic response. With the use of functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI), one of the primary tools for analysis of mirror neurons in humans, researchers found that overlapping neural networks (involved in emotional response and muscle recognition) activated along with neurons in the premotor cortex while a subject observed an emotional facial expressions. When matched with data about the functioning of mirror neurons as a whole these researchers posited “we understand the feelings of others via a mechanism of action representation shaping emotional content, such that we ground our empathic resonance in the experience of our acting body and the emotions associated with specific movements” (Carr 5497-5502). This type of facial mimicry was demonstrated as very significant in our ability to recognize emotions through a somewhat strange experiment in which participants watched a facial expression change from one emotional expression into another and identified as quickly as they could the emotion they saw. Some participants mimicked what they saw freely, others were asked to hold a pencil laterally in their teeth, inhibiting the movement of their facial muscles. Those that had free use of their facial expression were quicker in recognizing the emotional changes in the faces they observed (Niedenthal "When Did Her Smile Drop?"; “Embodiment in Attitudes”). While this study says nothing about whether the observers *felt* happiness change to sadness, it did demonstrate that on some level the participants depended on their ability to mimic others in order to perceive their emotions.

Without suggesting mirror neurons as the physical mechanism behind the unconscious mimicry they observed, one study showed that subtle synchronous movement can result at the perception of someone else's movement. In a series of experiments participants engaged in a task with a confederate who would deliberately plant a behavior: smiling, head rubbing or foot shaking. Recordings of the interactions compared to a baseline observation of the participant alone showed that the behavior that the confederate brought into the room increased in the participant. Not only did the first series of experiments show participants to be mirroring the facial expressions and behaviors of the confederates, but a second experiment showed that intentional mirroring by the confederate altered the participant's view of how their interaction went. During a simple task, confederates intentionally mirrored the movements of the participants. Those participants who were intentionally mirrored by the confederates reported a sense of flow in the task. They enjoyed the task more, felt it went better, and reported liking the confederate more when mirrored compared to interactions during which the confederates did not mirror their partners (Chartrand 893-910). This study does not suggest that emotions were directly shared between participants, but it does indicate that the kind of physical mimicry involved in these experiments registers, even if subconsciously, and creates a sense of pleasurable rapport between people. Elaine Hatfield, John Cacioppo, and Richard Rapson agree that mirrored movement and facial expressions facilitate a feeling of rapport and intimacy in dyads as well as situations when one person speaks with a group. They cite numerous studies in *Emotional Contagion* in order to support their claim that this (usually) unconscious synchronous movement is also foundational to the seemingly contagious spread of emotions (Hatfield 16-47). Since the discovery of a

neurological mirroring system in human beings, this emotional contagion has been increasingly linked to mirror neurons, and this emotional sharing has been theorized as a form of empathy. Even though we may not consciously register what is happening, we find pleasure in this transfer of actions and emotions.

The internal imitation of another's emotional state does not constitute the only means of empathetic response. A great deal of energy has been put into investigating whether the reflexive emotional response to the presence of another's emotions is foundational to a more cognitive response in which an observer evaluates another's emotions and sympathizes, or whether they are entirely separate neurologically. Indeed, a distinction is often made between an empathetic response (I feel what you feel) and a perspective taking response (I understand what you feel). The automatic, empathetic response has been theorized to be a result of the mirror neuron system, while a perspective taking response also called cognitive empathy depends on evaluations including our ability to comprehend their circumstances, the other's relative goodness in our opinion or what our relationship to them may be. Frans de Waal is quick to point out how easily an empathetic response can be shut off or turned to *schadenfreude* based on our perceived relationship to someone we see in pain.**

** Additional information in: Shamay-Tsoory, Simone G, Judith Aharon-Peretz, and Daniella Perry. "Two Systems for Empathy: a Double Dissociation between Emotional and Cognitive Empathy in Inferior Frontal Gyrus Versus Ventromedial Prefrontal Lesions." *Brain*. 132.3 (2009): 617-627. Print. ; Keen, Suzanne. "A Theory of Narrative Empathy." *Narrative*. 14.3 (2006): 207-236. Print; Molnar-Szakacs, I. "From Actions to Empathy and Morality - a Neural Perspective." *Journal of Economic Behavior and Organization*. 77.1 (2011): 76-85. Print; de, Waal F. B. M. "Putting the Altruism Back into Altruism: the Evolution of Empathy." *Annual Review of Psychology*. 59 (2008): 279-300. Print

It is this largely unconscious, automatic tendency to synchronize both physically and subsequently converge emotionally that Hatfield (et al.) have termed “emotional contagion” (4-5). As a means of relating emotional contagion to cognitive empathy, de Waal proposes a “Russian [nesting] doll” structure in order to imagine emotional contagion with its basis in motor mimicry as a core mechanism of immediately sharing emotions: the small doll in the center. While it is at the center, in de Waal’s construction, perspective-taking and sympathy do not necessarily build on it in order to achieve the same shared emotional result. Emotional contagion may underpin sympathetic responses and higher order emotional responses, but the mirror neuron response does not ensure them. Here it might be helpful to note that “higher order” brain functions are not necessarily those that are to be valued as better or more civilized, but neurologically developed later in the evolutionary process and so, in a way, built on top of it. As such, higher order cognitive functions are an outgrowth of core neurological functions like the mirror neuron system. They may work in combination, but sympathetic responses do not rely on emotional contagion and may occur independently of the mirror neuron system (“Putting the Altruism Back ...”). Any emotional stimulus could potentially trigger both emotional contagion and cognitive empathy reactions simultaneously; they shape one another providing something of a template of how our biology (emotional contagion) and our culture (cognitive empathy) interact.

We cannot be sure, for example, what the experiences of anti-theatricalist writers were at the public theatres or if they indeed did attend them at least often enough to form a basis for their attacks. Stephen Gosson initially came to London to be an actor and a playwright and William Prynne admits to going to four plays in his life so we can assume

that these two had some experience in the audience of a public theatre. If either of these men felt the pull of their mirror neurons while watching the lively (or lewd) actions of the players encouraging them to synchronize with the player, or felt one with the rowdy mass assembled before the stage, the sensation may have provided the felt experience for their metaphorical conceptualization of *passions as infectious* and *theatre as plague*.

Simultaneously, their acquired emotional values and norms of expressions (and their emotional communities) shaped or inhibited their “higher order” cognitive responses. They may have had the sensation of shared emotions, but notions of manly constancy and the need to resist passions may also have led them to feel repulsed by the subtle touch (*tango*) of the players and the crowd, turning whatever they felt in the theatre into scorn and disgust. Chapter II argued, other emotional communities valued collective emotion and identified the theatres as a place where this sensation could be poignantly felt. For many, the pleasure that they felt in sharing emotions within the crowd or from the players may have been a motivating factor in leaving the isolated pleasures that Gosson proscribed (especially to women) or the church services that so many apparently found to be wholly without pleasure despite also being in a large assembly.

The pleasure of a feeling of physical involvement may have been a determining factor in what audiences sought from the outdoor theatres and what they sought at the venues like the enclosed Blackfriars. The Blackfriars theatre, notes Andrew Gurr, was “more a place for witplay than swordplay” as part of his discussion of a growing rift in early modern London theatres between the attractions of poetry and spectacle (*Shakespearean Stage...* 211-212). The rift, in which economics and social hierarchy certainly played a role, was not only one of social class or a division of ocular and aural

enjoyment. The theatre going population could also have chosen one venue over another based on a preference for the kinesthetic involvement that audiences felt as part of a vigorous performance in a highly visible and active crowd or the potentially more subdued physicality of smaller and more enclosed spaces that relied on literary device and poetic beauty. These emotional communities of London were divided not on whether the infections of emotion must be avoided all together but on the degree and kind of physical expression and collective emotional involvement necessary for their enjoyment of a performance. It is perhaps for this reason that Ben Jonson, who usually privileged the poetic aspects of his plays over the performance, so readily published his plays. If collective emotions and physical embodiment were unnecessary, or at least less important than the language and arguments made in the text, then the solitary activity of reading the plays did little to alter Jonson's intended experience for his audience.

At this point it seems important, given the wide potential for variation in an audience's reactions to the emotional expressions of a performer, to investigate the metaphor of reflection implied in mirror neurons and the interaction of this metaphor with emotional exchange in the theatre. First, the metaphor of reflection may bring to mind a unidirectional flow, especially when mirror neurons are explained as instrumental to emotional contagion. Second, the metaphor of reflection, at least in the last century and a half, has often led to fairly naturalistic acting drawn from observations of day-to-day reality. This may give the impression that the only behaviors audiences resonate with emotionally have some basis in psychologically verifiable behaviors. Finally, the metaphor of reflection suggests that the emotion performed will be received by the

observer in exactly the same form. This issue relates to the theorized experiences of Gosson and Prynne above, but this study will complicate it further below.

Other discrepancies between mirror and the experience of emotional exchange between actors or an actor and the audience could also be addressed. Artaud, for example, would despise the metaphor of *theatre as reflection* not only because he did not think theatre should represent (or resemble) the day-to-day struggles of individuals, but also because for Artaud the theatre should not *represent* at all. The metaphor suggests that there is a reality, the lived experience of the audience, and a false copy of that experience played out before them. For Artaud, the theatre should be a reality of its own; a copy could not serve for his demanded function of theatre. The mirror metaphor also privileges a visual experience over auditory or kinesthetic experiences, but the theatrical experience is not limited in this way. Both theatre and the experience of shared emotions in a more general sense are multiple sensory experiences even when visualization is privileged. While either of these subjects could provide fruitful discussion, the three listed above must be addressed in order to start thinking about both infection and reflection as metaphors and potential modes for approaching performance. So, in the next section I will discuss the reciprocal exchange of emotions, the question of “realistic” representation, and discrepancies in exchange.

Dissonance with the Mirror Metaphor:

Rapport

Like metaphors of infection, the metaphors *theatre as mirror* or *emotion as reflection* do not necessarily convey a sense of constant emotional reciprocity between actors and audience. The metaphor of contagion itself suggests a carrier that then spreads

a virus to the group. *Emotion as contagion* then constructs the spread of emotion from a single source into other bodies. Emotional reflection in theatre can easily be conceptualized as the audience mirroring the emotions of the performer. This is not surprising and could even be stated as the goal of many actors: sharing their subjective experience with an audience. Any actor, however, could probably attest that the role the audience plays in performance is not so simple, and the emotional information coming from the audience has a strong impact on the performer. Even in a darkened and quiet house the audience is not simply a passive body. The director Vsevolod Meyerhold's student Igor Ilinsky recorded how his teacher felt about the active role that an audience has on a performance:

Meyerhold considered the spectator to be an integral part of the performance. He felt that in many ways (with noise, movement, laughter, coughing) the actor could feel the relationship the spectator had to the spectacle... the audience does exist, breaking into the performance with laughter, applause, coughing and rustling. All this at one time disturbs, and another time helps the actor, improves his playing, helps to shorten or lengthen pauses, enlivens or quiets what happens onstage, distracts or inspires the actor. A tragedy can be heightened by the blowing of noses, comedy by laughter. (Cole 505)

Meyerhold acknowledged that the audience's emotional input provokes change in the performance whatever the preparations made in rehearsal. The actor can try to ignore this input, but very likely this emotional feedback will have some effect on her performance, conscious or unconscious. The emotional feedback may be dissonant with the emotional effect that the actor prepared for (laughter at unexpected moments) or it might resonate

with and amplify the actor's own emotions. If the actor does not expect or give some attention to the feeling coming from the audience she may create a sense of emotional distance from the audience. As mentioned above, there is pleasure in synchronous movements and emotions. This distance may be a desirable effect, perhaps setting a character up in an antagonistic relationship to the audience or fostering antipathy rather than empathy for the character. If not, emotional mirroring is not the only way to enjoy a performance, but the actor's performance may feel emotionally cold.

This is not to say that the actor must follow every perceived emotional change from the audience. Emotions in the audience and the actor need not always mirror from moment to moment in a performance, and not every audience member experiences the same moment in the same way. Still, if the actor stays open to the emotional input of her audience, the feeling she perceives from them, this could be a useful way of enhancing the performance and subtly molding every performance to each specific audience. There is an integral, emotional relationship that develops between the actor and the audience during any given performance, but it is important to remember that the actor never interacts with the same audience from performance to performance. In Herbert Blau's words, the audience "does not exist before the play but is *initiated* or *precipitated* by it; it is not an entity to begin with but a consciousness constructed. The audience is what *happens*" (25). The presence of an emotionally charged audience, the feeling that the actor gets from them, alters the performance both consciously and unconsciously. If the actor is open and attentive to this emotional input, she can use it to enhance her performance whether by sustaining the mirrored emotional rapport or making deliberate breaks from it. This exchange between actor and audience changes constantly and never

repeats precisely the same way from one performance to the next since the audience and the actor are both different.

An example of this can be seen in the Antony Sher's chronicle of preparation for the role of Richard III, *Year of the King*. Here, Sher recollects the impact his audience has on the interpretation and performance of a role. The actor writes that at an early point in his process he is concerned that his Richard will be funny, but he feels that he must instead root his performance in pain. This struggle dogs his preparation for the role. He gives the example of what might happen through a story about his portrayal of Tartuffe. He explains, "in *Tartuffe* rehearsals I remember saying, 'I don't think its funny at all what he does in this household. It disturbs me.' But at the first preview, at the first whiff of the audience's delight in this bloodsport, I was off; inventing snorts, hops, dancing eyebrows before their very eyes. The irresistible drug of laughter" (58). Sher is slow to accept that Richard III is funny and admits to having difficulty: "the humor of the character is still a mystery and one which only a live audience can solve" (221). Indeed, only in the first preview does Sher seem to fully realize how his character works. From his first interaction with the audience Sher seems to feel the audience coming closer to him or moving further away. Sometimes this sensation is describable, hearing gasps upon his first appearance (on crutches and deformed) he decides to "tease" them with glimpses of his hump because he feels they are straining to see it. Other moments he seems to just receive a sense of closeness or disjointedness with the audience causing him to make alterations or corrections to his performance. He feels them out and they provoke him to new attempts in the business during his brawl with Lady Anne, slipping a crutch between her legs. Following intermission, he writes simply "Feel they're with me now," then

adding, “I’m playing the humor much harsher, less sycophantically than before, making them enjoy it on my terms” (236-237). Sher begins his process making strong choices that often he is not willing to compromise, but by the time performances come about he approaches them with a less certain openness. He realizes that audience input in the moment of performance can sharpen or alter his performance. Suddenly, the performance becomes more fluid and adaptable to the moment.

Sher’s performance is shaped by the emotional input he receives from the audience even as he shapes their experience with his performance. However, he does not yield agency up entirely. He begins a rapport with the audience, allowing the emotional input he receives from them to egg him on to new choices. He presents them with his image, they reflect surprise and desire to him, he feels it and returns to them a taunting strut to keep their interest piqued. Once he feels he has established this rapport, he returns to the harsh humor he felt was important to his portrayal. He perhaps feels the same delight in bloodsport from this audience as he did for *Tartuffe*, but instead of heightening his performance to give them more of the delight he senses that they want, he amplifies the harshness of the humor, perhaps hoping to sour the humor that they were so willing to share with this murderous king. In this sense, the actor and audience reflect back on one another, sharing an emotional experience and amplifying it. At times this bounce breaks and either the actor or the audience sends new emotional input. Sher makes the humor more brutal, shading the emotional rapport differently as if he is sending out a contagion he hopes for them to catch. As he said, “enjoy it on my terms.” Perhaps some are infected and able to find pleasure in sustaining an emotional rapport. Others may feel growing disgust, letting their automatic and unconscious reaction give way to evaluative cognitive

functions that begin antipathy in them and prepare them to feel good when they see Richard unhorsed and defeated.

In Chapter II, this dissertation suggested that Shakespeare's Gloucester may provide an insight into a possible infectious mode of performance written in to *Richard III*. Now that the metaphors of emotional transfer are coming into sharper focus, necessitating elaboration on this suggestion. This elaboration will also complicate the theory by relating it to an overlapping reflective mode. Self admittedly, Gloucester takes the role of the Vice with regard to his relationship to the audience. Like the traditional clown, he is able to maintain a verbal rapport with the audience, but the tenor of his humor is markedly darker. David Mann's description of the Vice emphasized this ability to maintain contact with the audience while also "exploiting any opportunities for spontaneous fun that might present themselves" allowing the audience to feel like part of the action of the play (Mann 22). Gloucester's wordplay, his verbal enticements of the audience and his opening speech's string of "our"s play a part in maintaining this contact. The text encourages the actor to establish a rapport with the audience, to bring them into Gloucester's murderous machinations. In this sense the actor becomes an emotionally infectious agent, attempting to excite the audience into conspiracy with him by using his own delight and bloodlust. He approaches them (physically, verbally) and tries to stir something in them (emotionally). He employs the subtle touch that anti-theatricalists interceded against because they believed the touch of contagion (*inficio*) altered the audience permanently, corrupting their moral natures or weakening their defenses against outside influence.

If the actor playing Gloucester succeeds, the audience begins an unconscious mirroring, perhaps only an internal imitation that carries with it emotional associations. The physical and emotional rapport established, the actor and the audience may begin mirroring one another, heightening each other's emotions or provoking the actor to new attempts. McConachie writes of emotional contagion that in the presence of rage "audiences will recognize and embody this emotion, or any other [emotion]. Put us together in an auditorium and our bodies and minds are like the inside of a good violin; we resonate and amplify emotions with each other" (*Engaging Audiences* 95). Add to this that emotional resonance rebounds on the actor, and the actor, if attuned to the audience, can feel the same emotional amplification. Alternately, the actor or the audience may instigate a sudden emotional shift, a new contagion emerging. The new emotional information may be a deliberate shift by the actor. Laughter suddenly dissolves into tears and the audience, already deeply involved in emotional rapport with the actor, may then easily follow this sudden shift. Otherwise the audience, perhaps more engaged with the laughter spreading among themselves than with the actor's emotions specifically, may continue their laughter.

In this conceptualization of emotional contagion in theatre the actor deliberately attempts to spread emotion into the audience. This may be done without ever addressing the audience as directly as Gloucester does in *Richard III*, but rather staying within the illusion of a scene seemingly unaware of an audience. On a neurological level there appears to be little difference in whether the person observed is in direct contact with the

observer or even appears aware of being observed.^{††} The contagious emotion spreads to the audience and the audience returns emotional input to the actor. At this point the actor may continue a mirroring exchange, allowing the emotion a chance to amplify and provide new impulses within the rebounding, or the actor may break from the emotional exchange. After breaking from the dual mirroring the actor may begin another emotional strain hoping that this new emotion infects the audience. Potentially the audience (or some segment of it) may break the emotional mirroring too, affecting the actor. This, however, depends largely on how easily the actor is able to receive emotional input from the audience. The actor on the Elizabethan public stage, surrounded by a visible assembly with no qualms about shouting back at the stage, presumably had a better chance to be infected by a range of emotional input than an actor focused on her scene partner before an audience accustomed to relative silent enjoyment and barely visible in what little refracted light spills into the house. Either mode doubtlessly has its advantages and disadvantages and speaks in some measure to what kind of exchange is prioritized by the practitioners. In either case, emotional input reaches the stage that may be incorporated into the performance or (consciously at least) ignored.

It should be noted here that the relative amount of control an actor or director has over this emotional rapport with the ever-changing audience and unpredictability of live performance is fairly small compared to other elements of a play. Actors and audience will, however, establish some form of emotional exchange, and practitioners can only

^{††} This is especially apparent in the many studies that show that mirror neurons will fire not only at a live presence but in response to a recording or in Vittorio Gallese's claim that mirror neurons fire in the presence of lifelike sculpture, saying "When you see the Baroque sculptor Gian Lorenzo Bernini's hand of divinity grasping marble, you see the hand as if it were grasping flesh." (qtd. in Blakeslee, Sandra. "Cells That Read Minds." *The New York Times* (January 10, 2006): F1, F4.)

benefit from attempting to understand, engage with and find ways to prepare for this relationship. Exploring metaphorical conceptualizations of the relationship between actor and audience constitutes one way of engaging with and shaping this relationship. The metaphors we use to structure our expected emotional relationship to the audience or the function of theatre will shape the theatre we create.

Meaningless Arm Movements

As mentioned above, Hamlet's advice to the players is a call for moderation in gesture and passion. The prince advises them neither to be "too tame" nor to overstep the "modesty of nature." We cannot be certain what this balance translated into in terms of performance style or norms of expression in early modern theatres. Not only is it doubtful that Shakespeare was calling for the kind of naturalistic illusion that grew out of the late nineteenth century, but as Barbara Rosenwein points out in her definition of emotional communities, norms of emotional expression are no more stable over time than they are across contemporaneous cultures (2). That said, Shakespeare and the actors of early modern London must have found a relatable method of expressing emotional content for the continually returning emotional communities in the audiences of the public theatre. In this sense they mirrored the nature of those in their audiences without necessarily mimicking the day-to-day observable behaviors of London's population.

A naturalistic style dominated much of Western theatre during the twentieth century. Here, the metaphor of *theatre as reflection* highlights a close resemblance between the action and characters on stage to an observed reality outside the theatre. With this use of the metaphor of reflection still so present in contemporary theatre it may tinge the notion of mirroring emotions in such a way that suggests that those emotions

can only be elicited and sustained by way of psychologically grounded behaviors. But do we only mirror those behaviors that are part of our everyday experience? Can we only draw emotional content from the physical expressions that are part of our own norms of expression?

In the 1930s John Martin, the dance critic for *The New York Times* hailed by many as America's first dance critic, made it part of his personal mission to draw attention to modern dance by finding a way to speak about the emerging form. In *The Dance* he describes modern dancers in a way that echoes Expressionist theories of acting as well as contemporary theories of emotional contagion. He writes:

The modern dancer, instead of employing the cumulative resources of academic tradition, cuts through directly to the source of all dancing. He utilizes the principle that every emotional state tends to express itself in movement, and that the movements thus created spontaneously, though they are not representational, reflect accurately in each case the character of the particular emotional state.

Because of the inherent contagion of bodily movement, which makes the onlooker feel sympathetically in his own musculature the exertions he sees in somebody else's musculature, the dancer is able to convey through movement the most intangible emotional experience. (105)

Rather than communicate through the established system of signs in ballet, for example, the modern dancer could directly access an emotional source and manifest that emotional content in the body. The audience feels the actor's emotions within themselves because of an infection of emotion carried into their own bodies. Martin spent a great deal of energy trying to delineate this empathetic response of internal mimicry, and his findings

presage those of cognitive science in the last few years, but he also suggests that we unconsciously synchronize with movements and emotional expressions that are not part of our everyday experience of movement.

For a time scientists were not sure whether or not mirror neurons fired only during the observation of goal-oriented movements (picking up a piece of fruit and taking a bite) or whether they also recognized and simulated the movements of non goal-oriented movements. One study set out to test this question and, as several of the scientists would later put it, the mirroring is “present not only during the observation of goal-oriented movements, but also during the observation of meaningless arm movements” (Rizzolatti “From Mirror Neurons to Imitation...” 256). Outside the context of a neurological study these so-called “meaningless” movements might actually convey quite a bit of emotional information. A more recent study took as a given that mirror neurons fire when perceiving movements without apparent physical goals. They showed that mirror neurons fire vigorously in the sight of dance movements, specifically in sight of performances of capoeira and classical ballet. The study’s main objective was to see whether mirror neurons activated more strongly in sight of specific acquired motor skills, that is whether a classically trained ballet dancer’s mirror neurons fired more vigorously while watching ballet than capoeira and vice versa. The study demonstrated this theory’s plausibility but also that mirror neurons still fired during component movements that overlapped (the preparation and execution of a jump for example), and that non dancers still had mirror neuron reactions to the dances they saw (Calvo-Merino 1243-1249). Perhaps unsurprisingly, dancers more specifically and strongly embodied dance moves in which

they were expertly trained, but that training did not preclude the inner imitation that Martin explained in his works.

The actor's movements in Barrault's mostly pantomimed *As I Lay Dying* may well have resembled modern dance in some measure. Barrault writes in his memoir that the actors embodied characters as well as "their environment: the river, the fire, the rasping of the saw breaking down wood" and Barrault himself in playing the bastard son wanted "to be at one and the same time man and horse" (*Memories* 67). Despite the initial hostility and laughter that met the actors after the curtain lifted, they continued. With time Barrault could feel the audience become attuned to the performance as it led to the rhythmic pulse during the mother's death scene. If we are to believe reports, by that point, facilitated by the rhythm the saw established and the full body movements of the performers, the breath in the whole theatre synchronized. It is possible that this mirrored action led to an emotional convergence between actors and audience, the kind of pleasurable synchronicity that affects one's sense of whether an exchange went well on a large scale. The atmosphere that Artaud reported as changing so drastically, changed because of infectious movements leading into a mirrored rapport that has little to do with psychologically grounded behavior. In light of his praise for Barrault's work, it is a small leap from this performance to Artaud's signals through the fire, his expressive hieroglyphs and his means for affecting (or infecting) the organism directly. What this moment illustrates then is perhaps the superfluity of Artaud's desired spectacle. In light of the actor's contagious affect on the audience even when not performing actions observed from life outside the theatre, of which Artaud was acutely aware, some of the

demands on the Theatre of Cruelty that Artaud could not meet seem extraneous for achieving this aspect of his desired affect.

Again, this does not mean that the presence of an actor embodying emotions or expressing physically in ways that the audience is unaccustomed to will automatically unify actor and audience in a shared emotional experience. Herbert Blau noted the strange combination of intimacy and distance felt in the audience during Grotowski's *Dr. Faustus*. Despite the attempt to close the distance between actor and audience by physically placing the audience at the same table with Faustus as his dinner guests, Blau notes that the performance played exclusion and intimacy against one another as the guests "feel all the more intimately the autonomy of the performance, its devout and forbidding presence" (*The Audience* 149). The incredible physical expression of Grotowski's actors potentially prevents emotional contagion by virtue of the fact that it feels at once intimate and unapproachable. The physicality of Faustus may resonate in the spectator's body and potentially stir their emotions, but if the expressions are so far outside their accustomed emotional norms, some in the audience may feel themselves coming to the emotional equivalent of a language barrier.

Inexact Transfers

In *Metaphors We Live By*, George Lakoff and Mark Johnson explain a major problem with Michael Reddy's metaphorical conceptualization of language. Reddy constructs the sharing of ideas with language using a "conduit metaphor." This metaphor takes ideas to be like objects that can be packaged in words and given to a receiver. What this metaphor assumes, then, is that the meanings of words are self-evident, that the package received will, when opened, contain exactly the same object as was originally

placed in the package (11-12). This is by no means a new problematizing of language, but this way of thinking about language and metaphor can also serve as a reminder that emotional meaning is not inherent in the actor's or the audience's expressions.

Oftentimes studies on emotional contagion and mirror neurons are so focused on the biological reaction of mirroring that emotions may appear to be universally conceptualized and experienced. As this dissertation has tried to establish, emotions may have universal components but they are structured in a range of ways across cultures and from emotional community to emotional community. Even some of his antagonistic critics acknowledged the passion of Artaud's portrayal of the father in *The Cenci*, but if the critics felt his passion they did not receive from him a shared meaning nor did they find pleasure in his performance.

Furthermore, it should be acknowledged that not all audience members attend a performance to feel an intimate emotional exchange. In the extreme example of the anti-theatricalists, the felt experience of emotional exchange disturbs these particular members of the audience; whatever the actors felt, Gosson and Prynne wanted no part of it. In "Kinesthesia, Empathy, and Related Pleasures," Matthew Reason and Dee Reynolds survey audience responses to determine the kinds of pleasure that audiences seek from watching dance. Reason and Reynolds found that spectators constantly shifted modes of engagement when watching dance, finding pleasure in some modes more than others (though some had difficulty breaking out of their accustomed modes). They report on some of their findings,

Broadly speaking, the desire for distance and escapism was identified as a significant motivation among the frequent classical ballet spectators who

participated in the research. In contrast, the desire for a visceral response to intimacy and intensity was a different kind of approach that was adopted by some in terms of all dance (including ballet) but was more frequently evident for certain kinds of contemporary dance. (Reason 70)

The researchers theorize that in both cases that the spectators are enjoying some form of kinesthetic empathy but some prefer to feel the sensation as an appreciation for the grace of a virtuoso performer far beyond their own abilities while others enjoy the sensual feeling of engaging in the dance with the performer (as if dancing in their seats), or as Reason and Reynolds note, “investing the self into the body of the other” (71). Similarly, not all audiences will enjoy the feeling of emotional transference; they may prefer to engage with the performance in another way. Artaud’s critics certainly refused to engage with *The Cenci* in the way he wanted them to, many preferring to experience an intelligible story or a performance that would adhere to classical expressions of emotion (Blin 128-144). These preferences in both dance and theatre may be explained with reference to personal background, social class, or through emotional community as this dissertation has done.

So far this dissertation has sought to find a way to talk about the important dynamic of emotional exchange between actors and audience. The flood of cognitive studies relating to mirror neurons in recent years helps to understand the mechanics of this exchange often taken to be a theatrical given. These studies, however, describe a phenomenon that has accumulated several structuring metaphors throughout the history of theatre. Determining what this emotional exchange meant for different groups (emotional communities) can be explained in part by investigating what that metaphor

meant for that group in their historical context. This investigation can, in turn, inform contemporary performance and provide perspective for the effect of mirror neurons on performance. Finally, in a conversation between theatre and cognitive studies we can begin to connect an understanding of mirror neurons, nuanced by an exploration of the metaphors of infection and reflection, to practical application for actors.

In an article about cognitive studies and theatre Rhonda Blair reminds the reader that an actor “cannot ‘work’ at the neural level” (Blair "Cognitive Neuroscience and Acting" 100). Indeed, we cannot engage our mirror neurons by a force of will in the way that we move our limbs or speak a line. That said, we can facilitate their activation through indirect means and attend to the emotional input they give us about other actors or the audience, encouraging this unconscious response through conscious training. Knowing that these cells activate better under certain circumstances (for instance when an actors muscles are loose enough to perform “inner imitations”) may affect actor training or the way a play is presented. We cannot force an audience to engage their mirror neurons either, but we can create conditions that facilitate or inhibit their neural firing. Finally, as part of our conceptualization of the emotional relationship that these neurons enable may be metaphorically conceptualized, theatre artists must engage with their metaphors. This is not because metaphorical structuring debilitates theatre or because certain of our metaphors should be given preference while others ought to be abandoned. Rather, this study suggests that theatre artists, scholars and critics must pay attention how we shape theatre with metaphors. What do our metaphors highlight about the theatre we want to create? What do these same metaphors obscure? What do they tell us about how we structure the relationship between actor and audience, especially the emotional

exchange between them? What possibilities do they hide from us? What do they say about what we perceive as the theatre's function?

CHAPTER V

METAPHORS OF COMMUNICATION

It has been the goal of this study to provide a framework for analyzing emotional communication in the theatre, especially emotional exchange that occurs between actors and audience. This dissertation has taken as a foundational point the premise put forward in George Lakoff and Mark Johnson's *Metaphors We Live By* that we tend to conceptualize certain abstract or difficult to deal with ideas by metaphorically correlating these ideas with others that are more concrete. This association creates a metaphorical relationship wherein one thing is understood in terms of another, a process that highlights some features of the idea while obscuring other aspects (115). Emotions provide a prime example of an idea that is often understood in terms of another, as demonstrated in Zoltán Kövecses' *Metaphor and Emotion*, but the transfer of one's emotion to another is often similarly understood through a metaphorical conceptualization. This becomes very important when analyzing theatre practitioners who involve in their work some form of emotional transference.

Kövecses proposes in his work that emotions and metaphor interact in such a way that the experience of an emotion is culturally inflected by the metaphors that a particular culture uses to describe the emotion. This study has built on this point, attempting to demonstrate that the experience of theatre is shaped by the metaphors used to conceptualize the relationship between actors and audience. These metaphors sometimes

come from the practitioners themselves, as in Artaud's structuring of *theatre as plague*, and they can also be applied to the theatre from the outside, as in the theatre of early modern London. Despite the potentially universal biological basis for emotions and their expressions, emotions are not stable over time or cross-culturally in the sense that emotions are also conceptualized through particular cultural norms of expression and emotional values (emotional communities). This dissertation has tried to demonstrate that emotional exchange is similarly conceptualized differently depending on specific historical factors (notions of the body and how it works at a given time) and cultural values of emotional exchange (whether the transfer of emotion is valued within a specific group and what expressions of emotion transfer). Groups that valued emotional exchange sought it out in theatres that provided the kind of emotional expression that they valued. Others balked at their attempts at emotional exchange and sought different pleasures in the theatre or avoided the theatre altogether.

If emotional exchange is a central question for theatre, then practitioners and theorists can benefit greatly from examining the metaphors used to structure this relationship. The metaphors of infection and reflection, recurring metaphors used in Western theatre, yield a great deal of information about the expected function of theatre and its relationship to the audience as conceptualized in different historical and cultural moments. In Chapter II, this dissertation investigated what infection meant in the context of early modern London in order to determine how *theatre as infection* could have informed the acting and the emotional relationship between actor and audience. The movement of passions from one body to another conceptualized as an infectious transfer of spirits irradiating from the body, especially from the eyes, may have had a strong

influence on the relationship of an actor to the audience of the time.* For contemporary practitioners working with Shakespeare's texts this examination of the infectious movement of emotions provides useful insight into a relationship with the audience that is embedded in the text itself. The early modern notion of the power of eye contact with the audience, for example, for the purpose of infecting them with emotion could inform contemporary performance. The oft-used term "direct address" suggests a fairly undefined communication with the audience. Taking into account the potential emotional relationship a moment of direct address may have been structured to facilitate, the actor can take moments within the script to emotionally provoke the audience. Characters could be singled out as especially strong carriers of emotion and moments within the text could be found for them to "hold interlocutions with the audients" of an infectious nature (II.ii.45). The texts hold within themselves passages that encourage the actor to directly share content with the audience. Understanding that this may have been coupled with a view of the body as a permeable structure and an infectious view of emotions shades these moments of sharing in a way that contemporary productions may choose to exploit.

Artaud's attempt to revitalize and repurpose metaphors of infection in theatre, mostly in theory, evoked an overlapping but ultimately very different relationship to the audience. The theatre he demanded can be understood in greater detail when determining what the metaphors of infection and reflection meant for his theatre. In the essay "No

* Especially seen in the previously cited works: Bacon, Francis, and William Rawley. *Sylva Sylvarum, or, A Natural History, in Ten Centuries Whereunto Is Newly Added, the History Natural and Experimental of Life and Death, or, The Prolongation of Līe [Sic]*. London: Printed by J.R. for William Lee, and are to be sold by George Sawbridge, 1670. Print. ; Bacon, Francis, James Spedding, Robert Leslie Ellis, Douglas Denon Heath, and William Rawley. *The Works of Francis Bacon*. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, and Company, 1800. Print. ; Ficino, Marsilio. *Commentary on Plato's Symposium on Love*. Sears Jayne ed. Dallas: Spring Publications, 1985. Print.

More Masterpieces” Artaud claimed that dwindling audiences, the position of theatre as an “inferior art,” and attitude of attending the theatre only for distraction can all be traced to the increased attempts by theatre artists since the Renaissance to create the illusion of day-to-day reality on stage. Artaud laments that the theatre has been reduced to “a purely descriptive and narrative theater – storytelling psychology... the public is no longer shown anything but the mirror of itself” (*Double* 76). Artaud speaks to a problem he sees in reaching the audience emotionally on a metaphysical level, beyond the scope of psychologically based theatre. For Artaud, *theatre as reflection* reduces the capacity of actors to engage in a meaningful emotional relationship with the audience. Reflection kept the actor’s behaviors within a narrow realm of psychological behaviors that he thought could only reach an audience on an emotionally superficial level closer to reporting than feeling.

For this reason, Artaud uses the metaphorical emotional relationship of *theatre as plague* to structure a theatre that would be more than illusion; that would be a real operation. His structure led him to theorize a theatre wherein the director shapes the *mise en scène* to be an immersive event in which the actor, part of a larger spell, infects the audience through extreme expressions, like living hieroglyphs ignited by emotional force. To facilitate the infection Artaud sought methods to erase the defined territories of stage and auditorium. His own attempts to bridge the distance typically resulted in the expressions of emotion and encompassing sound effects described in Chapter III, but he also proposed that “in order to attack the spectator’s sensibility” the spectacle surround the audience. He writes “instead of making the stage and auditorium two closed worlds, without possible communication” a surrounding spectacle “spreads its visual and

sonorous outbursts over the entire mass of the spectators” (*Double* 86). In his first manifesto on Theatre of Cruelty he declared “We abolish the stage and the auditorium and replace them by a single site... A direct communication will be re-established between the actor and the spectator, from the fact that the spectator, placed in the middle of the action, is engulfed and physically affected by it” (*Double* 96). For Artaud, and those who would attempt to realize his theories, the bounds of psychologically verifiable behavior were insufficient to infect the audience. The plague of theatre required that they attempt to erase the division of spectacle and spectator and reach their audience with expressions of emotion more intense than those found in naturalistic theatre.

Understanding Artaud’s metaphorical structuring of the desired emotional relationship between actor and audience illuminates why Artaud arrived at the conclusions he did when he theorized about how best to reach an audience. For Artaud, infection and reflection could not coexist within the same metaphorical conceptualization of theatre because they suggested entirely different relationships to the audience and ways of reaching them. This structuring of an emotional relationship can be understood in part through Artaud’s use of the metaphors in his own works, but investigating the emotional communities that shaped Artaud’s development as an artist also helped to paint a clearer picture of Artaud’s particular use of infection.

Locating the metaphors employed by a theatrical practitioner or theorist to describe the emotional exchange between actors and audience is an important step in illuminating their expected acting style, the relationship an actor must seek with the audience, and the function of emotions in theatre. Once these guiding metaphors are located they must be understood in that artist’s cultural context, and even more

specifically as a part of the emotional values and norms of expression of an emotional community. This becomes especially important in providing nuance to our understanding of a single metaphor's distinctly different use by different artists. Constantin Stanislavski's use of the metaphor of infection provides an illustrative contrast to Artaud on this point.

In 1917, Stanislavski wrote that people come to the theatre to be entertained but "leave it with awakened emotions and thoughts, enriched by the experience of having witnessed the beautiful life of a human spirit." He continues by saying that this awakening is all the more irresistible for being the result of many artists (not just a single actor) united in contributing to the undertaking of theatre, as opposed to any artist's single effort (in painting, sculpting, writing, for example). He explains:

This is a great massive and well-equipped force which acts together, moves together to make its impression on the mass of spectators, causing thousands of human hearts to beat as one. The highly charged atmosphere of the theatre draws out a contagious mass emotion. Besides, the spectators hypnotize each other and thus heighten the impact from the stage. (*Legacy* 198-199)

For Stanislavski the actor's emotional work, guided by the director and drawing from the playwright's character, produces an emotion effect. This emotional force infects the audience all the more easily because it is in harmony with the force of an entire production. Finally, the audience harmonizes with the production too. The mass of spectators synchronize with the work on stage (thousands of hearts beating as one) and so amplify the effect of the stage by spreading the contagion amongst themselves. Stanislavski credits the creation of this emotional harmony to every creative artist,

technician, and performer involved in the production, but the ultimate result he seeks is an emotional infection that flows from the actors on stage into the audience. This contagion unifies the whole theatre in a resonant emotion that amplifies within the audience. This emotional transfer emits from the actor, as mentioned in Chapter I, in invisible radiations of emotions that constitute the communication of the stage to the audience.

Sharon M. Carnicke and R. I. G. Hughes separately demonstrated the similarities in Stanislavski's view of the actor's art and Leo Tolstoy's measure of art's value in *What is Art?*, specifically its infectiousness. Hughes notes that both Stanislavski and Tolstoy believed that emotional infection in art was determined through three factors: the individuality of feeling, the clarity of the feeling and the sincerity of the artist expressing the emotion. Most important for both, the sincerity of an artist's emotion is determined largely by the artist's absorption in their emotion (Hughes 44). Stanislavski is very clear when writing about the actor's attention and concentration that the actor must have an object to focus attention on, but that the compelling and attractive allure of the auditorium must not be that focus of attention. Rather, the actor must find a more compelling focus on the stage, something that can draw the actors attention away from the auditorium. To Stanislavski, when an actor's attention slips into the audience, the actor begins to make a show for them, playing for them rather than sincerely absorbing their attention into some on stage object (*An Actor's Work*). Stanislavski's sense of absorption and sincerity echoes Tolstoy's who writes that:

As soon as the spectator, hearer, or reader, feels that the artist is infected by his own production and writes, sings, or plays, for himself, and not merely to act on

others, this mental condition of the artist infects the recipient; and on the contrary, as soon as the spectator... does not feel what he wishes to express, but is doing it for him, the recipient – resistance immediately springs up. (Tolstoy 165)

For the actor this means that an emotion must be generated within herself without the intention of spreading that infection into the audience. If the actor becomes filled with emotion then the infection is automatic, but when an artist aims to make the audience feel an emotion that the artist does not feel herself, the audience will be repulsed by the attempt.

For Carnicke the association is made between Stanislavski and Tolstoy as part of her attempt to illuminate the meaning of Stanislavski's "lost term." Carnicke finds that understanding Stanislavski's use of the term *perezhivanie* is vital to understanding his system itself if for no other reason than the frequency with which he uses the term. To begin understanding it, she points out its early appearance in *An Actor Prepares*. Tortsov has gathered the students together for a critique of their previous night's work. He tells them:

There are only two moments worth noting; the first, when Maria threw herself down the staircase with the despairing cry of 'Oh, help me!' and the second... when Kostya Nazvanov said 'Blood, Iago, blood!' In both instances, you who were playing and we who were watching, gave ourselves up completely to what was happening on the stage. Such successful moments, by themselves, we can recognize as belonging to the art of living the part. (*An Actor Prepares* 12)

Carnicke explains that the translator has rendered *perezhivanie* here as "living the part," but throughout Elizabeth Hapgood's translation "no single word or phrase emerges as a

consistent equivalent” though the word is most often translated into English as “experience” (Carnicke 107-110). Jean Benedetti translates this same passage using a term closer to Carnicke’s preferred definition, calling it the “art of experiencing,” and in this translation retains a line that explains the effect of experiencing the role on the audience. Benedetti adds to the translation that Tortsov and the audience “were stunned and fired by the same common emotion” (*An Actor’s Work* 110). The result of an actor’s ability to experience the emotions of her character spark an automatic sharing of that same emotion with the audience. Carnicke theorizes that Stanislavski purposely used Tolstoy’s precepts for emotionally infectious art as part of the foundation for his theories on acting as a way of legitimizing theatre as art on an equal footing with literature or the plastic arts. She reasons “Stanislavsky cleverly uses [Tolstoy’s] ideas to support the central goal of the Moscow Art Theatre – respect for theatrical art – through an implied tautology. If art infects its audience with the artist’s experiencing, and if acting does the same, then acting must be a legitimate art” (Carnicke 111-112). Indeed, Stanislavski explained theatre as functioning as a communication of emotions in which the audience takes silent part. Watching the actor, the audience, “sees, recognizes, understands, and is infected with their experiencing... In real art, influence proceeds of itself. It is based on the infectiousness of genuine feelings and experiences” (Carnicke 111).

Stanislavski sets up the relationship of the actor to the audience as one of an infectious emotional communication, but as this study has tried to demonstrate, not all emotional relationships conceptualized within the metaphor of *emotion as infection* or *theatre as infectious* connote the same relationship or the same expectations of audience involvement. Stanislavski’s use of the metaphor of infection highlights the passivity of

the audience. He does not find the audience unnecessary to performance, of course, and notes that “Playing without an audience is like singing in a room with a dead acoustic, full of soft furnishing and carpets. Playing to a packed and sympathetic house is like singing in a space with a good acoustic.” He continues by explaining that an audience “creates, so to speak, a psychological acoustic. It registers what we do and bounces its own living, human feelings back to us” (*An Actor’s Work* 238). The audience reverberates with emotion but the relationship is, for the most part, unidirectional. The audience does send emotional feedback to the actor and the actor reciprocates, but this communication of emotional input must remain indirect. In his lessons on communication he writes:

Yes, yes true, direct communication during a show, no, but indirect communication is essential. Both the difficulty and the uniqueness of our form of communication lie in the fact that it occurs with another actor and with the audience simultaneously. Communication with the former is direct, conscious, but with the latter it is indirect, unconscious, *through another actor*. It is evident that, in both cases, the communication is two-way. (237)

In essence, for Stanislavski’s emotional infection to work the worlds of the audience and of the actor must remain distinct, at least on the surface. The only direct emotional communication that can happen is between actors or among members of the audience. As Stanislavski notes above, the audience may “hypnotize” one another, but they are otherwise a sounding board for emotion. The actors must remain in constant emotional communication, but their attention must never shift into the audience. Only an emotional undercurrent unites the two, but when the audience becomes overtly aware of the

exchange the bond breaks. Stanislavski describes this emotional communication as involuntary response writing:

When the audience sees two or more characters exchanging their thoughts and feelings, it becomes involved in their words and actions involuntarily, rather like someone accidentally overhearing a conversation. It participates silently in these exchanges, sees them, understands them and is caught up in other people's experiences. It follows that the audience can only understand and indirectly participate in what is happening when the characters in the play are in communication with each [other]. If the actors do not wish to lose their grip on a large audience, they must take great care always to be in unbroken communication with their partner through their own feelings, thoughts and actions, which are similar to the feelings, thoughts and actions of the character. (232-233)

In some ways, Stanislavski's sense of infection works directly counter to Artaud's. For emotional infection to happen Stanislavski believes that the word of the stage and the world of the audience must remain distinct. The two bind only through an invisible exchange that, if acknowledged, disappears. The actors can only maintain it through a complete investment in the action of the stage and the reality set forth by the playwright. For Artaud, this absorption in an illusion of reality is precisely what prevents theatre's infection. For Artaud, infection can only happen through those actions that shatter the illusion and involve the audience in the same reality as the actor. This is what led Artaud to suggest, as others had before him, finding ways to create a single space that held both actors and audience, lighting the audience and actors equally, and surrounding them with

spectacle and sound (*Double* 93-98). This also provoked Artaud to seek out physical and aural ways beyond the scope of naturalistic theatre as a means of infecting an audience. The audience had to be intensely aware that they were there to be infected and subsequently purged, and he could only reach them through expressions of extreme intensity (his martyrs signaling through fire).

The public theatre of early modern London as it relates to the embedded practices in the works of Shakespeare, the absorptive theatre of Stanislavski, and the explosive theatre of Artaud present three distinct uses of the same metaphor to describe the emotional relationship between actors and audience. In each instance metaphors of infection highlight some aspect of this relationship and altered the expected acting meant to make use of infectious emotions. When viewed in conjunction with emotional communities involved with the theatres of these theatre artists (their emotional values and norms of expression) the metaphors reveal a great deal about potential acting style, the function of theatre, and the relationship cultivated between actors and audience.

These practitioners have also demonstrated differing relationships to the metaphor *theatre as reflection*, a metaphorical construction that could work in conjunction with *theatre as infection* (Stanislavski) or represents a deficient and incompatible way of relating to an audience (Artaud). As theatre continues to dialogue with cognitive studies, the metaphors of infection and reflection might begin to blur even though some theatre artists intentionally kept these metaphors distinct. The research into mirror neurons holds a potential meeting ground of art and science. Mirror neurons used to describe the phenomenon of emotional contagion could provoke this blend of metaphors of infection and reflection into one. This dissertation has demonstrated the metaphors of reflection

and infection as distinct, yet overlapping. In this way theatrical theories of emotional sharing illuminate the process of emotional mirroring described in cognitive studies. This dissertation suggests that theatrical notions of infection clarify aspects of the emotional relationship between actor and audience that the inherent metaphor of reflection in mirror neuron studies inadvertently obscure. Specifically those aspects examined in Chapter IV: that the transfer of emotions can be inexact, that only those expressions that fit the scope of observable psychological behavior transfer emotional content, and that emotional exchange is primarily unidirectional. For theatre and cognitive studies to fruitfully inform one another a similar reciprocal relationship should be encouraged through the scholarly explorations of both. Cognitive studies may help the theatre to define and call into question ways of working or assumptions like Peter Brook's (Chapter I) about emotional relationships by providing insight into how the mind interacts with the world. Conversely, the wealth of accumulated experience in theatre recorded by theatre practitioners can also fill in gaps for as yet undetermined aspects of emotional relationships and provide insight into the workings of emotional exchange that are not universal because of their biological basis but rather heavily determined by, for example, emotional community. For scholars and practitioners of either field, exploring metaphors of emotional exchange can go a long way toward explaining how emotional content is shared in a theatrical context. What do the metaphors highlight? What do they obscure? What does the metaphor suggest about the expectations of emotional expression and how do metaphors function to determine a specific relationship between actor and audience? This dissertation provides an initial framework for answering these questions whether

they refer to the metaphors of infection and reflection or to any of myriad other potential metaphors for emotional sharing between actors and between actor and audience.

Mirror Work

Exploring metaphor allowed this dissertation to begin constructing a concept of modes of performance that are metaphorically structured by notions of infection and reflection. These overlapping modes of performance for consideration in contemporary performance make use of the historical insights of *theatre as infection* and recent notions of *emotion as reflection*. In closing, this dissertation suggests that an understanding of the metaphorical conceptualization of emotional exchange in theatre might be applied to future considerations of actor training. This process begins by defining what these metaphors tend to suggest about the relationship between actors and audience, bearing in mind that every theorist and practitioner has specific, nuanced uses for these metaphors and that the metaphors productively share territory.

With respect to the emotional exchange between people, infection and contagion tend to suggest a more or less forceful alteration of another's emotions by producing that emotion oneself. This is not to say that emotional mirroring is not an instance of creating a feeling in another person, but the language of disease, taking a body from a state of health to a state of illness, suggests a more drastic change brought on by an expression of emotion directly aimed at another. This change may be brought on by an expression that is outside the norms of expression that the observer is used to. Infection suggests something that is potentially different from the observer's usual experience of expression but can still transfer emotional content. As opposed to metaphors of reflection, infection also suggests the potential for an inexact copy of that emotion in another. That is to say

that once that emotion enters another body it may mutate into some other expression that may or may not be resonant with the expression of the one initiating the emotion. Lastly, metaphors of infection highlight the transfer of emotional input that is not necessarily visible, but rather felt as if beneath the surface.

Reflection tends to highlight the opposite of this last aspect of infection. It suggests an exact replication that may or may not extend beyond a superficial level. It may also give the impression that one side of the exchange is more real than the other as the mirror is a flat image of the thing itself. Reflection does, however, draw attention to the amplification of emotion when both sides of the communication are seen to reflect one another. This is the kind of bounce back-and-forth that Meyerhold and Stanislavski separately referred to when describing the role of an audience in theatre, though the former saw this as reason to draw attention to the audience's presence and the latter found it a helpful but dangerous effect of playing before a live audience (Cole 238). This reflection back-and-forth between bodies allows for potential emotional input to come from either side of the exchange, something that the language of infection does not immediately bring to mind. Finally, the metaphor of reflection suggests that emotional content can be shared more indirectly, as Stanislavski believed it should be, without breaking away from the illusion of a scene.

Of course, this is not to suggest that an actor's emotions are not contagious when absorbed in the illusion of a separate reality any more than it suggests that the audience only reflects emotional expressions that fit within their accustomed norms of behavior. Instead, these metaphors each illuminate the potential emotional exchange between actors or between an actor and the audience differently, and also work together to enhance our

overall understanding of the emotional exchange in theatre by filling in the gaps of the other or providing alternative ways of approaching emotional transfer. A very basic, yet potentially complex, acting exercise may illuminate this point. The mirror exercise can incorporate aspects of emotional contagion and emotional reflection, making both metaphors part of actor training.

David Zinder offers several variations and explorations of the mirror exercise in his *Body, Voice, Imagination*. He observes that the exercise “is one of the most unfairly maligned group exercises in the literature of actor training, since it is regarded as the most basic in partner work, one best done in the first few lessons of ‘Acting 101’ and then forgotten.” Zinder then writes that he will devote considerably more energy to this exercise because it teaches the actor, by repeating the experience and developing it further with each iteration, to be aware of what happens as the actor sends radiations and the spectator receives them (101-102). Viola Spolin’s *Improvisation for the Theater* demonstrates that she had a similar respect for this exercise. Her series of mirror exercises cultivate a heightened engagement between partners as they take turns initiating movements in shorter intervals until “both are at once the initiator and the mirror (or follower), reflecting themselves being reflected” and dissolving “the walls between players” (Spolin 63). In this respect this ubiquitous exercise of mirroring another actor can be complicated so as to train the actor to be attentive to both giving and receiving emotionally charged expressions.

On the surface the exercise is simple enough. One actor tries to physically imitate the actions of the other actor. The mirroring partners should feel free to explore a full range of movement understanding that even an imperfect reflection resonates in their

partner's body. Spolin's directive that the actor be attentive whether they are truly (and fully) mirroring what they see in their partner or they are making assumptions about the movement and anticipating its form is important here. She observes that actors may see their partner begin a movement and, especially if it is a familiar action, assume they know how to complete it. This may lead the actor to mirror to imitate what they *think* they see, not what their partner may actually be doing (61). The actors should fully mirror the moment to moment changes in their partner, neither correcting mistakes after the fact nor anticipating the movement's end.

As the actors practice, alternating between reflector and reflected, they realize that mirroring the other's entire body (stance, facial expression, rhythm, actions) requires a great deal of attention. They must take in their partner as a whole and in the tiny details without getting so bogged down in analyzing the details that they miss in the next change. The exercise also requires that the actors be loose and alert in order to keep up with the constant changes they observe. In time, the actors may become more aware of how to foster in themselves a feeling of total receptivity, taking in impulses from the other and replicating them without analysis.

Practicing this free imitation could be a way of indirectly training the actor to receive emotional input. The mirror neuron research of the previous chapter suggested that emotions are easier to identify when the facial muscles are free to imitate the expression of the face being observed (as in the pencil inhibitor experiment).[†] If the actor

[†] Especially evident in: Niedenthal, Paula, Markus Brauer, Jamin Halberstadt, and Åse Innes-Ker. "When Did Her Smile Drop? Facial Mimicry and the Influences of Emotional State on the Detection of Change in Emotional Expression." *Cognition and Emotion*. 15.6 (2001): 853-864. Print; Niedenthal, Paula M, Lawrence W. Barsalou, Piotr Winkielman,

trains to be a receiver and reflector of physical input, they also potentially train their ability to be affected by emotional input. The mirroring exercise could train actors to unconsciously pick up on emotional cues and allow them to be amplified in their own bodies as they share the emotion back and forth. With the mirror exercise the actor trains to mirror more than the physical actions they observe; they train to receive and send back emotional input.

As the mirror exercise gets progressively more complicated it can turn into a constant communication wherein the sense of who is reflecting and who is initiating action is lost. Zinder calls this phase, when the distinction between mirror and mover dissolves, the “free mirror,” and notes that students often take this leap on their own quite by accident during the first stage of mirroring (106). Mirroring becomes a constant communication, a negotiation in which both actors must remain fully available to impulses from their partner and free to initiate something new. Here the actors may feel the contagious aspect of mirroring, the impulse to suddenly and deliberately change the flow of exchange. This impulse may come from within or as a result of something that their partner is doing. The impulse may simply emerge from the exchange without an easily defined originator. Ideally, the actors train to keep a high level of attention on one another while also freely changing the course of the exchange based on sudden emotional impulses.

Building from this point the actors can be given an emotional provocation to begin their mirror exchange. For example, the exercise starts with the suggestion that the actors begin an exchange with an emotionally charged word. The teacher provides a word

that the actors base their movements on that may be an emotion (as in “joy”) or a word that may have emotional connotations for the actor (as in “home”). The feeling provides the impetus to begin moving. If “home” is the word provided, the actors need not produce realistic movement of entering a doorway, setting down keys and looking around to see if anyone else is home. Rather, they simply move with what is hopefully an emotionally charged image affecting their exchange. The exercise is silent and so needs no explanation. The actors allow emotion to affect their movements and remain open to emotional input from their partner. The mirror exercise then becomes a foundation for expressing and receiving emotional content from cues that are not necessarily verbal, for staying attentive to emotional shifts in exchanges with other actors, and for purposely sending emotional content to another that alters the exchange. As with Spolin’s mirror exercises the partners may find that the exercise “produces a penetrating involvement with each other” based on a constant negotiation of initiation and reflection (62). They may further find that emotional input amplifies between them in a reflective bounce, or that subtle infections of emotion alter the exchange in sudden and unpredictable shifts.

This proposed series of exercises only constitute an initial sketch of how understanding metaphors of emotional exchange can be expanded for use beyond analyzing the expected relationships between actor and audience of specific theorists and practitioners. A great deal of how we understand our world is structured through metaphorical knowledge, understanding one thing in terms of another. The relationship between actors and between actor and audience is no different. This does not demonstrate a deficiency in our ability to grasp abstract concepts like emotions. Rather, metaphors are tools we can use to better handle concepts that don’t readily lend themselves to other

ways of knowing. In deepening our apprehension of certain facets of a given concept, these tools, however, also obscure other elements. For this reason it is important to investigate how a theatre artist, theorist, or critic employs a given metaphor. Practitioners and scholars alike can question in what context a metaphor is used, and what (intentionally or not) the use of metaphor obscures. Emotional exchange in theatre is just such a concept. This dissertation provides a framework for investigating metaphorical conceptualizations of theatre and provokes experimentation with metaphors of emotional exchange in acting. The initial metaphors of infection and reflection explored, this dissertation has laid the foundation for further explorations into the metaphors that shape theatre. Infection and reflection present two powerful and pervasive metaphorical structures, but others remain. Furthermore, less prominent metaphors may suggest entirely different emotional relationships and exchanges that may enrich the experimental theatrical experimentation and training.

Finally, this dissertation has attempted to create a space where cognitive science and theatre arts may productively interact. As discoveries about how the mind continue to illuminate (among other things) the intersubjective emotional experience, theatre artists should take these discoveries as provocative moments for reevaluation. Scientific experimentation need not trump the experimentation done in acting labs, but it can call in to question old assumptions or suggest new avenues for exploration. Blair may be correct about our inability to work on a neural level, directly at least. Still, we may learn from studies like those of the mirror neuron system how to better understand the emotional link between minds, and how we might create conditions or exercises to facilitate and strengthen this link between actors and audience.

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