Beckett as Symbolist Samuel Beckett and the Theatre of the Modern Avant-Garde

by

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ABSTRACT

The thesis is essentially an investigation of the aesthetic conventions of the *mise-en-scene* in Beckett's theatre In order to provide a frame of reference, Beckett's theatre is contextualized within the aesthetic conventions of the theatrical avant-garde in the modern period The origins of avant-garde aesthetic conventions in the theatre of French Symbolism are examined and traced through various movements of the modern period, using drawing on play-texts, manifestos, and theories as well as first hand accounts of witnesses and participants of the events in question Several important critical accounts of the period and of the avant-garde are also consulted The conventions of the avant-garde are examined in the light of Carl Jung's *Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious* Jung's subsequent influence on Beckett's theatre is also examined

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Introduction

> Truly experimental work that has an organic, and not merely a spasmodic growth can only be arrived at in light of what has already been achieved by other workers in the field In order to move forward one must first be able to look back
> (James Roose-Evans)

From the appearance of *Waiting for Godot*, the theatre of Samuel Beckett -- the most critically and popularly successful of avant-garde playwrights -- has been viewed with a strange mixture of curiosity, fascination, apprehension, and even dread This is true even today, almost fifty years after his first play appeared on the stage, and thirty years after it led to his Nobel prize for literature The relevance of his work is attested to by its continuing presence in production, and not only on the stage As of September 2000, Dublin's Gate Theatre in Ireland is in the midst of committing the later plays to film with a group of the world's leading actors and directors (in fact, one of these, *Krapp's Last Tape*, directed by Atom Egoyan and featuring John Hurt, recently screened in Victoria) As this project's creator is quick to assert, it is only now that the mainstream seems ready to absorb the lessons that Beckett's work has to offer He is frequently referred to as a 'genius' or " the greatest playwright of the twentieth century " But why? What is it that Beckett's theatre is doing? In order to develop a better understanding of Beckett's work, it is useful to place him in his historical context by determining the character and development of the modern period From that perspective the character and contribution of Beckett's work begins to emerge more clearly It is my position that Beckett's work achieves its critical and popular stature because it expresses the *zeitgeist* of theatrical modernism It eloquently captures the essential values and mission of the *mise-en-scene* in the theatre of the modern avant-garde, incorporating its primary themes and models, accommodating its aesthetic dichotomies What is at once ironic and entirely logical is that in synthesizing the essence of theatrical modernism, Beckett's theatre bridges the end of modernism to its beginnings in French Symbolism Beckett's theatre is symbolist theatre

This thesis presumes the importance of Symbolism in the development of the avant-garde To fully appreciate the symbolist aesthetic is to recognize the roots of theatrical modernism -- its themes, methods, and patterns of development -- and to provide an historical context for an understanding of Beckett's contribution to it In identifying or establishing the fundamental principles of the modern period, and tracing their evolution through various avant-garde approaches, this thesis demonstrates clear affinities between Beckett's theatre and that of French Symbolism Viewing Beckett's theatre in this context affords a much broader and deeper appreciation of its richness and power, and of what it represents to collective experiment of theatrical modernism and to twentieth-century theatre in general

An enormous amount of material has been written about Beckett Most of it is laudatory, his work is frequently held up as a outstanding example of modern theatrical art But opinions vary considerably There are some who believe that Beckett's theatre is not avant-garde at all In *Beckett in Performance* Jonathan Kalb discusses the suspicion with which his work is often viewed by the contemporary avant-garde its instant classic status puts its avant-garde status in question One would seem to deny the other (Kalb, 157-162) Kalb argues that, by virtue of both his progressive elements and his widespread acceptance, Beckett belongs neither to the avant-garde nor the mainstream In the *Avant-Garde Theatre 1892-1992* (a k a *Holy Theatre*), Christopher Innes denies Beckett's avant-garde status for different reasons He feels that Beckett's theatre lacks two crucial elements

> Similarly, Samuel Beckett's work is related (to the avant-garde) in its use of Symbolism and psycho-drama, as in its stripping away of worn-out theatrical idioms to create minimalist images - but despite early interest in the surrealists, his existential vision is quite distinct from the avant-garde stress on liberating the primitive side of the psyche Although there may be stylistic similarities in the work of a symbolist like Yeats, or an existentialist like Beckett the essential basis of their work is antithetical to the anarchic primitivism and radical politics of the avant-garde (4-5)

Both these challenges to Beckett's avant-garde status seem more a provocation

than a truly defensible position. Kalb's argument about the popularity of Beckett's work, his assertion that it belongs neither to the mainstream nor to the avant-garde inclines me to conclude, for exactly the same reasons, that he belongs to both. Ultimately, popularity is a relative term. Beckett's widespread acceptance -- even as a 'classic' -- does not compare with the kind of popularity that Neil Simon enjoys, for example. And the notion that Beckett's popularity disqualifies him as avant-garde is a little absurd. If popularity alone were the deciding factor, Expressionism would not have a place in the avant-garde either. In fact, the respective, relative popularity of both these genres is a crucial element of their importance to the historical avant-garde. An embrace of popular forms is behind the modern avant-garde's earliest efforts. As for Innes, he is mistaken in his evaluation of Beckett because his criteria for avant-garde status are essentially superficial. 'Anarchic primitivism' and 'radical politics' are not fundamental avant-garde principles in themselves, but manifestations of those principles. They cannot be used to determine what is avant-garde because they do not accurately characterize it.

Kalb's discussion identifies an important characteristic of Beckett's theatre: it defies or transcends easy attempts at categorization. It does not fit conveniently into any mold. It is able to accommodate or incorporate widely divergent positions. This trait is important in that it enables Beckett's theatre to incorporate the fundamental premises of the avant-garde, and its primary models and major aesthetic dichotomies as well. Beckett's work not only belongs to the modern avant-garde, but is its product, acting as a kind of culminating, synthetic paradigm. It achieves this by addressing and utilizing all the basic elements of avant-garde performance. In this, Beckett's theatre returns to the fundamental tenets of symbolist practice, and the anti-illusionist roots of the modern period. Ultimately, Beckett is a symbolist.

Beckett's theatre is certainly symbolist by descent. As the progenitor of the theatrical avant-garde, Symbolism established models and parameters for its subsequent development. The major elements and arguments derive from it. Consequently, its stamp is on all of the theatrical avant-garde, to a greater or lesser degree. There are specific lines of continuity in the avant-garde that trace back to French Symbolism. But beyond the ancestry of Beckett's cultural milieu, his theatre exhibits several specific and

significant parallels with French Symbolism. This has implications for our understanding of the modern period. It indicates a kind of consistency where one is often denied - in the profusion of avant-garde 'isms'. To identify parallel elements in the theatre of nineteenth-century Paris and in Beckett's theatre supports the idea of consistency in avant-garde performance convention, an identification of conventional models and aesthetic parameters for the modern period as a whole.

This thesis, then, deals primarily with two things: the pattern of development in the modern avant-garde and the particular affinities between Beckett's theatre and the theatre of French Symbolism. My examination of these things draws from several different sources or texts, as well as the interpretations and analysis of many who were involved directly in avant-garde development. These offer general perspectives on the progression of the period, and specific perspectives on particular schools or movements. All offer individual insights into the dynamics of avant-garde development through the period. The first chapter discusses the symbolist movement. More specifically, it describes how the performance models and aesthetic parameters of the avant-garde were conceived and developed in theatrical Symbolism. It describes how these are prescribed in the theoretical and philosophical underpinnings of the movement and embodied in the work of specific directors and playwrights. The basic parameters of theatrical Symbolism from a practical point of view are examined: its modes, qualities and practical models. I discuss these practical considerations in relation to the movement's more important playwrights and directors and the work they produced for the stage. The chapter highlights the work of Aurelien-Marie Lugné-Poe, Maurice Maeterlinck, Alfred Jarry, August Strindberg and Vsevelod Meyerhold.

The second chapter offers a brief overview of the many different stylistic variations of the modern aesthetic. It describes, in roughly chronological sequence, how the character of avant-garde performance develops in the major theatrical movements of the modern period, consistently employing the models and observing the aesthetic parameters established in theatrical Symbolism. An examination of several better known 'isms' reveals that the primary models emerge repeatedly in slightly altered form, coloured or tempered by the balance of whatever individual bias and aesthetic dichotomy

is prevalent at the time The movements examined are Futurism, dada, Surrealism and the Theatre of Cruelty, Expressionism, the Brechtian Theatre and the theatre of the Bauhaus School The evolving modern aesthetic is discussed in relation to those movements The notion of aesthetic consistency within the theatrical avant-garde is further explored by describing how its motivating intentions and basic methods find an analogue in the psychological theory of the period, specifically in Jung's *Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious*

The third chapter explores Jung's influence on Beckett's theatre, how it shapes understanding of his work by illuminating the aesthetics of avant-garde performance, and Beckett's avant-garde characteristics This chapter examines how his theatre employs the avant-garde's primary models and addresses its aesthetic dichotomies (particularly the debate of the rational versus anti-rational in theatrical art) It also briefly compares Beckett's techniques directly with individual styles examined in the second chapter and in particular examines how they adhere to the specific prescriptions of the symbolist aesthetic

The implications of identifying Beckett's work with Symbolism are discussed in the conclusion The parallels support a surprising consistency of avant-garde aesthetic through the modern period, as evidenced by the primary models and dichotomies, despite the differences - real and imagined - between one movement and the next They suggest that the unique power of Beckett's theatre derives from his ability to draw together all these important and often contradictory elements of the modern avant-garde theatre Of particular importance is his uniting of the grotesque with the lyrical streams of Symbolism (the 'marriage' of *Princesse Maleine* to *Pere Ubu* in *Waiting for Godot*), as well as his reconciling of the rational and anti-rational forces of the avant-garde in general

Before proceeding, a little time should be spent on further discussion of the term 'avant-garde' and the values it implies Any such discussion must begin with the recognition that it is initially associated with the realist / naturalist movement At the time of its appearance, this movement represented a new way of conceiving the theatre to produce it in as visually and conceptually realistic a manner as possible, as a true

reflection of contemporary realities, particularly certain truths of existence in nineteenth-century society It had a particular fascination with the challenges of 'lower' and working-class life, problems generally regarded as sordid by predominantly middle-class audiences Along with (and ultimately subordinate to) realism, naturalism's less vehement and myopic off-shoot, the realistic aesthetic came to dominate popular culture of the modern period, indeed the entire twentieth century Consequently all the subsequent avant-garde movements act *enmasse* against that backdrop, sharing a common goal of (sometimes stridently) offering alternatives to it

Ultimately, the theatre of objective 'truth' gave rise to a revolution in the medium's aesthetic values seemingly based on a fundamental opposition to objectivity The new values encouraged a shift from the representative to the expressive, or from the objective to the subjective Theatrical Symbolism was the vanguard of this aesthetic revolution It heralded a drastic change in what the *mise-en-scene* was expected to do It began actively to pursue and harness the multi-media possibilities of theatre, altering or abstracting the conventionally realistic *mise-en-scene* to suit the shape of a given idea or psychic principle, and the new concept created a need for new (or rediscovered) models of performance It is the aesthetic associated with this scenic and conceptual revolution that has subsequently come to be almost exclusively associated with the term 'avant-garde' In this thesis, unless stated otherwise, these are the values referred to when the term is used Nevertheless it is important to remember that the avant-garde does have a slightly wider origin than is generally believed In fact, the dichotomy between realism and Symbolism is the first major dichotomy of theatre in the modern age that of the representational versus the presentational

Regardless of attitudes toward realism, two things underlie avant-garde performance Firstly, avant-garde theatre art is about ideas and about giving shape to ideas The avant-garde stage is a cerebral or psychic stage Often it addresses or expresses the psyche more or less directly Ultimately it has to do with the way we view, construct and explore our world Without becoming too abstract, avant-garde theatre manifests a discourse of ideas (and this applies as much to naturalism as to Symbolism in that each movement had an obvious agenda) The advent of the modern age sees the

roughly parallel development of a theatre that by and large is concerned with the propagation of ideas and often an exploration, or at least a tacit acknowledgment of, the subconscious. This might be called allegory. The difference in the modern avant-garde is that it moves beyond simple allegory into complex metaphor, making an attempt to stage ideas more directly. Fundamentally, even before what I call the symbolist revolution, the avant-garde stage is already becoming a cerebral or psychic stage, giving shape to a particular idea in expressive rather than representative ways. But an important feature of theatre in the modern period - all theatre - is that it develops the technological ability to deliver what imagination designs.

The second basic characteristic of the avant-garde relates to the aesthetic dichotomies that arise throughout the modern period. The term 'avant-garde' is a military term that means 'advance guard' and military principles extend to the making of theatre. The act of making theatre, or art in general, is at once both a creative and destructive act. The one rests on the other. When we examine the theatrical avant-garde, we must do so in the light of these simultaneous forces which form its essential dynamic. The concept owes a debt to Nietzsche. His philosophy, particularly in *The Birth of Tragedy*, exercised considerable influence over experimental genres. However, even this seminal work owes a great deal to the time in which it was written. In many ways, much like Aristotle's two thousand years earlier, his role in writing it is that of philosophical observer, a thoughtful spectator of something that has already been created, though in this case the focus of attention is the work of Wagner rather than that of, say, Sophocles. Nietzsche may have intended the book to be influential (no doubt Aristotle did too), but what he wrote was an observation of a dynamic that he perceived already existed. Nevertheless, I refer to the simultaneous will to destruction and creation as Nietzsche's dynamic, because I know of no other convenient name for it, and because I first encountered the concept in his writing. He asserts that this urge is intrinsic to any artistic process, but it is certainly and particularly true of the avant-garde. The concept is clearly implicit in the term. The artists of the time may not have needed Nietzsche to point this out, and in fact not everybody would have read this work, but where his influence did extend, it ensured that there was a working *consciousness* of the dynamic: the creation of

something new rests on the destruction of its predecessor, conversely, the inevitable decay of traditional forms leaves a void to be filled. Indeed, much of the avant-garde operated with a particular enthusiasm for this idea. That said, the exchange of 'old' for 'new' is rarely wholesale, but selective and complex: bits and pieces of one style are traded for those of another. Of course, it is simple logic that elements of the *mise-en-scene* attacked in the 'old' theatre must be the same elements that are addressed in the 'new.' The proportions vary from style to style.

In certain movements the desire to attack becomes a central, if not overriding, focus. The destructive element may manifest itself as an oppositional stance, a subversive or even satirical element, but there is always a critical quality in avant-garde work, whether it is of art or society or both. And here one can see that the propagation of the cerebral stage and the consciousness of Nietzsche's dynamic are related. A new idea generally contains a critique of an old idea. There is a poignant connection between them that relates to theatrical Symbolism's conceptual revolution. But in Symbolism, the urge to destruction is comparatively restrained. The Symbolists concern seems to be chiefly with the presentation of theatre. The revolution is still primarily artistic, more metaphysical than political. However, the subversive element that exists in avant-garde art contributes to a rising political consciousness and activism among avant-garde artists, and a more vocal and vitriolic tone of subversion emerges as the modern period progresses. This often extends from the artistic to the political, and so as the period progresses we see an increasing overlap of artistic and political missions.

Once the mimetic principles were effectively questioned, the *mise-en-scene* was free to reinvent itself. The guiding principle of the new *mise-en-scene* was abstraction. An understanding of this concept plays a vital role in understanding modern avant-garde convention. Theatre communicates not only to the eyes in three dimensions, but to all the senses. It also occurs over a set period of time (the duration of a production's performance). The modern *mise-en-scene* incorporates the principle of abstraction in a number of different ways (using objective 'reality' as a reference point). The abstraction of time (plot sequence), space (setting) and identity (character of actors and objects) are those that spring first to mind. But the principle could also be said to extend in other

directions. For example, it could extend to abstraction in distinctions between high and low art, and especially to the process of artistic exchange (for example, the audience-stage relationship and issues of audience reception). In the avant-garde, these no longer operate according to traditional principles. This ultimately leads to the self-referential character of meta-theatre. Bearing that basic principle of abstraction in mind, it is important to remember that, like the Nietzschean dynamic, it is applied to a greater or lesser degree, depending on the circumstance and the temperament of the artists involved.

In a practical sense, largely due to theatrical necessities, symbolic correspondences must work in either a concrete or an abstract mode. A stage image (which can exist in two, three or four dimensions) either refers to a recognizable object or it does not. However, the theatre's character as a multi-media art-form means that the notion of abstract association also extends to correspondences between sense-media themselves. As a way of organizing the various options, and as an abstraction or rejection of traditional plot development, certain models came into use. They could be described as metaphors or analogues, which fall into three categories in much the same way as do primary colours in pigment. If objective reality, the day-to-day world around us, can be viewed as the basic model for realism and naturalism, the new models for the modern *mise-en-scene* were Music, Dream and Circus, served up with varying rationales and degrees of intensity. These helped determine the treatment and organization of the theatre's temporal manifestations. The fundamental dynamic between abstract and concrete correspondence informs other aesthetic parameters which serve to define the boundaries of avant-garde theatre: presentational and representational, lyrical and grotesque, and rational and anti-rational. These parameters and models still operate today, in both theatre and film.

Symbolism marked a fundamental shift in the nature of the *mise-en-scene*, from objective representation to subjective expression, what Esslin refers to as "a shift that marks the watershed between the traditional and the modern, the representational and the expressionist projection of mental realities" (Esslin 251). This amounts to a revolution in the way in which theatre is conceived and presented. But despite this substantial

difference, this aesthetic revolution has a curious dynamic, maintaining a certain similarity of intention, which hearkens to that connection between the notion of the psychic stage and Nietzsche's dynamic Rischbieter discusses the mechanics of this dynamic in the foreword of *Art and the Stage in the Twentieth Century* He suggests that the seeds of avant-garde developments can be seen in the naturalistic works of their predecessors

> Within the very works that were the showpieces of the naturalistic theatre, the dramas of Ibsen, Strindberg, and Gerhart Hauptmann there were formal elements--Symbolisms in Ibsen, quasi-musical sequences in Hauptmann, psychic structures in Strindberg-- that called for corresponding features in the acting and the decor (Rischbieter 9)

Rischbieter is referring to formal elements, the mechanics, as I say, of the shift I first came across this idea in Esslin's *The Theatre of the Absurd* In the chapter entitled "The Tradition of the Absurd," Esslin discusses this same shift However, he discusses it from a thematic - as opposed to a formal - point of view He characterizes the symbolist revolution as the logical extension of the same basic search for truth which stimulated and initiated the naturalist/realist movement That search eventually led away from material truths into the realms of the human mind and the subconscious truths that create the conditions by which we live, a theatre that begins by genuinely concentrating on materiality must inevitably give way to one which is focused on the inner world

> it is a significant and somewhat paradoxical fact that the development of psychological subjectivism was the direct and logical development of the movement that had led to naturalism It is the desire to represent reality, all of reality, that at first leads to the ruthlessly truthful description of surfaces, and then on to the realization that objective reality, surfaces, are only part, and a relatively unimportant part of the real world (Esslin 252)

Yet despite what may be a basic similarity of thematic intention, Symbolism established itself in opposition to naturalism, and represents the beginning of a revolution The nature of the *mise-en-scene* changes radically It is fundamentally altered by a change in what it is asked to do Still, some sense of continuity is important to remember as the various avant-garde movements are examined It could be called a

continuity of oppositional stances, an idea that I think is best expressed by Bert O States "revolutions originate from within the stylistic paradigm, a little as the bank clerk learns banking from the inside and then runs off with the funds" (*Great Reckonings in Little Rooms* 88).

Chapter One

The Symbolist Movement and the Genesis of the Avant-garde *Mise-en-Scene*

> When stage imagery was freed of its servitude in mimetic signification, the one to one relationship between the sign and its signification, the theatres of Brecht, Meyerhold, Artaud, Wilder, the Absurdists, and Grotowski, among countless others, became possible (*Great Reckonings in Little Rooms* 101)

The character of Symbolism is somewhat contradictory it represents an obvious and, to some extent, deliberate extension of already existing artistic principles (such as those of Romanticism) Yet it is clear that, in the broader sweep of theatrical development, Symbolism also heralds the beginning of a revolution in the presentation of theatre The precise origins of the movement are difficult to pin down It has inspirational sources in the philosophies of Schopenhauer and Swedenborg and in the Romantic movement (despite the fact that the avant-garde often tried to deny any association with Romanticism) Wagner and Baudelaire provided the focus for that influence, while figures such as Villiers de L'Isle-Adam and Stephane Mallarme acted to bridge the romantic past to the symbolist present In so doing, they helped give rise to a new theatrical aesthetic more or less based on the expression of subjective, primordial or archetypal ideas

When examining theatrical Symbolism, it is important to remember that it began as an extension of the larger artistic movement, or as Deak puts it, "the work of poets and painters" (11) They introduced a novel approach to theatre centred around the concept of an expressive rather than representational *mise-en-scene* This decision amounted to a virtual revolution in the nature of the theatrical exchange and consequently in audience reception It is also important to understand that the *theory* of symbolist performance was developed considerably before the fact The various possibilities were explored in oral and written discourse, and early symbolist performance manifested the discourse in a practical form However, although the idea of symbolist theatre was stimulated by philosophers -- and to some degree defined and prescribed by the poets and painters, in the final analysis what appeared on-stage was determined by playwrights, directors,

designers (often painters) and actors in the course of staging the productions. Despite the considerable influence of figures such as Stephane Mallarme, theatrical Symbolism was ultimately the product of the theatre professionals. Maeterlinck, for example was an active participant in the first productions of his plays, but where Lugne-Poe was concerned he was pliable and was willing to alter lines to suit the circumstances (Deak 164).

The first manifestations of this aesthetic revolution were subtle and the process had varying degrees of success. In terms of performance, the character of Symbolism was fairly elusive, and found an integrity of expression on relatively few occasions. However, in the process of staging the plays, choices were made, and those choices set precedents, taught valuable lessons and introduced new issues and challenges. The process of practical exploration is a continuous one. It continued through the end of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth. Many of the Symbolists' basic initial intentions were more fully explored in subsequent theatrical experiments. More important than any definitive conclusions as to what constitutes symbolist performance were the practical models and approaches upon which those experiments were based.

In many ways the symbolist movement evolved in opposition to the realist/naturalist movement. As such it represented an extension of an older struggle between rationalism and anti-rationalism which lay at the heart of the romantic movement. Schopenhauer's philosophy forms a significant part of the anti-rationalist aesthetic and, as such, helped create a platform for theatrical Symbolism. In simple terms, his contention is that "primordial reality--the will to live--is irrational and that attempts to understand the world rationally are doomed to failure" (Webster's). But of much greater pertinence to the avant-garde theatre is the philosopher's assertion that "aspects of music express in a universal or general form what lies behind the generality that conceptual thinking abstracts from phenomena." This belief has had an enormous impact on the avant-garde *mise-en-scene* from the Symbolists to Beckett and beyond. Likewise, Emmanuel Swedenborg's theory of mystical correspondences, which asserts the spiritual significance of objects in the temporal plane, has also had considerable implications.

> Symbolic poetry, the enemy of 'instruction, declamation, false sensibility and objective description', seeks to clothe the Idea in a tangible form which will not be that poetry's object but which, while serving to express the idea, will remain subordinate Nor must the Idea itself be seen as stripped of the sumptuous robes of external analogy, for the essential characteristic of symbolic art is never to go so far as the conception of the Idea in itself Thus, in this art, neither scenes from nature nor human actions nor any other physical phenomena can be present in themselves what we have instead are perceptible appearances designed to represent their esoteric affinities with primordial Ideas (Delevoy 71)

The Manifesto of Symbolist Literature was published in 1886 by a group of literary artists under the leadership of Jean Moreas The document reveals the essential philosophy of the movement, outlines its fundamental premises, indicates its formal and thematic preoccupations and offers examples of both the prototypical symbolist (Baudelaire) and a model for a symbolist novel The manifesto begins in typical avant-garde fashion by decrying the state of contemporary literary art and declaring the need for new approaches Offering Baudelaire as the paragon of symbolist virtue, it proceeds to express the intention to explore 'primordial ideas' by creating "perceptible appearances designed to represent esoteric affinities" with them The outline for an hypothetical symbolist novel is one which will become quite popular during the course of the modern period, especially in the expressionist movement one central, 'three-dimensional' character will dominate the action, surrounded by supporting characters in representative, 'two-dimensional' roles, as if in a dream (in fact, this hypothetical form had already begun to emerge with the publication of Husyman's novel *À Rebours* in 1886)

This symbolist manifesto conforms to the governing principles of avant-garde art, operating according to Nietzsche's fundamental dynamic and focusing on the abstract expression of primordial imperatives But, while essentially and inarguably a literary manifesto, it goes further in that it describes these principles in a manner which has particular relevance to the theatre in defiance of realism, symbolist art will offer perceptible *appearances, designed* to represent esoteric affinities with primordial ideas In practical theatrical terms, the *mise-en-scene* will be abstracted to suit the metaphorical

expression of an idea This brief statement implies and ultimately leads to nothing short of a revolution in theatrical performance In *Art and the Stage in the 20th Century*, Rischbieter captures the essence of this revolution

> The new program for theatrical decor was formulated thus 'It is to do by means of form and line what the poet does with words to compel the spectator to feel the same thing as the creator of the drama ' Thus [wrote] Herman Nahr in 1905 In the same year Siegfried Jacobson wrote 'Here the task is not to reproduce reality, but by a profound refashioning of outward things, by the simplest basic forms of colours and lines, by the melodic weaving of perspectives and distant vistas, to illustrate the inner weft of the drama ' (9)

In the course of illustrating this 'inner weft', the Symbolists explored theories of correspondence, the means by which esoteric affinities might be decoded and understood or at least absorbed These can be reduced to two basic modes of correspondence, characterized by either "deepened reality or stylized anti-reality" (Rischbieter 10) They find their respective progenitors in the ideas of Emmanuel Swedenborg and Charles Baudelaire The term *correspondence* actually originates with Swedenborg The theory contends that objects and images have a direct corresponding value in the spiritual plane One can easily see the theatrical implications of such a system (pointing the way to Artaud's language of hieroglyphic images, for instance) Obviously, this kind of concrete Symbolism was in use long before However, Swedenborg systematized and standardized the practice, incorporating a rationale and regulation which aid the application and apprehension of the Symbolism Grounded in Christian theology, which provides a basis of structure, his philosophy of correspondences comprises a metaphysical system which reaches beyond suggestion toward transubstantiation, and providing a mystical context popular in the *fin de siecle* milieu By the mid nineteenth-century a dictionary of his correspondences had been published This philosophy became required reading for symbolist thinkers Maeterlinck, for example, was instructed to read it by his mentor, Villiers de l'Isle-Adam Certainly, all the major symbolist thinkers had a working knowledge of Swedenborg Baudelaire, Villiers, Mallarme, Maeterlinck and, above all, Strindberg

From a symbolist point of view, however, there are difficulties with Swedenborg's ideas Despite a deep concern with spiritual or metaphysical concepts, their manifestation in physical objects means his theories are essentially rooted in the temporal For many Symbolists, any metaphysical aspirations were threatened by such physical associations In philosophical terms, in suggesting the spiritual extension of reality, Swedenborg's ideas seem to be in line with Hegel's rather than Schopenhauer's A somewhat puritanical streak in the symbolist movement would colour Swedenborg's method of Symbolism as too materially weighted, earthy or common The solution to this problem came from Baudelaire, in whose poetic idealization Swedenborg's ideas found a considerably modified expression

The philosophy of Schopenhauer could be said to provide a basis for Baudelaire's deviation from Swedenborg's materially rooted theories, in that the phenomenon of music actually provided the initial impulse for his development of this variation While he acknowledged the importance of Wagner's work as catalyst, Baudelaire's correspondences could be considered an intellectual hybrid of Swedenborg and Schopenhauer He applied the concept of correspondence to music before all other forms of artistic expression Where Swedenborg's theories embody a concrete kind of Symbolism, Baudelaire's ideas employ an abstract Symbolism based on an association of the senses and sense-media, and the idea that moods or ideas can be conveyed through a corresponding color, smell and/or sound His notion of correspondences is generally associated with a sonnet of the same name (*Correspondences* in *Les Fleurs du Mal*) in which his concept first emerged However, his theories found a more articulate and comprehensive expression in a piece of criticism on Wagner

> The reader knows the aim we are pursuing, namely to show that true music suggests similar ideas to different minds Moreover, *a priori* reasoning, without further analysis, and without comparisons, would not be ridiculous in this context, for the only really surprising thing would be that sound could not suggest colour, that colours could not give the idea of a melody, and that both sound and colour together were unsuitable as media for ideas, since all things always have been expressed by reciprocal analogies, ever since the day when God created the world as a complex indivisible totality (Baudelaire 331)

Some issue might be made over the difference between these two systems regarding their pertinence to the symbolist movement In a critical appraisal of the symbolist movement, for instance, Balakian stresses that Swedenborg's correspondences should be recognized as an influence, but that Baudelaire's adaptation of the idea is much more significant French Symbolism does prefer a certain flexible ambiguity, tending to surround an idea rather than name it (Mallarme in Deak 23) In this context, the system of symbolic association offered by Swedenborg is too rigid A faster, looser approach to Symbolism is required, an approach which is implied in this passage about Rimbaud

> His writing is free and untamed, and frequently breaks the instrument of language So much so that, out of reach of all prohibitions, he can set aside the chain of representation and, with close access to the truth of the free creator, plough the furrows of his own phantasms and utter his entire self, no matter how much the field has been secretly mined For in the case of Rimbaud more than any other such enthusiast, words cannot be assimilated to algebraic symbols operating one way only (Delevoy 74)

All things considered, Baudelaire's correspondences are probably more immediately pertinent to symbolist practice However, we can be fairly certain that Swedenborg's theories not only played an important part in the development of Baudelaire's modifications but continued to retain their own pertinence to symbolist performance as well In the context of theatrical practice specifically, the abstract and the concrete are not easy to separate However much the Symbolists may have preferred the idea of Baudelaire's abstract correspondences, the reality of representation is difficult to avoid As ephemeral as theatre may be in one regard, it is nevertheless temporal by definition As States describes it, the theatre "is really a language whose words consist to an unusual degree of things that *are* what they seem to be" (20) That temporal nature is one of the more challenging obstacles in the development of symbolist theatre Given the metaphysical preoccupations of the movement, there are problems associated with the creation of any sort of symbolist theatre at all, and this problem continues to surface in subsequent avant-garde styles throughout the modern period Thus there were certain

ideological or aesthetic challenges from the outset of avant-garde experimentation But that fact had important, even crucial, implications As an unavoidable obstacle, it acted as a kind of whetting stone against which the symbolist movement sharpened itself

> Negative commentary on theatre as a genre is part of the early discourse of Symbolism Initially this commentary was necessary because most of the contemporary theatre and the new symbolist aesthetic were incompatible These negative commentaries are also important because each of them, while discussing the "impossibility of theatre," proposes ways in which difficulties can be overcome (Deak 25)

Addressing the fundamental paradox of the theatrical medium, then, became crucial in the development of the symbolist *mise-en-scene*, and not for the Symbolists only, but also for the aesthetic of the avant-garde as a whole Despite the inherent problems of creating symbolist theatre, the movement continued to explore ways of addressing such incompatibility That fundamental contradiction became a dominant feature of avant-garde development The various approaches to that challenge defined the ways of accommodating the medium of the theatre to Symbolism

Much of the debate centered on the actors themselves The human form is the essence of temporality, a fact which creates problems for the Symbolists at the conceptual level "The fundamental contradiction between materiality and conceptuality, or between materiality and spirituality is nowhere more apparent than in the person of the actor" (Deak 25) The stage is the actor's medium Without the actor there is no theatre, or at least that is the commonly held belief, then as now So the conundrum of metaphysical theatre existed at the most basic level Symbolism challenged this assumption from the very beginning, and then set out to find ways of reconciling the concept of metaphysical theatre and the physical fact of the actor

A document of particular relevance to this struggle appeared in 1889 in *Revue d'Art Dramatique* Gustav Kahn's *Confessions of Faith of a Modernist* Kahn is introduced as the head of the symbolist movement, for an article in which he outlines five genres of symbolist theatre The first of these is described as poetic drama, and relates to the importance of poetry and music to symbolist theatre " the new symbolist drama must be based on the same principles as the new poetry the poetic concept of verbal

orchestration meant the application of the principles of music to drama and theatre" (Deak 29) The second, third and fourth genres in Kahn's manifesto are *character comedy in an undefined setting, modern and clownish pantomime*, and *circus comedy* There is great significance here in that Kahn, though "well within the tradition of those who suggested popular genres for modern theatre, such as Baudelaire and Banville, is the first to propose the specific genre of popular theatre for the symbolist poetic theatre " Obviously, the absorption of popular theatre is significant not only for Symbolism but for subsequent avant-garde efforts as well The fifth genre is recorded as visual spectacle These were originally intended to be 'textless theatre '

> The visual spectacle, a series of short expressive images, was supposed to be a form of textless theatre In these 'poems of form and colour,' language would be unnecessary, since it would only hinder the evocation of mystery (Deak 29-30)

The extent to which actual performances scrupulously (or even callously) adhered to these proposed genres, or whether they subscribed to them at all, is difficult to determine The circumstances of publication (the profile of the magazine and the status accorded to Kahn) suggests considerable exposure and a good degree of support There is plenty of reason to conclude that Kahn's genres were well known, particularly within the limited confines of the symbolist community There are no practical examples which publicly adhere to these specific categories, but in fact these genres are probably more important in revealing certain preoccupations of the movement rather than for what they may have directly inspired They reveal the essential parameters of symbolist performance Actual, practical working models arose from the context of creating individual theatrical events, offering more directly applicable, if still more or less conceptual, metaphors by which the Symbolists could begin to address the paradox of symbolist theatre So the theories of symbolist theatre developed or evolved into practical models, and the roots of those models can be clearly seen in Kahn's five genres To address the paradox of the actor, and the essential contradiction between "materiality and conceptuality," three primary models for avant-garde performance emerged music, dream and circus The application of these three formal and thematic models can be

clearly seen in the conception and development of symbolist performance They dominated avant-garde practice throughout the modern period and continue to do so up to the present day

In accordance with the enormous influence of Schopenhauer, Baudelaire and Wagner on the theatre of this period, music was the first model of the avant-garde Schopenhauer's philosophy lay at the heart of symbolist practice "aspects of music express in a universal or general form what lies behind the generality that conceptual thinking abstracts from phenomena " The new *mise-en-scene* initially evolved in relation to music, which had provided the impetus for its creation in the first place Music is the purest expression of the abstract, with many mythological and ideological implications Thus the application of the musical model begins at the most basic level the transmission of primordial ideas through the abstraction of (visible) reality Of all the practical attempts at undiluted abstract correspondence, the most successful have tended to emerge out of associations with music The theories of sense-media correspondence (or what came to be known as synesthesia) advanced by Baudelaire flow directly from it However, as previously discussed, theatre obviously had a difficult time functioning without at least some grounding in reality So the musical model was required to apply itself in more oblique ways The most basic of these was in the context of dramatic structure If it could be said that the primary models generally supported a theme-centred, as opposed to plot-centred approach, music provided a powerful example The theatrical event could now appear, for instance, as a series of loosely related (or even *un*related) variations on a theme Beyond the application of organizational principles, the musical model revealed itself in a concern for rhythm and tempo, along with the less tangible elements of tone, mood and colour It also governed any attempts at the association of sense media

Because of its essential abstraction the musical model does not lend itself well to concrete correspondence it may affect the dramatic structure of an event and thus temper its representative nature, but it cannot manipulate the concrete elements easily Perhaps it is for this reason that the extremely pliable and versatile dream model seems to have developed virtually side by side with the musical It may not have had, at least until

the appearance of Freud and Jung, the kind of philosophical or ideological integrity of the musical model, but it offered considerable advantages It offered a flexible and adaptable model because it could easily incorporate both the abstract and the concrete, the lyrical and the grotesque (dream or nightmare) It also provided a tangible metaphor by which a potential audience could grasp the concept of the new symbolist *mise-en-scene* This made it both useful and popular Once reality is rejected as a model, the alternatives are somewhat limited It is in dreams that we most directly experience something other than reality Theatre often strives to create the atmosphere of a dream because it provides a context in which we may be more able to grasp the idea of correspondence, concrete or abstract At the perceptual level, dreams need not appear to operate according to any logical or rigidly consistent principle, floating freely between narrative or thematic organization This 'anything-is-possible' atmosphere of the dream also allows it to accommodate even those most problematic concrete symbols, the actors themselves

Though the dream model is flexible in regard to temporal phenomena, the problem of the actor demands a more thorough response It is all very well to declare that everything on the stage is the pre-text for a dream, but if that dream includes the physical presence of the actor, that presence needs to be explained in a way the dream model cannot easily accommodate The solution is more or less a variation on the puppet and clown This is a key component of the circus model, which became extremely important to the avant-garde The influence of pantomime and circus, evident in Kahn's manifesto, extends to the inclusion of circus techniques (acrobatics, juggling, clowning) in the dramatic structure of texts written by poets This has implications that refer back to the guiding principle of abstraction the absorption of circus techniques into the theatre represents an abstraction of the human form It is related to the subsequent development of physical systems like biomechanics or eurythmics, which are based on the abstract exploration of the human form in three-dimensional space So, aside from working as an important alternative to the dream model, and its attendant accommodation of general temporal issues, the circus model specifically addresses the problem of the actor, the clown, acrobat and marionette offer particularly apt, richly symbolic abstracts of

humanity Moreover, incorporating the circus model into avant-garde practice accomplishes a blurring (or an abstraction) of the boundary between high and low art, a key factor of the modern avant-garde The circus model supports a subversive response to the status quo by virtue of its inherent anarchy, implicitly rejecting narrative structure in favour of one that supports a series of moments or events that may or may not be related (the cabaret or vaudeville format for example) The other especially important characteristic of the circus model is that it is self-referential, lending itself to that important meta-theatrical element of the avant-garde

The value of this model is difficult to over-emphasize The circus offered an irreverent, anarchic, subversive energy which appealed to an avant-garde so opposed to bourgeois values The popular theatre, and the cabaret in particular, provided not only a structural model for the various avant-garde experiments in their infancy, but a venue for their explorations as well The provision of venue and format is closely linked to the avant-garde's initial identification with the character of popular theatre This extended to the regular appearance of the clown and marionette, an element of avant-garde performance that is possessed of a singular potency Though it seems to have been somewhat diluted in the twentieth-century, the lineage of the clown still has deep roots in the symbolic Thus, the clown exists in the world of the archetypal fool as well as in the circus and music-hall When these worlds collide, the richest and boldest theatrical experiences of the modern age have been the result In the figure of the clown, manic, anarchic antics are married to ancient symbolic significance In fact, that manic anarchy ultimately comprises the symbolic significance that is the clown's ancient legacy The circus model would become increasingly important to the avant-garde for the free-flowing anarchy of its carnival atmosphere Both music and dream allow a strong underlying rationale for the symbols or ideas presented, a way of achieving consistency, continuity or integrity in the Symbolism at work, but the circus model became popular precisely because it allows for more or less *complete* freedom from logic in the presentation of a given theatrical event

The performance models began to emerge with the earliest practical attempts at symbolist performance at *Theâtre d'Art*, and saw their first mature expressions in the

plays of Maeterlinck And by the time that Lugne-Poe separated the *Theâtre de l'Oeuvre* from 'official' Symbolism in 1897, all three models had clearly emerged Through the course of the movement, two distinct *qualities* (as distinct from models) of symbolist performance also emerged lyrical and grotesque The highly successful scandal of Jarry and *Ubu Roi*, which marks the mature expression of the circus model, also marked the full emergence of the grotesque as a practical genre of symbolist performance, heretofore focused primarily on the lyrical The two qualities of Symbolism saw still more extensive exploration and development in the work of two other important theatrical Symbolists Strindberg and Meyerhold Taken together, the primary models for symbolist performance under the conceptual reference points of the lyrical and the grotesque set the stage for virtually all the avant-garde experiments of the early twentieth-century

The actual appearance of a symbolist theatre arrived with the foundation of Paul Fort's *Théâtre d'Art* Though his previous efforts to produce theatre had met with little success, his new theatre quickly began to gain attention The second performance saw it gain public notoriety This, it seems, was mainly due to his staging of a one-act play by Rachilde, who, "wife of Valette, the powerful editor of *La Mercure de France*, was already a recognized writer at the time " The audience, consisting largely of the artistic community, came to see her work, which consequently put Fort's theatre on the cultural map His position was further strengthened when Rachilde and Valette joined his play-selection committee in 1891 This affiliation saw continued production of Rachilde's marginally successful plays and the equally consistent supportive exposure in *La Mercure de France* However, despite the success of his political and public relations, it was the theatre's third production in which Fort successfully achieved a truly symbolist *mise-en-scene* (Deak 142) The production of *La Fille aux mains coupees* (*The girl with the Cut-off Hands*) manifests the basic elements which comprise the symbolist aesthetic

> as a result of the gauze scrim and soft light, the actors, placed against the background of the painted canvas, and moving mostly on horizontal lines, appeared as distant dream-like shadows As in symbolist painting, the perspective and depth were eliminated and the flat abstracted bodies of the actors appeared against the background of the painted backdrop (Deak 145)

The playwright himself substantiates this view of the *mise-en-scene* when he describes how the spectator of the new theatre "will give himself fully to the will of the poet, and will see, in accordance with his soul, terrible and charming shapes and dream-worlds which nobody but he will inhabit. And theatre will be what it should be: a pretext for dream" (Quillard, qtd. in Deak 145). The vocal, verbal component of the dream was composed of stage directions in a prose-poetry style which were read to the audience, alongside the vocal music of the chanted verse dialogue. Thus, the *Théâtre d'Art*'s third production, the first in which a symbolist aesthetic was firmly established, saw the application of both music and dream as performance models. These were also clearly evident in Paul Roinard's subsequent adaptation of Solomon's *Song of Songs*. Fort had initially set out on a course of action which promised the staging of many kinds of text (poetry, parables, myths and occult writings), and the *Song of Songs* was undertaken as part of that mandate. The production offered a prime example of the symbolist aesthetic in action. Drawn from the bible, the piece was understood by Roinard "as a dramatic poem in which the conflict of the human spirit with its failures and the divine spirit goes through eight stages of development." What makes the production of particular interest to this study is the approach which Roinard elaborated:

> Roinard described three levels of the meaning of narrative: the literal meaning (he also calls it the real meaning), the analogous mystical meaning (a suggestion of a corresponding mystical meaning), and a musical meaning (transposition of the meaning into the interplay of musical instruments). Besides the division of the scenario into the three levels of meaning, Roinard developed for each of the eight devices and three paraphrases the exact correspondence between the speech, music, colour and scent. (Deak 153)

The *Song of Songs* is a splendid example of early theatrical Symbolism. In it we find not only an abstract *mise-en-scene*, but one that incorporates almost every hallmark of symbolist practice, invoking the primordial idea and archetypal forces with a text drawn from a biblical (mythical) source, citing three levels of meaning which apply both concrete and abstract correspondences, incorporating the musical model *within* the dream model.

> With the idea of synthesizing the atmosphere of the dream which envelopes the song of songs, the composition of the decor attempts to make vivid in a simple and more condensed manner the principal symbols in which the general ideas of the great lyric poem are revealed (Roinard in Deak 154)

The stagings of *La Fille aux mains coupées* and *The Song of Songs* stand out as milestones in the initial development of the symbolist *mise-en-scene*, but the climax of the *Theâtre d' Art*'s short history (1890-92) is clearly marked by the production of Maurice Maeterlinck's plays *L'Intruse* (The Intruder) and *Les Avêgles* (The Blind) They also represent the first original symbolist plays, as opposed to adaptations of already existing works Early in his career, Maeterlinck's mentor, Count Villiers de L'Isle-Adam, directed him toward the emulation of music " all this too solid realism does not suit you Music before everything Your path lies elsewhere" (Halls 16) Advised to emulate the mood and structure of music, he created plays that have a musical kind of subtlety in rhythm and tone This is especially true in the approach that was taken in regard to the dialogue, which was hushed and restrained so much as to be frequently inaudible The environments of these plays had the quality of the dream The dim, static dream-like atmosphere is apparent in descriptions of them The gauze curtain in the first production of *Pelleas et Melisande* has acquired legendary proportions, though it was not the first time this kind of a device was employed It is certain that the dream-like quality of these plays was considerably determined by those responsible for its staging (Lugne-Poe, Paul Percheron and Maurice Denis) but Maeterlinck himself had an active role in those first productions as well Furthermore, the play-texts themselves, while adhering to aspects of the musical model, evoke the quality of the dream in their structure and content (the concrete imagery typical of dream-staging)

A noteworthy feature of Maeterlinck's plays, particularly given his status as Symbolism's leading playwright of the day, is that, though they were unquestionably welcomed as symbolist, the veneer of the plays has a relatively conventional appearance While dimly lit (*The Intruder* called for a single source of light throughout most of its length), and assuming a sort of ethereal quality that is unmistakably symbolist, "such

aspects of the symbolist *mise-en-scene* were juxtaposed with a stage set and dramatic situation that had a degree of verisimilitude" (Deak 161). It takes place in a family home and focuses on the relatively mundane experience of the family as they wait for news regarding the condition of the woman giving birth in the next room. It is this hybrid quality that makes the play both dramatic and symbolist. "Symbolism yes, but it is also theatre" (Jean Jullien qtd. in Deak 162). This should not be seen as a weakness in the work, quite the opposite; the play is organized as much around theme and mood as around the plot, which is very basic. The idea is expressed through the stage-image and dialogue, but also through the tone, dynamic, and orchestrated rhythm of dialogue and event, revealing the influence of the musical model, along with the model of the dream, reflected in the tone and mood which pervade the play. However the new symbolic character of the *mise-en-scene* which was very apparent in earlier works, was more subtly played out in Maeterlinck's plays. According to Deak, his plays certainly conform to the "model of theatre as the realization of a theoretical proposition or an intellectual concept", but, "when taking into account the production of Maeterlinck's plays, this factor is not so apparent, because both the literary and directorial models of theatre give seemingly plausible explanations for the productions" (Deak 176). So in a manner of speaking it is the fully rounded character of Maeterlinck's plays that might obscure the symbolist qualities of his *mise-en-scene*. Ultimately, however, "the symbolist acting style as well as the visual *mise-en-scene* that were practiced by *Théâtre d'Art* were precisely the means by which *The Intruder* became the revelation of the evening" (Deak 162).

The straddling of distinctions between representation and presentation is a feature of lyrical Symbolism, which is primarily characterized by the quality of the event, and its general intended effect. It is not abrupt or vulgar, but is gracefully if not elegantly presented and designed to haunt rather than shock. Though it is not necessarily confined to verisimilitude, this flavour of Symbolism is apparent in the gentle deviation from reality offered by Maeterlinck's plays. In fact, Maeterlinck's *Intruder*, along with his subsequent plays, typifies this approach. The subject matter, even as it invariably hovers around the subject of death, is offered delicately. The quality of context or approach to

the material denotes the lyrical, whether this is expressed in relatively concrete terms or in the realm of the entirely abstract Maeterlinck's plays are classic examples of lyrical Symbolism

By the simple virtue of its earlier appearance *L'Intruse* is probably the most important of Materlinck's plays In it the movement finally found an original play "that was both dramatic and symbolist," meaning a play in which the symbolist poetic was realized in dramatic form (Deak 161) The appearance of Maeterlinck's works stands out as a defining moment of symbolist history, not only for their originality and aesthetic integrity, but also for the rousing success that they enjoyed He had been compared to Shakespeare by Octave Mirabeau before his work was ever staged However, *L'Intruse* became such a substantial public success for Paul Fort that he almost immediately endeavoured to produce *The Sightless* These two plays, along with *Pelleas and Melisande* (staged later by Lugne-Poe) made Maeterlinck Symbolism's first significant playwright

Maeterlinck's success brought theatrical Symbolism a new measure of popular and critical success However, due to the shortcomings in Fort's management, and an attendant crisis of confidence in his leadership, the *Théâtre d'Art* did not survive Instead, Lugne-Poé, whose involvement both as actor and director contributed heavily to the success of Maeterlinck's plays, took advantage of the momentum to found the *Théâtre de l'Oeuvre* It should be mentioned that *Peleas and Melisande* was staged under its own auspices rather than those of either company, though it did bridge the gap between one and the other

The new symbolist theatre essentially picked up where the *Theâtre d'Art* left off But Lugne-Poe and his co-founders, Camille Mauclair and Edouard Vuillard, seem to have had a clearer idea of where they were taking their new theatre, and of the plays they wanted to produce There were some important changes, most likely adopted to compensate for the dearth of symbolist playwrights, which was a constant problem Firstly, the *Théâtre de l'Oeuvre* undertook a program of Scandinavian plays, those of "Ibsen, Bjornson and Strindberg " This was a particularly interesting choice, in that these plays were, and are, traditionally associated with naturalism, or at least realism No

doubt the adoption of the Scandinavian plays owed something to Maeterlinck's stretching of symbolist boundaries A potential for symbolist treatment, similar to the lyrical Symbolism characteristic of Maeterlinck's work, is implied by the *Théâtre de l'Oeuvre*'s production of these plays The adoption and production of the Scandinavian plays implies a recognition of their inherent symbolist tendencies The plays themselves were written as pieces of realism, yet it is clear that Strindberg's naturalistic plays, for example, had an affinity with Symbolism on a number of fronts

> Strindberg's use of myths, fairytales, and the hidden psychological motivation connected to the fragments of myths and fairytales makes him relevant to symbolist drama as well whether from the point of view of dramatic structure, thematic preoccupations, or the juxtaposition of psychological and mythological perspectives on dramatic character, Strindberg's psychologism, as in the case with Ibsen's psychologism, was understood within the context of the revelation of hidden metaphysical forces Specifically Strindberg's concept of psychic influence and psychic warfare could have been perceived within the practice of the occult and black magic (Deak 213)

By gently emphasizing certain aspects of the plays, and the scenic circumstances of performance, realistic plays could become symbolist

Another strategy that Lugne-Poe 's theatre attempted in its second season was a "new dramaturgical program" that "turned toward the past as well as to Indian Theatre" (Deak 218) This revealed the wider boundaries of the mythic dimensions in the dream model (which can also incorporate the folktale) It also revealed the efforts of the symbolist theatre to mine other cultures and epochs to find new, strange or forgotten symbols and symbolic contexts This may have been in order to make the theatrical experience more powerful for the novelty of the Symbolism

The adjustment to the repertoire at the *Théâtre de l'Oeuvre* had considerable ramifications for the movement, firmly establishing new and wider criteria for what might constitute a symbolist play It was a clever strategy on the part of Lugne-Poe, Maeterlinck (who served as a literary adviser) and the others at the *Théâtre de l'Oeuvre*, whereby they managed to appropriate the plays of other traditions for their own cause

This is particularly true in the case of realistic plays One of the peculiar qualities of realism throughout the modern period is its seemingly inexhaustible ability to adopt and incorporate the more compelling or successful qualities of its opponents Thus many of the "revolutionary" practices of the historical avant-garde now have a comfortable place on today's generally realistic stages But in the case of the *Theâtre de l'Oeuvre*, by adopting the work of the Scandinavian playwrights, the Symbolists, at least for a time, turned the tables works in the vanguard of realistic playwrighting were now employed in the cause of symbolist theatre But the co-opting of realistic plays into symbolist performance did nothing to alter the viability of these plays as examples of realism, and of course they continued to be performed on the realistic stage

When the work of a 'new' symbolist playwright did eventually appear, it was certainly a momentous occasion Alfred Jarry wrote only one play of any real significance, but its impact was enormous *Ubu Roi* had a tremendous influence on the development of the avant-garde, perhaps as a rallying point as much as anything else Regardless, from an historical perspective, the other work of the *Theâtre de l'Oeuvre* in this period was eclipsed by its production in 1896, and it became of one of the most important events in the history of avant-garde theatre Many studies of this play have been published over the last hundred years, and its importance to the avant-garde is well established The character of the performance and the sense of anarchy personified in the form of the "diabolical clown," Ubu, are a matter of record There is little sense in going over ground which has already been extensively covered, but there are some discrepancies that need to be addressed There may be some doubt as to which, if any, tradition the play belongs *Ubu Roi* is often viewed as a sort of singular event outside of its historical, aesthetic context, an event both unprecedented and unheralded This is far from true The play was heralded in early conceptions of the symbolist aesthetic, particularly those of Kahn, and it is important that *Ubu Roi* be recognized as symbolist The nature of the play and the circumstances of its production both support this view Not surprisingly, Deak devotes considerable space to the idea

> *Ubu Roi* fits Kahn's description of character comedy and partially that of clownish pantomime It is unlikely that Jarry was influenced by Kahn in the choice of genre though he probably read the essay and may

> have considered Kahn's other suggestion -- for example, the idea of cutting down crowds on stage to few actors, which they both advocated The clown, as previously discussed, was a frequent theme in the second half of the nineteenth-century and the clownish pantomime popular with poets and artists (Deak 242)

I am inclined to agree, in that it seems likely that Jarry would have been aware of Kahn's manifesto Ultimately, however, whether he read the manifesto or not is of little importance One cannot take the play out of its historical context It clearly adheres to prescribed symbolist principles and genres Symbolism's leading director produced it in a symbolist theatre Furthermore, during the course of its somewhat troubled production, the play received unequivocal support from Mme Rachilde, a proponent of the movement from the outset At one point she even ventured to remind Lugne-Poe of his obligation to the play and its artists (Deak 229) If the circumstances of its production are not enough to establish its status, further evidence can be found in the fact that, after its notorious premiere, the play was highly praised by none other than Stephane Mallarme, Symbolism's most prominent proponent

> With rare and lasting clay, you have molded an extraordinary character in its own right, and you have done this as a spare and steady dramatic sculpture He enters into the domain of the highest taste and is haunting me (Mallarme qtd in Deak 243)

Ubu Roi is often offered as the point of origin for avant-garde theatre Though it is clear that this is not really true, and that the play belongs to the greater symbolist aesthetic, its importance as a touchstone is undeniable This is clearly demonstrated in the number of movements and individuals that claim Jarry and *Ubu Roi* as an aesthetic / ideological progenitor What makes the play so important in this context is that not only did it mark the first prominent application of the circus model, but the sudden and full emergence of grotesque Symbolism as well In so doing, it set the tone for many subsequent modern experiments, especially in Paris

Initially, at least, the circus model and grotesque Symbolism are virtually synonymous, plausible because of the fundamental sense of anarchy that they both share Though ultimately the grotesque transcends the simple presence of the clown or even the

anarchy of the circus, the identification of these elements generally provides a good indication of the quality of Symbolism at work in a given production The distinction between lyrical and grotesque Symbolism is important in understanding the character of the symbolist movement and its influence on subsequent theatrical experiments Ultimately it is about the tone of the Symbolism, about the way it is achieved The lyrical is subtle where the grotesque is overt The lyrical seduces where the grotesque goads or even bludgeons The plays of Maeterlinck and Jarry aptly represent these two extremes The distinction between the two is revealed in two quotations The first, from Storch, describes the character of *Ubu Roi* relative to previous productions "The break-out from these toned-down sensitively felt settings was made by Alfred Jarry in 1896 with *Ubu Roi* He had firm ideas and the Nabis gave him their enthusiastic collaboration theatre as fun, a studio joke, dirty, shocking, throwing good taste into a puddle" (Storch 16) Another clue comes from the now-famous response of William Yeats to *Ubu Roi* "after all our subtle colour and nervous rhythm, after the faint mixed tints of Conder, what more is possible? After us the savage God" (qtd in Deak 243)

Savage or not, French Symbolism (proper) began to dissolve even as its influence was spreading throughout the Europe To attempt to trace a comprehensive line of influence would be futile, but there are a few particularly important figures in the adoption and spread of symbolist principles throughout Europe For example, though he broke with Symbolism proper, recognizing the need to operate outside of specific allegiances, Lugné-Poe continued to produce plays and spread the influence of the fundamental tenets of avant-garde performance Marinetti came under that influence, for example Outside of the Parisian milieu, however, symbolist principles were explored, developed and disseminated by two particularly significant practitioners of modern theatre, August Strindberg and Vsevelod Meyerhold The performances that arose from their work inform a vast range of subsequent theatrical exploration Aside from the perpetuation of symbolist principles, these two are significant for the degree to which they embody certain major developments of experimental theatre in the modern period

The volume, scope and subsequent influence of Strindberg's large body of work place him among the most important playwrights of his generation He made important

and lasting contributions to both the realistic and symbolist traditions Even if his conversion to Symbolism, in *To Damascus*, came late in his career, he is certainly among the most prominent symbolist playwrights The program of Scandinavian plays undertaken by Lugne-Poe, described above, exemplifies the affinity of even Strindberg's realistic plays with the goals and methods of French Symbolism However, his position as a symbolist undeniably arises by virtue of his later works, those of the late 19th and early 20th centuries These plays are often called proto-expressionist This is a label that, if not entirely incorrect, is somewhat problematic, in that it is entirely too narrow a definition Though it describes what particular style his work precedes (and wields influence over), it does not really describe what it is Symbolism

Strindberg's conversion to Symbolism was nurtured -- perhaps even precipitated -- by his visits to Paris, where he spent a considerable amount of time in the early 1890s It was around this time that he was introduced to the works of Maeterlinck Coincidentally this was also approximately the same period in which his plays were produced at the *Theâtre de l'Oeuvre* His symbolist work was to appear shortly afterwards, erupting out of a period in which he suffered a nervous breakdown and came under the influence of Swedenborg, who became a major inspiration not only in his writings but also in his life His new approach to theatre was revealed in a new work, *To Damascus*, (a title drawn from St Paul's conversion to Christianity) Whether by chance or design, the basic structure of this work bears a clear resemblance to the outline for a symbolist novel, which appears in Symbolism's literary manifesto After *To Damascus*, Strindberg pursued the imagery and structure of the dream in his *A Dream Play*, a piece which also incorporates Hindu mythology Finally, he embarked on a series of plays known as the *Chamber Plays*, so called for his desire to emulate in them the thematic structure of (chamber) music

Strindberg's contribution to Symbolism and the aesthetic of the modern avant-garde is obviously enormous His career parallels the evolution of Symbolism in the theatre He is equally effective in both realist and symbolist idioms His naturalistic plays, *Miss Julie* or *The Father*, display some affinity with symbolist thought and prefigure his conversion to Symbolism, or a theatre of "psychological subjectivism "

They are precisely those "show pieces of the naturalistic theatre" which possessed the "formal elements that called for corresponding features in the acting and the décor" (Rischbieter 9). Accordingly, his later works were the showpieces of an entirely different kind of theatre. *A Dream Play* is a milestone of symbolist development. This full embrace of both realist and symbolist idioms emphasizes the importance of his work. His conversion, around 1897, arising as it did from his deteriorating mental state and Swedenborg's influence, embodies the essential nature of the symbolist revolution (Esslin 252).

Strindberg's influence was most directly felt in Germany, where he was the single greatest theatrical influence on the development of Expressionism. The fundamental premises of the avant-garde -- the abstract expression of primordial imperatives, and the conceptual models of dream and music -- favoured in his plays were quickly seized upon by many theatrical explorers. Ironically, in his lifetime he did more to advance the aesthetic of lyrical Symbolism than that of the grotesque, which Expressionism ultimately adopted. His plays possess that sense of deepened reality that Rischbieter describes, a deepened reality, which, if it is sometimes shocking, could not really be called grotesque. Rather, there is a vague atmosphere of dread permeating his plays (especially *The Chamber Plays*). They have more in common with Maeterlinck's subtleties than Jarry's deceptively blunt satire. However, this undercurrent grows throughout the post-inferno period. The writing leans more and more toward the grotesque as the atmosphere of dread increasingly becomes one of horror or mental and physical anguish. So, in that sense, Strindberg does begin to capture some degree of the grotesque character. It is that quality of horror -- along with basic avant-garde principles -- that the expressionists seized upon and which became a predominant feature of that movement.

Where Strindberg could be considered Symbolism's most significant playwright, Vsevelod Meyerhold is indisputably its most prominent director. His theatrical experiments encompass the parameters of avant-garde practice, capturing the general character of the overall endeavour along with many peculiarities of individual variations. They encompass the transition from realism to Symbolism, as well as the divergence of

the lyrical and the grotesque His career more or less summarizes the symbolist movement its developments and implications As such, it is an invaluable source of information about the symbolist aesthetic, especially because the extent to which he explored it Maeterlinck's plays, which acted as the stimulus for Meyerhold's explorations, also provided the jumping off point for new and exciting theatrical variations These echoed or paralleled the emergence of the grotesque in *Ubu Roi*, one of a surprising number of such coincidences in the avant-garde However, Meyerhold's experiments, fully developed and clearly articulated, are a much more sophisticated expression of the grotesque than Jarry's plays, and ultimately it is to him we owe its more complete definition In fact, beyond that grasp of the grotesque, Meyerhold's embodiment of avant-garde principles is so complete that his career could act as a text for its development in the modern period

Though the influence of Maeterlinck and the symbolist revolution took some time to reach Eastern Europe, " by 1903 the impact of Western Symbolism had been fully absorbed by Russian literature" (Braun 30) This was also the year that Meyerhold assumed the directorship of a company that he renamed and dedicated to the production of symbolist drama Within two years he assumed the directorship of a new project sponsored by Stanislavsky to address the new drama Meyerhold gave it the name 'Theatre-Studio ' He became an adept practitioner of symbolist staging techniques, and an examination of these, in this early stage, reveals their kinship with French practices, further emphasizing the inherent nature of Maeterlinck's plays For example, in 1905, Meyerhold produced Maeterlinck's *The Death of Tintagiles*, in which he strove for the musical model

> Both the external effects of the scenario of Maeterlinck's play (such as the howling of the wind, the beating of the waves, and the buzzing of voices) and all the points in the dialogue were conveyed with the help of actual music (orchestra and choir *a capella*) (qt in Braun 48)

Meyerhold's detailed and meticulous approach to the play revealed the subtle character of its lyrical Symbolism The production provides a clear example of the musical model of performance in action, and the poetic orchestration of vocal elements proposed in

Kahn's genre of *poetic drama* as well As far as dialogue was concerned, Meyerhold considered the actors' voices to be nothing less than musical instruments and offered strict instructions as to their use

> 1 The words must be coldly 'coined,' free from all tremolo and the familiar break in the voice There must be a total absence of tensions and lugubrious intonation
> 2 The sound must always be 'reinforced', the words must fall like drops into a deep well, the fall being clearly audible without any vibration in space There must be no diffusion of sound, no drawing out of word endings (qtd in Deak 173)

Meyerhold's adherence to the musical model also included efforts to "synchronize gestures and movements with the musical score " According to Braun, he was able to accomplish the synchronization of movement with music, but found his efforts to do so with the dialogue more difficult, at least in the early stages of his career Nevertheless, the musical model remained a priority throughout his professional life, so much so that "perhaps more than anything else it was this concept of 'musicality' that characterized Meyerhold's style and set him apart from every other stage director of his time" (Braun 222)

Though his application of musical principles remained consistent, in other regards Meyerhold's approach underwent drastic alterations relatively early in his career In the initial stages it was dominated by Maeterlinck's lyrical plays, but he soon began to explore a new form These productions were dominated by a preoccupation with the grotesque It was in Alexander Blok's play, *The Fairground Booth*, that new ideas began to take shape

> As the descriptions of Meyerhold as Pierrot suggest, the style of acting was far removed from the *tableaux vivants* of his earlier productions The abrupt changes of mood, the sudden switches of personality, the asides to the audience, all demanded a mental and physical dexterity, an ability to improvise, a capacity for acting not only the part but also one's attitude to it These devices were all waiting to be rediscovered in the tradition of the popular theatre stretching back to the *commedia dell 'arte* and beyond It was this theatre, the theatre of masks and improvisation, which the experience of *The Fairground Booth* led Meyerhold to explore It came to furnish the basis for his entire style, a style which in a word can be called 'grotesque' (Braun 74)

Curiously, *The Fairground Booth* played a role in Russian Symbolism very similar to the one that *Ubu Roi* played in the French In both cases, Symbolism found its first articulate voice in Maeterlinck's plays However, in both cases, not long after the appearance of lyrical Symbolism, the grotesque began to manifest itself in the circus model Thus, though the Russian grotesque seems to have developed independently, it seems to have done so on parallel lines to grotesque development in France At least there is no indication that either Meyerhold or Blok had ever heard of Jarry Braun explicitly states that Blok had not Though there is reason to suppose that Meyerhold might have investigated Maeterlinck when first encountering him, there is no evidence of it, or of any in-depth study of symbolist theory So the parallel development suggests a natural evolution of the grotesque and of the circus model testifying to the importance of their respective roles in symbolist performance Ultimately it also lends credence to Kahn's manifesto

The parallel played itself out in the similarity of response from particular members of the symbolist community In one such example, "[t]he production drove a rift between Blok and his bosom companion, Andrei Bely Bely called it a betrayal of Symbolism and a 'bitter mockery of Blok's own past'" (Braun 73) This reaction echoes Yeat's reference to the 'savage God' in response to *Ubu Roi* In his defense, Blok asserted the consistency of his approach "Blok himself later said, there was essentially nothing new in what he was saying in *The Fairground Booth*, the difference was that he was saying it in public rather than in the personal isolation of the lyric" (Braun 73) Meyerhold pursued his new ideas, regardless of criticism, and in 1912 an essay on the grotesque appeared It offers a more elaborate definition which we can apply to a fuller understanding of the symbolist aesthetic in general

> The grotesque does not recognize the purely debased or the purely exalted The grotesque mixes opposites, consciously creating harsh incongruity, playing entirely on its own originality The grotesque deepens life's outward appearance to the point where it ceases to appear merely natural The basis of the grotesque is the artist's constant desire to switch the spectator from the plane he has just reached to another which is totally unforeseen (Qtd in Braun 74)

For Meyerhold the grotesque became a carefully elaborated style Despite the

haphazard tone of *Ubu Roi*, Jarry had a strong idea of what he was doing in its creation His system of pataphysics attests to this But Meyerhold went much further in pursuit of the grotesque aesthetic He developed his notions of the grotesque and his application of circus and musical models into a sophisticated system of acting This ultimately became biomechanics, which is based on the use of an actor's plasticity to explore three-dimensional space His relentless experimentation led him to associations and flirtations with theatrical ideas that once again anticipate or parallel aesthetic developments in the rest of Europe His notions of grotesque theatre parallel much of the thought and theories behind grotesque genres, like Futurism and dada, more directly influenced by Jarry Meyerhold was quick to seize on the particular trends, innovations or ideas with which he came into contact His staging of *The Dawn* and Mayakovsky's *Mystery-Bouffe* employed strong elements of cubo-futurist design at a time when those had scarcely been heard of anywhere else Moreover, his ideas also prefigure the much more politically focused, grotesque, theatrical ideas of Bertolt Brecht Tretyakov's play *Earth Rampant*, for example, which Meyerhold staged in March of 1923, employed devices similar to Brecht's The play was "a direct commentary on recent Soviet history Tretyakov sought to strengthen the dialogue by giving it the laconicism of the agitory placard and by schooling the actors in an appropriately aggressive style of declamation " As Braun further describes, "both in its forms and objectives, Tretyakov's treatment closely resembled what Brecht was later to call 'Epic" (Braun 180)

Meyerhold's kinship with Epic Theatre is clear in his ideas on the grotesque "The grotesque mixes opposites, consciously creating harsh incongruity " This concept has a clear relation to Brecht's *Verfremdungseffekt* (alienation) and the whole notion of the Brechtian dialectic, in which elements of production sharpen themselves against each other Meyerhold was also to say, "[t]he actor-tribune acts not the situation itself, but what is concealed behind it and what it has to reveal for a specifically propagandist purpose " Like Brecht, Meyerhold avoided the complete breakdown of dramatic performances into the performance-bites of Futurist soiree and Dada cabaret, but he did break down the texts of his productions into smaller units "With Meyerhold the basic

dramatic unit was the episode, whereas with Stanislavsky it remained the act, the one dismantles reality, the other reproduces its flow" (qtd in Braun 267).

That his later work extended into the political realm is a development dictated more, perhaps, by the political climate of the Soviet Union at the time, rather than a strict subscription to political ideals in the theatre. The circumstances of his arrest and subsequent execution for criticizing the artistic merits of state-dictated socialist realism, seem to indicate that his political inclinations rarely seem to have superseded his artistic ones. Nevertheless his development of what would later be called Brechtian techniques is fairly clear. What stimulated their development in this instance is immaterial. The facts seem to indicate that he more or less prefigured the development of the Brechtian style.

Meyerhold is one of those theatre personalities who seem to have touched upon all the important ideas, in one way or another. Perhaps it is his forty-year career based on a complex interaction of stunning successes, fierce criticism, and financial hardship that make Meyerhold's work seem so resolutely progressive. In the course of that work, he had a meaningful association with the conceptual terrain of both lyrical and grotesque Symbolism, the subsequent efforts of futurism and constructivism, the music meets circus sensibility common in Bauhaus Theatre, a political theatre that prefigured Brecht's. However it is important to remember that the aesthetic ideas which provided the impetus for this innovation and development clearly trace back to Symbolism. Meyerhold fully explored the symbolist aesthetic, creating productions of Maeterlinck as well as symbolist adaptations of Ibsen's plays. These formed the basis for subsequent ideas, offering a starting point for his more complex innovations. In fact, in many ways his work is the single best source of information about the symbolist aesthetic, not only because of surviving records detailing his meticulous approach to production but also because he fully explored the potential of symbolist theatre.

> The situation in Russia is of particular interest. Meyerhold's symbolist productions achieved a higher level of artistry than did French productions, and in the works of Meyerhold, Evreinov, Tairov, and other directors, the move from symbolist theatre to the new theatricality

> took place. This new theatricality was founded on the ideas of transformation, theatrical characters like Pierrot and Harlequin, and other popular theatrical traditions such as the *commedia dell'arte*. Meyerhold's staging of Blok's *The Puppet Show* (1906), Schnitzler's *Columbine's Scarf*, and Moliere's *Don Juan* mark the transition from his symbolist phase to the *Doctor Departutto* period and new theatricality (Deak 5)

Symbolism's position at the fore-front of avant-garde exploration is often overlooked and obscured in accounts of modern theatrical development. Credit goes to Jarry a good deal of the time. Both Esslin and Innes take that view of this. And States constantly refers to what he calls the *expressionist* revolution, which if not completely unfair is not entirely accurate either. All of these views conveniently avoid or ignore the fact that the basic avenues of avant-garde exploration were mapped out in the late eighteen-eighties and pursued by theatrical Symbolists in the eighteen-nineties. By the time *Ubu Roi* had been performed, the basic parameters of avant-garde experimentation for the modern period had been established. The three primary, practical models had been advanced, and the dichotomy between the lyrical and the grotesque had also been introduced. This represents the first major schism of the avant-garde, in that, in conjunction with the primary performance models, it essentially determined the early character of the modern, avant-garde theatre. Though it may have become less relevant as the century progressed, the implications of the distinction still resonate powerfully in Beckett's early work. The dichotomy's continuing influence is well represented by the influence of Maeterlinck and Jarry, as paradigms of the respective poles, on the subsequent experiments of the avant-garde. What remained after Jarry was to explore the terrain within the parameters outlined by those models and qualities. Strindberg and Meyerhold proceeded to do so, and played a pivotal role in exploring defining and advancing the principles of lyrical and grotesque Symbolism, but much of this exploration was also conducted under symbolist auspices.

Though one cannot dismiss the ingenuity of the theatre artists at work, the revolution in theatre aesthetics is clearly as much a matter of serendipity as of their ability. Social conditions of the time provided an atmosphere that supported their artistic

subversion Artists like Baudelaire and Wagner, particularly, led the way for their experiments but their theatre was also the product of a kind of artistic convergence in painting and poetry Milestones in the development of modern aesthetics are often associated with the appearance of visual artists as relatively autonomous artists in the theatrical enterprise This is a practice that really begins when Paul Serusier, Toulouse-Lautrec and others like them start painting the settings in Paul Fort's *Theâtre d'Art* Likewise, Baudelaire's poetic influences were amplified in the work of other poets, particularly Stephane Mallarme Finally, the theatre of realism prevalent in the avant-garde theatre at the time provided the perfect counterpart to focus their efforts Regardless of serendipity, the symbolist movement developed all the major principles which the avant-garde would espouse These were subsequently explored and developed in the work of Meyerhold and Strindberg As the modern period progressed, these and other theatre artists also benefited from a growing technological ability to deliver the practical demands of their collective imagination and the new models of performance But the fundamental premises remained the same the abstract expression of the cerebral according to the primary models and qualities These remained consistent throughout the period, and were still valid when Beckett began to turn his attention to the theatre Along the way another aesthetic dichotomy emerged, or re-emerged, between the rational and anti-rational forces of the artistic milieu (In fact, anti-rationalist forces were at the root of symbolist development in the first place) However, as artists and audiences alike become more accustomed to the idea of theatrical metaphor, the focus seems to have from one fixed on a lyrical or grotesque *production* to a rational or irrational *process* The opposition of rational and anti-rational in the twentieth-century came to determine how the material was approached from the outset

Chapter Two

Streams of the Avant-garde The Symbolist Legacy

The dynamic of the modern avant-garde is explosive, an almost geometric progression of theatrical exploration. The parameters and performance models of the new *mise-en-scene* spread rapidly throughout Europe as new theatre artists actively embraced the cerebral/psychic stage. This period of activity -- the roughly seventy years that span modernism -- reached its Zenith in the nineteen-twenties, or more accurately, in the interwar period. This pivotal 'interregnum' of aesthetic development was largely stimulated and defined by the First World War, the frequency and intensity of artistic expression accelerated sharply in its wake, and many theatrical experiments flourished virtually simultaneously. Heralded by dada's *Cabaret Voltaire* in 1916, this period saw the emergence not only of dada, but also of Expressionism, Surrealism (and the related Theatre of Cruelty), the Bauhaus School, agitprop and Epic Theatre. This crescendo of theatrical activity -- in many cases almost a direct response to the war -- was also a natural outgrowth of a growing fluency with modern aesthetic principles, aided by a growing technological capability that exacerbated the horrors of War.

It is reasonable to assert the basic similarities of the various modern schools of avant-garde theatre, given the initial influence of Symbolism and the similarity of the European cultural milieu. There was a great deal of cross-pollination in the modern European avant-garde. Very few of these artists worked in total isolation, and the atmosphere created by their virtual coexistence informed all their work. The socio-political conditions confronting European artists were essentially the same, and their theatrical endeavours can be seen as a response to those. The political environment was quickly developing in the relative poles of a steadily rising imperialist capitalism and its socialist opposition. Europe was experiencing the full effects of an ongoing technological revolution which saw the development of photography, electricity, telegraph, telephone, film, radio, and powered flight. It might be said that Europe was experiencing symptoms of a kind of 'future shock' (à la Toffler). But whatever label one

assigns, it is certain that Europe was struggling to come to grips with swelling industrialism and rapidly advancing technologies, in an increasingly polarized political environment. All these coincided with and / or contributed to the development of the modern metropolis. It was in this context that the modern avant-garde goaded and reflected the crisis of spiritual development in general society, a crisis for which Darwin, Marx and Freud are traditionally given credit, but which was clearly a general social development. Many other systems and philosophies played a role in this evolution. Nietzsche's ideas, for example, had considerable influence, while the general cult of the *fin-de-siecle* of the nineteenth century seems to have stimulated a rapidly rising interest in mysticism and the occult (a fascination manifested in Symbolism).

While Darwin, Marx and Nietzsche challenged our social and philosophical belief systems, Freud and Jung advanced relatively new and scientifically based theories to deal with the more intangible aspects of psychic / spiritual existence in the face of declining religious practice, exploring the 'irrational' regions of the mind that determine our understanding of the world. They had a decisive influence on the avant-garde. Consequently they also provide a lens through which we can see its common motivations, intentions and methods. Their work further serves to illuminate the resurgent struggle between rationalism and anti-rationalism within the ranks of the avant-garde, a struggle which accompanied the waning relevance of the lyrical / grotesque dichotomy. From this standpoint Jungian perspectives are particularly relevant because, appearing later than Freud's, they act as a more contemporary if inadvertent summary of avant-garde exploration. In the context of this thesis they are especially relevant because of the influence they had on Beckett.

The first prominent pioneers of the new aesthetic after Symbolism were Marinetti and Kokoschka. Both emerged in the first few years of the twentieth century, the same period in which Meyerhold made his transition from lyrical to grotesque Symbolism, and in which Strindberg was writing his chamber plays. Lugne-Poe formally broke with Symbolism in 1897 but continued to produce plays for the avant-garde with a basically symbolist aesthetic. In the early twentieth century he was joined in this task by new companies like the *Ballet Russe*, and individuals like Jean Cocteau, who contributed

immeasurably to the swelling tide of avant-garde production. These two in particular were to play an important role in the Parisian avant-garde. In Germany, a series of strong directors like Max Reinhardt and Piscator and eventually Brecht were to have the largest impact.

What re-emerged between the wars was a renewed tension between rationalism and anti-rationalism because that tension was at the heart of the representational / presentational dichotomy surrounding the initial development of Symbolism. At that time, in a dichotomy which can also be understood as between illusion and anti-illusion, the representational was associated with the rational and the presentational with the anti-rational. In Symbolism's first six years, the basic ground rules of the presentational, avant-garde aesthetic were established. Over that time, as artists and audiences become accustomed to theatrical metaphor, within the ranks of the avant-garde the point of contention -- the issue of presentationalism -- was subsumed by the emerging dichotomy of the lyrical and the grotesque, as defined by Maeterlinck and Jarry respectively. Yet, even while this new distinction and the models of performance were being further explored and disseminated throughout Europe, new movements began to appear. For the most part these operated according to the same basic set of rules: expression of the psyche according to those basic models and qualities. However, in the early years of the twentieth century, the distinction between the lyrical and the grotesque was gradually undermined. Two factors contribute to this development. Realism quickly began to co-opt many of the distinguishing characteristics of lyrical Symbolism, and the overwhelming juggernaut of the grotesque acquired an increasingly high profile. Both these things conspired to make the lyrical increasingly irrelevant. It many ways, it is as though lyrical Symbolism began to adopt more features of the grotesque in order to compensate. Strindberg's theatre, for example, became increasingly horror-filled as the German world moved toward Expressionism. So as far as governing outlooks go, the distinction became less important as time went by. Instead, the key distinction became an issue of the *approach* to the theatre of metaphor: will the metaphor be determined by rational or irrational means? Will the cerebral/psychic stage function according to reason or to intuition? To this day, the work of Brecht and Artaud respectively stand as the best

examples of those two positions

FUTURISM

It is curious that in an avant-garde which for the most part seemed to view technological advance with some trepidation, the first significant offshoot of symbolist thinking – Futurism -- was enamoured with the whole notion of technology and industrial progress It appeared, under the leadership of Fillipo Tomasso Marinetti, with the publication of the first Futurist Manifesto in 1909, and advanced an aesthetic based on speed, industry and technology principles which were most completely expressed in War Given this ideology, and the extent to which European culture was rooted firmly in its past, it comes as no surprise that Marinetti longed for the destruction of the aesthetic traditions that, at least in his mind, prevented Europe from embracing the future But Marinetti's theatre showed the influence of Parisian Symbolism in Lugne-Poe's staging of *Roi Bombance* in 1909 As Rischbieter observes, the play "is linked by more than title with Jarry's *Ubu Roi*", and he describes Marinetti's early drama as "a mixture of symbolist tendencies and the grotesque" (Rischbieter 68) *The Synthetic Futurist Theater*, a manifesto published in 1915, indicates Futurism's adherence to the basic symbolist aesthetic and the general conventions of the modern avant-garde Abstract expression of the psyche is clearly indicated, and equally clear is the subversive, destructive (read Dionysian) nature, its overriding mission to subvert or ignore logic, tradition, aesthetic, and technique

> The Futurist Theatre arises from the two highly vital trends of futurist sensibility that have been more closely defined in the two manifestoes, VARIETY and WEIGHTS, MASSES, AND PRIZES OF THE ARTISTIC SENSIBILITY
> 1 OUR BOUNDLESS PASSION FOR THE TOPICAL, RAPID, FRAGMENTARY, ELEGANT, COMPLEX, CYNICAL, MUSCULAR FLEETING, AND FUTURIST LIFE 2 OUR HIGHLY MODERN, CEREBRAL CONCEPTION OF ART, ACCORDING TO WHICH NO LOGIC, NO TRADITION, NO AESTHETIC, NO TECHNIQUE, NO OCCASION, MAY BE IMPOSED ON THE ARTIST, WHOSE ONLY DESIRE MUST BE TO CREATE SYNTHETIC FORMS OF EXPRESSION OF CEREBRAL ENERGY POSSESSING THE VALUE OF

ABSOLUTE NOVELTY (qtd in Rischbieter 73)

For the most part Futurist performance was dominated by the circus and musical models It exhibited a particular identification with the variety theatre and especially comedians In 1913, Marinetti published a manifesto titled *The Variety Theatre*, and Futurist *soirées* were modeled after evenings of variety theatre and seem to have been demonstrations or propaganda sessions in which manifestos were read

> The proper forms of action were manifestoes, posters, soirées -- theatrical forms The stage, the platform, was the proper scene of action. Marinetti's poems, striving towards sound painting, abstraction from logic and meaning, cried out to be recited. On February 15th, 1910, the first futurist soiree took place in Turin. The public reacted vigorously, both for and against, henceforth it was drawn into this kind of futurist theatre The earliest form of Dadaist demonstration, of the happening, had taken place (Rischbieter 68)

As Rose Lee Goldberg explains in *Performance Art from Futurism to Present*, it was "precisely its variety -- its mixture of film and acrobatics, song and dance, clowning and 'the whole gamut of stupidity, imbecility, doltishness, and absurdity, insensibly pushing the intelligence to the very border of madness' -- that made it an ideal model for Futurist performance" (17) But, while the Futurists were clearly employing the values of the circus and variety theatre in their performances, it is equally clear that they were also employing a musical model in terms of their application of abstract correspondences between sense- media Music and painting were specifically evoked as metaphors and models for the theatrical process in such a way as to make the connection to the abstract correspondences of Baudelaire difficult to miss

> The Futurist theatrical synthesis will not be subject to logic, there will be nothing photographic about it, it will be autonomous, will resemble only itself, although it will draw elements from reality, combining them according to its mood. Just as for the painter and the musician there exists a narrowly limited but more intense life scattered about the external world, a life made up of colours shapes notes and sounds, so there exists for the man gifted with a feeling for the theatre, a specialized reality that violently assails the nerves it consists of what I call The Domain of the theatre (qtd in Rischbieter 73)

As one of the first two individual schools to emerge from the symbolist revolution, Futurism took considerable effort to set itself apart from its predecessors Yet it is clear that much of its stage vocabulary adopted elements previously explored by Symbolism, particularly those surrounding clowns and the circus model Furthermore, it is clear that notions concerning the application of abstract correspondence also belonged to the Symbolist aesthetic Even so, the Futurists' love of speed and technology brought these elements together in a new way Futurism is the only avant-garde movement to have shown such unbridled admiration for technological advancement as an end in itself As such it established the roots of what has become the fourth model of performance in the twentieth century -- that of technology and the machine, or what could be understood in our time as the model of cyber-space

The arrival of a real war undermined the Futurists' notions of it as an artistic concept (not least because many Futurists died in it) The Great War dampened any admiration for machine-wrought marvels when Europe's burgeoning technological capabilities were used simply to kill with greater efficiency However, the war that undermined Futurism also accomplished one of its goals the destruction wrought in Europe jeopardized, where it did not out-right destroy, many of her artistic treasures Like it or not, Europe was drawn into the twentieth century Regardless of its short-lived enthusiasm for conflict, Futurism's artistic legacy - what it really contributed to the modern milieu - has much more to do with its sense of anarchy, irreverence and energy, qualities that passed on the grotesque aesthetic of Jarry The movement had wide currency in terms of the influence it enjoyed, having a considerable impact on Russian Constructivism, for example, and an enormous impact on dada The Futurist aesthetic found fresh vigour in dada, when the Cabaret Voltaire premiered in Zurich However, it had a final important stage appearance when, in 1917, "Diaghilev invited [Giacomo]Balla and Fortunato Depero to work for the Ballet Russe" (Rischbieter 68) It is an instance of irony common in the history of the avant-garde, that at the time that *Fireworks* was making its debut, the Futurists crossed paths in Naples with Picasso, Satie and Cocteau This group was working on *Parade*, the ballet that was to herald dada

sensibilities Thus the event that marked the pinnacle of futurist stage design (*Fireworks*) was also its last significant production

DADA

The first formal use of the title is associated with Zurich and the *Cabaret Voltaire* This event was the creation of Hugo Ball and his wife Emmy Hennings, but Ball and Hans Arp coined the actual name "Dada is 'yes, yes' in Rumanian, 'rocking horse' and 'hobby horse' in French For Germans, Ball said, 'it is a sign of foolish naivete, joy in procreation and preoccupation with the baby carriage' " It also means 'given' in Spanish Rischbieter suggests that the first to employ this kind of artistic principle, if not specifically under the title of dada, were "the Cartesian Duchamp, who fundamentally substituted the despairing act of thought for the work of art, and the Spaniard Picabia, a gay, tough anarchist " He adds that they "personify the intellectual skeptical nihilistic principle behind Dada, the principle of anti-art" (Rischbieter 164)

Dada had many reincarnations, in many cities, and nowhere is the cross-pollination of the modern avant-garde seen more clearly The Cabaret Voltaire itself captured a sense of a common agenda among the avant-garde For instance, the *Sturm Soirée* of April 14 1917 featured the writing of Marinetti, a performance of Kokoschka's play *Sphinx and Strawman*, along with the writing of Guillaume Apollinaire, who originated the term 'Surrealism' Rischbieter's description reinforces this perspective

> In Zurich, at the Cabaret Voltaire, where the name of Dada was first used in 1916, many things converged Hugo Ball's soul-searching Expressionism, the Rumanian Tristan Tzara's agitational ferocity, Hulsenbeck's provocative arrogance, Serner's nihilism, Hausmann's Futurist and irrationalist activism, and finally Hans Arp, Sophie Taeuber, and Hans Richter, who were seeking a pure non-objective language of the imagination (Rischbieter 164)

Because dada manifested itself in a number of ways and places, it is difficult to define Its aesthetics are those of subversion, and if there is a defining characteristic, that nihilism or senselessness is basically it In this we see a full flowering of anti-rationalist

forces. Dada is frequently understood as a reaction against the irrationality of the Great War, and there is no reason to doubt this view. However, if the war triggered dada's dissatisfaction, that discontent stemmed from a broader range of issues: the war itself laid bare all the things that were stupid or at least problematic about European society. Dada's explicit rejection of rationalism, their "clear path of negation" (Kalb, *Beckett in Performance* 155) is a repudiation of European society and the tradition of reason. The blessings of industrialism had landed Europe in a war that, though perhaps begun as imperial posturing, quickly evolved into wholesale slaughter on an industrial scale. Much of the artistic community's response to the war was foreshadowed in dada. But as much as it was reacting to the direct stimulus of conflict, it was also part of an evolution of existing principles, and much more than just an anti-war movement. It was an artistic response to society in general. Hugo Ball's ideas reflect this:

> In an age like ours, when people are assaulted daily by the most monstrous things without being able to keep account of their impressions, in such an age aesthetic production becomes a prescribed course. But all living art will be irrational, primitive, complex: it will speak a secret language and leave behind documents not of edification but of paradox. (qtd. in Goldberg 55)

Dada is a symbolic and wide-ranging critique of art and life. The embrace of the destructive/creative dynamic is its *raison d'être*. Its problem in this regard is that its pronounced nihilism sometimes obscures its creativity. Dada's objectives were not as focused as even the Futurists', who seem to have had a clearer idea of what they wanted *in place* of everything they intended to destroy. Instead, dada directs subversive energy at everything in general. A manifesto written by Picabia on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary celebration of the premiere of Jarry's *Ubu Roi* (celebrated at The *Théâtre de l'Oeuvre*) aptly conveys this overriding nihilism:

> As to Dada, it doesn't smell, it means nothing, absolutely nothing. Dada is like your hopes: nothing. Like your paradise: nothing. Like your idols: nothing. Like your political leaders: nothing. Like your heroes: nothing. Like your artists: nothing. (qtd. in Rischbieter 170)

Dada engages in a sustained act of contradiction Its strength stems from the degree to which it embodies this principle In dada the subversive/ destructive impulse is the artistic impulse The act of subversion is its cerebral/psychic expression In the process of generally deriding everything, it creates new art Marcel Duchamp paints a mustache on the Mona Lisa, or signs a urinal R Mutt, and eloquently sends the message of dada More than simply a negation or mockery of art, dada is a savvy, sophisticated critique of it Though it may be born out of cynicism and world-weariness, at its best it is offered with a sense of humor In *Avant Garde Theatre*, Christopher Innes emphasizes dada's positive side, claiming a "positive political rationale" for Berlin dada, at least He asserts the movement's belief in the liberation of the individual from oppression, stimulated by the "free flow of imagination and release of the subconscious " He claims for it the "values of spontaneity, intuitive response, creative irrationalism and immediacy that the surrealist manifestoes also proclaimed " In illustrating this belief, Innes quotes this memorable excerpt from Tristan Tzara

> Every product of disgust capable of becoming a negation of family is Dada, a protest with the fists of its whole being engaged in destructive action Dada, knowledge of all the means rejected up until now by the shamefaced sex of comfortable compromise and good manners Dada, abolition of logic, which is the dance of those impotent to create Dada, abolition of memory Dada, abolition of the future Dada, absolute and unquestionable faith in every god which is the immediate product of spontaneity (qtd in Innes 71-71)

Though dada was further characterized by a great deal of argument among its members as to what it was and how best to go about demonstrating it, it nevertheless manifests the general characteristics of the avant-garde In keeping with the general patterns of avant-garde theatre, it utilizes the standard models of performance, especially the circus model Though their films made some use of dream structure and music, the circus is likely the most popular model for dada After the manner of the Futurists, this is seen in the cabaret format of their *soirees*, not to mention the general sense of anarchy that seems to have pervaded them Zurich dada, for example, could easily be described as a kind of artistic circus In this passage, Hans Arp offers a telling anecdote

> On the stage of a gaudy, motley, overcrowded tavern, there are several weird and peculiar figures representing Tzara, Janco, Ball, Hulsenbeck, Madame Hennings, and your humble servant Total pandemonium The people around us are shouting, laughing and gesticulating Our replies are sighs of love, volleys of hiccups, poems, moos, and miaowing of medieval Bruitists Tzara is wiggling his behind like the belly of an oriental dancer Janco is playing an invisible violin and bowing and scraping Madame Hennings, with a Madonna face, is doing the splits Hulsenbeck is banging away non-stop on the great drum, with Ball accompanying him on the piano, pale as a chalky ghost We are given the honorary title of Nihilists (qtd in Goldberg 60)

This circus atmosphere is consistent in dada That model, and the accompanying tone of irreverence, swept through Europe before the war even started Dada provided a focus for this kind of energy, although the concept of focus and dada may seem to be contradictory

Dada's influence, and that of the circus model, emerges in one of the more important events to take place in the inter-war period Not long after the *Cabaret Voltaire* got under way in Zurich, *The Ballet Russe* staged *Parade* in Paris One of the most important conduits for new staging practices (particularly in the integration of design), this company occupied Paris in the early years of the twentieth-century in a kind of self-imposed exile from their Russian origins They helped bring many concepts of staging from Russia to Paris and were at the centre of avant-garde production in the city for many years *Parade* was the "collaborative work of four artists each masters in their own fields, Eric Satie, Pablo Picasso, Jean Cocteau, and Leonid Massine " All were invaluable to avant-garde endeavours in Paris during this period (Additionally, Guillaume Apollinaire wrote the preface of the program and coined the term 'surreal' therein) *Parade* is important because it "set the tone for performance of the post-war years," and incorporated much of what was intrinsic to the avant-garde The character of the production was evident in the appearance of the 'managers'

> The revolutionary innovation introduced by Picasso to form a transition between the scenery and the ballet produced the famous 'manager' figures These might be described as Cubist dance masks The link between the setting and figure is here established This is emphasized by the use made of these figures

> in the dance they are theatrical grotesques which in their movements – as Satie's music with its underlying noises confirms – are merely manifestations of themselves Costume and actor become identical (Rischbieter 82)

Parade's circus atmosphere was explicitly stated in the notes of director, Jean Cocteau He defined it as "A simple, roughly outlined action which combines the attraction of the circus and the music hall a comic act, put on at the entrance of a traveling theatre to attract a crowd," and the scenario involved "a traveling troupe whose 'parade' is mistaken by the crowd for the real circus act" (Goldberg 77) Rischbieter describes it as a "fairground spectacle" in which "Eric Satie, Cocteau, Massine and the demon behind and above them – Picasso – let loose the 'managers' and the barkers made up of a collage of posters, stovepipes, and parts of the bodies of animals Cubist *objets d'art* set in motion" (Rischbieter 12) It is particularly revealing that in describing Parade, Leon Bakst, who had designed for the *Ballet Russe*, evoked Meyerhold's *Fairground Booth* "Picasso has designed for us his own idea of a fairground booth in which acrobats, Chinese, and *comperes* move as though in a kind of Kaleidoscope in a manner that is at once fantastic and real" (qtd in Rischbieter 46)

Though *Parade* could be characterized as a dada-esque production their movement did not officially reach Paris until 1919, when Tristan Tzara and Francis Picabia arrived there Not long afterward, a telling event took place, which beyond identifying the major personalities of the Parisian avant-garde provides a good indication of common cause and influence

> On March 27, 1920, Breton, Soupault, Ribemont-Dessaignes, Tzara and others "celebrated" the twenty-fifth anniversary of the scandal of the first night of Jarry's *Ubu Roi* at the original venue, The *Théâtre de l'Oeuvre* There were recitations manifestations and an absurd piece by Tzara was acted La premiere aventure celeste de M Antipyrine Picabia stayed away, his manifesto was read by Breton (Rischbieter 170)

But what solidarity Paris dada had was not to last very long Andre Breton was quickly developing his own ideas of what and how the avant-garde should produce There was little to distinguish them at first, other than his desire to set the course of the Parisian

avant-garde in accord with his own agenda He acknowledged the same basic sources of inspiration -- Marinetti's futurist, anarchic irrationalism and theatre of protest, and Jarry, as the *Ubu Roi* anniversary celebration suggests But despite this, the differences between the Tzara camp and Breton's were more than enough to drive a wedge between those who were content with the course of dada as it was and those who desired a more focused artistic mission In a display of artistic fervor that might be the envy of theatrical artists today (though in our litigious time lawsuits would invariably ensue), tensions between the two groups grew until they erupted in a more or less final conflict, in July 1923

> Breton, who had previously had an argument with Tzara and was therefore concerned to prepare the way for the strict coherence of the Surrealists, climbed onto the stage and hit out at the dancers A fight broke out between the supporters of Tzara and the followers of Breton After this, Tzara did his best to keep alive the Dada tradition-- although the very phrase is self-contradictory But 'Surrealism had devoured and digested Dada ' (Hans Richter qtd in Rischbieter 170)

Even so, shortly after this conflagration, Picabia, Duchamp and Satie staged *Relache* for the *Ballet Suedois* It is appropriate that Satie, who played such an important part in the establishment of Paris dada, also played a key role in what was perhaps its last significant theatrical expression Picabia was especially enthusiastic about Satie's participation "although I had made up my mind never to write a ballet Eric Satie persuaded me to do so The mere fact that he was writing the music for it was for me the best reason " *Relache* represented, if not the pinnacle of dada performance, at least "the only Dadaist theatrical experiment carried out with all the means of the stage and at great expense "

> There was no decor The stage consisted of three doorways close behind one another, and the rear wall Everything was covered with an arrangement of circular metal discs with an electric bulb shining in the centre of each one The audience was dazzled In the two acts of the ballet, scenes from everyday life followed one another in the manner of a revue, at the edge of the stage commonplace events took place, ordinary life was lived out A fireman, who smoked one cigarette after the other, spent the whole evening pouring water out of one bucket into another (by

> this action Picabia did not merely mock the fire regulations, but also made public the rites behind the scenes, denouncing the 'order' of the theatre) At the side of the stage sat an unoccupied man who from time to time rose and measured the floor of the stage (Rischbieter 170)

For its part, the intermission consisted of the film, *entr'acte*, which amounts to a series of nonsensical scenarios, including one of a man dancing in a tutu filmed from beneath through a glass plate At the end of the film, the cast burst through the film screen and the second act began This amounted to a series of gloomy dances followed by the appearance on stage of a miniature car, an event greeted with some derision by the audience

The presence of the circus model in *Relache* reveals itself precisely in the kind of loosely structured chaos that is that model's signature Fernand Leger described *Relache* in those terms, declaring, "[t]he watertight compartment separating ballet from music hall is broken through The author, the dancer, the acrobat, the screen, the stage, all these means of 'presenting a performance' are integrated and organized to achieve a total effect" (qtd in Rischbieter 169) As this was already cliché in Paris, it is almost needless to mention that the production caused a scandal, but despite its notoriety, or more probably because of it, Picabia declared *Relache* a success Whatever derision it invited he certainly seems to have ignored it However, the scandal did directly result in the demise of the *Ballet Suedois*, and Satie was haunted by it until his death not long after

Relache marked a watershed in the Parisian avant-garde By the time of its staging, the mantle of avant-garde theatre in Paris had passed from dada to Surrealism Though *Relache* stood out as a paramount example of most, if not all, of what dada had tried to accomplish, as well as a gesture of defiance, it was the last significant event of dada theatre Breton wrote afterwards "Though dada had its hour of fame it left few regrets" "Leave everything Leave dada Leave your wife Leave your mistress Leave your hopes and fears Set off on the roads" (qtd Goldberg 88) So saying, he steered the course of the avant-garde towards his own ideological destination

SURREALISM

It is somewhat ironic that the term *surrealist* was actually coined by Apollinaire in the program for *Parade*. Had he lived long enough, he might have further defined the term or challenged Breton's dominance, but he died two days before the end of the war, a victim of the flu epidemic, long before Surrealism ever emerged as a movement. He is still considered by many to have been a surrealist playwright in that his *Breasts of Tiresias* is often cited as a manifestation of the surrealist ideal. However, it was Breton who determined the course of Surrealism. He defined both the term and whatever practical artistic function it describes: "Surrealism, noun masc., pure psychic automatism, by which an attempt is made to express, either verbally or in writing, or in any other manner, the true functioning of thought" (qtd. in Goldberg 89). He added that it rested on a belief in the "higher reality of certain hitherto neglected forms of association, in the omnipotence of the dream, in the disinterested play of thought." Goldberg believes that these definitions provided

> for the first time a key to understanding some of the motives behind dada's seemingly nonsensical performances of the preceding years. With the surrealist manifesto, those works could be seen as an attempt to give free rein to words and actions and to the oddly juxtaposed images of the dream. Actually, Breton had already by 1919 become obsessed with Freud and the examination of the unconscious. (Goldberg 89)

However, despite arguments with Breton that eventually drove him from the movement, in theatrical terms by far the most powerful extension of the surrealist aesthetic is the body of thought produced by Antonin Artaud. His observations, prescriptions and prophecies of theatre wield influence to this day. It is evident that Breton fought (sometimes physically) with anyone who challenged his views, and the history of the surrealist movement, particularly its earliest years, is fraught with accounts of artists in conflict with him. So in this regard Artaud was no different from many of his contemporaries, though he fared worse than some. Despite his disagreements with Breton, Artaud's differences with the surrealists were primarily political. He wanted

little or nothing to do with politics, and in his theatre the surrealist aesthetic is essentially apolitical Conversely, Breton saw political affiliation as a way to further the goals of the movement This political conflict was a chief source of their disagreements Based on Breton's own definition of Surrealism there could be little other reason Artaud's ideas embody the aesthetic of the irrational grotesque and epitomize everything that Surrealism strives for in theatrical terms The only significant exception to this is Artaud's inclusion of music in his theories Breton "had a horror" of music, so it was left out of his reckoning Artaud's aesthetic lineage is clearly acknowledged in the name that he gave his theatre, *Théâtre Alfred Jarry* It expressed an admiration for Jarry and an acknowledgment of his influence This is a prominent point of agreement amongst the Surrealists, though obviously agreement on this point was no barrier to disagreement on others It is also worth mentioning that Artaud also actively acknowledges the influence of Maeterlinck and Strindberg in his essays on theatre

The work generally recognized as the foremost expression of Artaud's theatrical ideas is *The Theatre and Its Double*, a work that has captured the imagination of many theatre professionals in this century A cerebral/psychic conception of theatre is clear in this collection of essays Given that Artaud's "theatre aims to reach us below the threshold of critical thought" it might be supposed that cruelty operates outside the realm of the mind But nothing could be further from the truth In the sense that Artaud rejects rational thought, and adopts a visceral theatre as opposed to a more passive intellectual one, it could be said that Artaud's theories side-step the mind But the pre-rational states that the Theatre of Cruelty appeals to are still anchored there, in that they are anchored in the unconscious It is clear from his writings that Artaud is concerned with metaphysics in theatre and that he targets the psyche regardless of the fact that he subverts the intellect He is not concerned with conscious ideas, but primordial ones His method of approach seeks to more or less directly engage those levels of the mind which are below conscious apprehension In this way his theatre might be said to be acting on the nervous system But if Theatre of Cruelty is a theatre of the nervous system, the center of that nervous system is still in the brain Though Artaud is opposed to the rational, his theatre still enagages the mind The spirit of cerebral/psychic stage certainly applies here

Artaud's work is an extreme manifestation, the concentrated essence of avant-garde principles Much of his theory addresses formal aspects of theatre, but his ideas also epitomize the connection or association of the theatre with the spirit and psyche, sometimes invoking spiritual or religious concepts These values underscore all his innovative ideas While his theatre calls for environmental spaces, and design that includes "shredded lighting effects" and "synthesized sounds," it also calls for a metaphysical theatre, an alchemical theatre to turn spiritual lead into gold His theatre is a profuse, quasi-baroque, Dionysian revel a bubbling over of powerful unconscious imagery But it also captures a sense of reflective self-aware performance - the essence of the meta-theatre - in that it is resolutely and unashamedly presentational It makes no attempt to be representational even where illusion is intended to be convincing It starts from a presumption of the artificiality of theatre It is not life, or a representation of life, but its double

Artaud's theatre employs all the models of the avant-garde in some measure There are frequent allusions to the musical possibilities of theatre in his writing, and in this regard the resonance with symbolist theories of correspondence is obvious He is moving beyond the emulation of music as it pertains to language, or the creation of musical structures in dialogue, because dialogue plays a smaller role in his conception of theatre However, language does still offer considerable possibilities

> Besides creating a performance with palpable material means, the pure *mise-en-scene* contains, in gestures, facial expressions and mobile attitudes, through a concrete use of music, everything that speech contains and has speech at its disposal as well Rhythmic repetition of syllables and particular modulations of the voice, swathing the precise sense of words, arouse swarms of images in the brain, producing a more or less hallucinatory state and impelling the sensibility and mind alike to a kind of organic alteration which helps to strip from the written poetry the gratuitousness that commonly characterizes it And it is around this gratuitousness that the whole problem of theatre is centred (*The Theatre and its Double* 120-121)

The nature of the imagery, combined with the formal properties of the environmental approach to theatre that Artaud prescribes, implies an association with the dream and points to his use of the dream model He refers to the dream in his discussion

of the quality of language in the theatre and the development of a language of the theatre "[i]t is not a question of suppressing the spoken language but of giving words approximately the importance they have in dreams " There is also an implicit association with the dream in his discussion of myths in the theatre "The true purpose of the theatre is to create myths, to express life in its immense, universal aspect, and from life to extract images in which we find pleasure in discovering ourselves " These references would give a clear indication of the importance of the dream model to his theatre, even if he did not explicitly state the fact in the "First Manifesto of Cruelty "

> It is a question then of making the theatre, in the sense of the word, a function, something as localized and as precise as the circulation of blood in the arteries or the apparently chaotic development of dream images in the brain, and this is to be accomplished by a thorough involvement, a genuine enslavement of the attention
>
> The theatre will never find itself again -- i e constitute a means of true illusion -- except by furnishing the spectator with the truthful precipitates of dreams, in which his taste for crime, his erotic obsessions, his savagery, his chimeras, his utopian sense of life and matter, even his cannibalism, pour out, on a level not counterfeit and illusory, but interior (*The Theatre and its Double* 92)

The nature of his prescribed theatre reveals the presence of the circus model also It is unlikely that Artaud ever consciously propagated the model of the circus *per se*, but many elements of the circus model exist in his theatre nonetheless He explicitly calls for such elements in the essay "An Affective Athleticism" and his note "The Marx Brothers " The environmental nature of the Theatre of Cruelty, its implied sense of anarchy and danger, conjure associations with the circus in that it is a powerful embodiment of chaotic principles in a series of visceral stage images Both more or less induce one to respond regardless of will In Artaud's case, the spectator is intended to react to a kind of archetypal hieroglyph, triggering a deep psychological response, whereas in the circus the response is to a life-threatening situation such as a tightrope, trapeze or lion's cage Nevertheless the Theatre of Cruelty could be described as a sort of three-ring circus of psychological rigor

The dichotomy between the lyrical and grotesque has an interesting character in Artaud. The quality of cruelty in Artaud's theatre could easily lead one to assume that his theatre belongs to the grotesque, in a manner similar to Expressionism. But, as in Expressionism, there is also an element of lyricism in his theories. His theatre does not always shock or confront after the manner of the grotesque. Sometimes its visceral images are designed to seduce. All the qualities of reverence or beauty or perhaps even tranquillity may be present in a 'cruel' image, but they are present to the extent that they provoke a spontaneous response, the cruelty originates from the power of an image to do so. What this means is that both the grotesque and lyric treatments of the modern aesthetic are present in Artaud's theories.

Though the lyrical / grotesque dichotomy is still alive, by this time it has become less relevant. What has become relevant instead is the dichotomy between rational and irrational (or anti-rational) approaches to theatre, which fully re-surfaces after being submerged for some time. Artaud's contribution to modern aesthetics revolves around this. It stems from the extent to which his theatre, perhaps his very existence, embodies the anti-rational. This applies not only to pre-rational states of mind that comprise the content of his approach, but also the form in which these are to be apprehended. He resists stratification or standardization of approach. In as much as he calls for a new language of the theatre, which is not only visual, but also physical or sensual, the syntax and grammar are never fixed but always contingent on the context of the moment.

Theatre of Cruelty was never fully realized by Artaud. Its character makes it uniquely difficult to capture and sustain. After his death it languished in some obscurity for many years, though many like Roger Vitrac and Roger Blin learned important lessons from Artaud. The ideas were destined to be picked up and re-evaluated many times in the years after his death and they continue to provoke a response. Theatre of Cruelty has come to stand as a sort of beacon to theatre practitioners: a goal to be worked toward even if it proves particularly difficult to attain. It is a standard against which many avant-garde theatre practitioners continue to measure their success. Artaud is recognized as a sort of standard-bearer of the anti-rational avant-garde. Along with Bertolt Brecht, he is considered one of the two most important theorists of twentieth-century theatrical

practice

EXPRESSIONISM

At roughly the same time as Marinetti's plays and ideas began to appear in the Parisian milieu, another manifestation of the modern aesthetic emerged in Germany Under the influence of Strindberg (and also Wedekind) a new variation of symbolist performance ideals was developing, which bore early fruit in Kokoschka's *Murderer, Hope of Womankind*, first performed in 1907 However this was a singular event, Expressionism's early, pre-war years were confined to the writing of plays, most of which appeared after 1910 It was only toward the end of the war that Expressionism began to find its voice in performance, and the years of its greatest popularity were between the years 1918-25 During this time it had wide currency in Germany, with plays produced by many leading theatre professionals such as Max Reinhardt Though ultimately confined to its country of origin (with one or two exceptions in the United States), its considerable popularity and lasting legacy (particularly in film) made it one of the most popular avant-garde movements of the twentieth century

In terms of basic principles, Expressionism differs only marginally from Symbolism It starts from a similar position in regarding the stage as a place for the expression of ideas and metaphorical staging (the cerebral/psychic stage) It also embraces the 'Nietzschean dynamic' of simultaneous creative and destructive urges These ideas are implicit in Expressionism, but certain published works provide ample evidence of its ideological thrust The products of such eminent expressionist personages as Yvan Goll, Ludwig Rubiner, Paul Kornfeld, and George Kaiser qualify as explications of expressionist philosophy even if they do not constitute actual manifestoes In one, Yvan Goll explicitly states that " the stage must not limit itself to 'real' life, it becomes 'superreal' when it knows about things behind things Pure realism was the worst error of all literature " In another essay, Rubiner calls for "the liberation of psychic forces" in a series of man-made "catastrophes," additionally declaring "[o]ur catastrophes alone give us life The name of disturber is an honorary title for us, for us destroyer is a religious concept, inseparable for us today from that of creator" (qtd in Sokel 5) Likewise Goll

declares, "the first task will have to be the destruction of all external form--reasonable attitudes, conventionality, morality, all the formalities of life" (qtd. in Sokel 10-11). These glimpses of expressionist philosophy make clear the basic adherence of Expressionism to the basic principles of avant-garde theatre. Moreover, the idea of esoteric knowledge, or "things behind things," is an aptly expressed parallel to the symbolist's "esoteric affinities with primordial ideas" described in its literary manifesto.

In many ways, Expressionism can be understood as a Germanic extension of Symbolism with a more focused social agenda. In fact, nowhere is Symbolism's influence more directly felt than in Expressionism. It germinated under the influence of artists who were directly related to the Parisian movement in one form or another. Munch, Wedekind, Wagner and especially Strindberg. It was under the influence of Strindberg's Symbolism that the expressionist movement rose to prominence. What Expressionism does is apply the basic principles of the avant-garde more militantly and more forcefully, from an inherently more pessimistic and individualistic point of view. The overwhelming influence of the war is responsible for this.

Generally speaking, Expressionism is based on a feeling of discomfort in or with the world, a feeling that is sometimes expressed with the word, *unheimlichkeit*. As it expresses a distinct dissatisfaction with the status quo, Expressionism has considerable social implications. There were social conditions in turn-of-the century Germany (and earlier) which stimulated that dissatisfaction, but clearly the First World War and the dismal post-war conditions in the Weimar Republic amplified and focused those energies, and contributed to the growing popularity of expressionist plays. Though they initially called for a spiritual revolution, they started from the premise that the social system was corrupt. Such a premise was bound to have social implications. In this context, the Expressionists' u*nheimlichkeit* demanded that the protagonists of its plays pursue radical social transformation. The element of social protest is important to remember when we think of Expressionism. That aspect of the movement grew more intense as it developed, becoming increasingly pessimistic as living conditions in Germany deteriorated.

Expressionism's parallel with the general goals and methods of avant-garde intent

extends to the use of the same models, particularly those of dream and music For the most part this is due to the influence of Strindberg In his introduction to expressionist drama, Walter Sokel discusses both the 'dreamic' aspects of Expressionism and Strindberg's contribution to them

> The extremism and distortion of Expressionist drama derive from its closeness to the dream In its crude aspects, Expressionism is dramatized daydream and fantasy In its subtler and more interesting examples, Expressionism parallels the concealing Symbolism and subliminal suggestiveness of night dreams Strindberg called the experimental plays he wrote when he passed beyond Naturalism 'dream plays ' In them projection and embodiment of psychic forces take the place of imitation of external facts, association of ideas supplants construction of plot based on logical connection of cause and effect The old structural principle of causal interrelation between character, incident and action gives way to a new structural pattern, closer to music than to drama--the presentation and variation of a theme Strindberg's 'dream plays' became the inspiration of the Expressionists (xiv)

Sokel clearly illustrates the importance of the dream structure to expressionist playwrighting in this passage It is also a structure that conjures associations with the medieval morality play This is not a chance happening, but quite deliberate Other allegorical forms such as myths, folktales and medieval morality plays form an important component of the dream mode, and reveal its working presence in a given piece *Murderer, Hope of Womankind* clearly possesses a nightmarish atmosphere, but also has mythological implications, in that the plot is similar to that of a passion play In similar fashion, *From Morning until Midnight* follows a structural pattern reminiscent of the Stations of the Cross Sokel's description of the Passion play's importance startlingly echoes the prototypal dream model offered in Symbolism's literary manifesto

> The protagonist in Expressionist plays usually serves as an existential example, a paragon, very much like Christ in the Passion plays The other "characters" are not so much characters as functions in his mission or martyrdom They represent his opportunities, obstacles, parallels, variations, and counterpoints Genuine antagonists do not exist There are antagonistic characters, usually philistines, materialists, often scientists or engineers, moralists and sentimentalists However these

> antagonistic characters do not act as independent personalities motivated by aims of their own, but as foils to the protagonist They do not carry the action forward They are closer to the tempting devil in miracle plays or to Goethe's Mephistopheles than to Claudius in *Hamlet* The absence of conflict determines the pageant or pilgrimage-type structure of many full-length Expressionist plays, such as Hasenclever's *Humanity* and Brecht's *Baal* A loosely connected "life story", a series of "stations," pictures and situations takes the place of a well-knit plot (xx)

This is the essence of the Expressionists' approach, which Strindberg adopted in his first symbolist play, *To Damascus*

Naturally the adoption of the dream model also extends to the *mise-en-scene* and the elements of design The hallucinatory landscape of expressionist staging is implied in the texts of expressionist plays For example, in George Kaiser's *From Morning Until Midnight* a tree transforms into the figure of death But the best examples of Expressionism's dream-like settings are found in the few surviving films of the period In a late example, the film *Metropolis* shows a factory transform into the gaping jaws of death But probably the purest example of expressionist staging can be found in *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari* In this film, nothing is true in terms of construction or architecture, the streets are crooked and the buildings lean at odd and extreme angles

The dream's prominent place as a model for performance - in Expressionism as in the rest of the avant-garde - stems from the fact that it is the most direct unmitigated field of encounter with the psyche This is implicit in Goll's statement about "things behind things." The psyche is the dwelling-place of those 'things', the natural habitat of the primordial idea As Sokel proceeds to explain, the prevalence of the dream model in Expressionism is in part a result of trying to explore that habitat

> The influence of Strindberg coincided with that of psychoanalysis (Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams* appeared two years before *A Dream Play*) In both its Freudian and Jungian form, psychoanalysis had decisive significance for Expressionism But even before Freud and Jung, the intellectual atmosphere in the wake of romanticism, and German philosophy from Schelling to Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, had given intimations of the concept of the subconscious Even those Expressionists who were not conversant with the actual works of Freud and Jung could not help but be familiar with the climate of thought that

had given rise to psychoanalysis in the first place (xiii-xiv)

In a fashion similar to its role in Strindberg's later plays, musicality is a major component of expressionist playwrighting As in Symbolism, the musicality of a play most commonly reveals itself in the rhythms of dialogue, whereas the dream manifests itself in the overall atmosphere of performance In keeping with established symbolist practice, Strindberg stressed a more direct emulation of the dream and music He strove to capture the complex character of dreams in his later plays, both in terms of organizing principles and in the bizarre deportment of individual characters But, clearly, he also strove to emulate the organizing principles of music in much the same way His plays center on theme instead of plot, trying to capture musical structure and rhythms This is a hallmark of the earliest examples of Symbolism, dating back to the concept of verbal orchestration in Kahn's poetic drama In Expressionism, the element of musicality is most apparent in the rhythms of play-texts No recordings survive, and the films of course were silent, but the dialogue of the plays clearly reveals their rhythmic structure Sokel writes, "[e]xpressionist drama employs silence more frequently and more strategically than the conventional drama " In light of Kahn's "poetic concept of verbal orchestration," the application of the musical model shows considerable similarity

> Brecht (in *Baal*), Kaiser and Hasenclever use silence as a counterpoint to the meaning of the spoken dialogue Words and pauses together form a kind of linguistic chiaroscuro, counterpart to the visible chiaroscuro of illumination and dimness or darkness on Sorge's stage The deliberate use of the pause as a significant means of expression (indicated on the printed page by the abundance of dots and dashes in Expressionist plays) reveals most clearly the kinship between Expressionist drama and music Dots and dashes are the equivalents of pauses in musical scores The pause is an essential part of the expressionist attempt to create or recreate a theatre of depths inaccessible to conceptual speech, a "super-drama," as Yvan Goll calls it, conveying a "surreality" which is to empirical reality what depth is to surface (xix)

Expressionism seldom if ever overtly manifests the circus model or the clown One reason for this may be because, as Lionel Richard points out in Phaidon's

Encyclopedia of Expressionism, the movement is not - as a rule - gifted with a great sense of humor (162) However, there is, in certain expressionist performance texts, certainly a sense of the anarchy, spectacle and danger that accompany the clown and circus Another connection to the circus model that begins to appear relates to the circus freak show Expressionism encourages distortion and force, anguish and revolt Its signature is the scream Its parade of mutations and social misfits, playing to the emotion of an audience often at the expense of intellect, effectively evokes the circus sideshow (recalling the Theatre of Cruelty as well) The generally chaotic atmosphere of Expressionism leads to the circus even if sometimes that route is a bit circuitous

The impact of the cabaret and music hall on Expressionism is clear at least In a rare overt example, Yvan Goll celebrated Charlie Chaplin, along with Apollinaire (one of his most decisive influences) in his scenario *Chaplinade* (Sokel xx) Expressionism's nurseries were the cabarets of Munich's *Eleven Executioners* and Reinhardt's *Schall und Rauch* Other circus-like elements emerge in Kokoschka's *Sphinx and the Strawman*, one of those texts that cross the boundary between dada and Expressionism The play includes (among other things) a giant mask/head electrically lit from inside, a parrot which keeps calling "anima sweet anima", and the character of death, dressed as "an entirely normal human being" (Esslin *Theatre of the Absurd* 263) Nevertheless, Sokel, in summing up, describes the nature of this play in the following terms

> In Kokoschka's play, the projection of psychic situations into symbolic images, an essential function of the subconscious mind, becomes action on the stage This principle offered Kokoschka, and Goll after him, a means of returning to the ancient nature of theatre as magic show, as visual and pantomimic liberation from the confining fetters of realism and propriety As Esslin has pointed out, it is precisely this triumph of the image, this staging of metaphor, which makes for the dramatic poetry in the works of Beckett, Ionesco, and Genet This particular form of expressionist dream play not only points ahead to the avant-garde theatre of our own day, but also re-establishes connections with the ancient mainstream of European theatre, which the "well-made" respectable play of the modern era had repudiated Cabaret and circus, commedia dell' arte, Passion and miracle play, and above all, the magic farce of the Vienna popular theatre, which flowered in Mozart's and Schikaneder's *Magic Flute*, the whole Baroque delight in the *spectaculum mundi*,

> contributed to that feast of theatricality and poetry - Kokoschka's *Job* (xvii)

Something that Sokel alludes to here, and that is important, is that Expressionism also relates to the circus model by virtue of its popularity It was (is) rare for an avant-garde movement to enjoy that kind of popularity, but Expressionism had wide currency during its height It also had considerable impact on other forms long after pure theatrical Expressionism had faded away This is important because part of circus's adoption as a model for the avant-garde stemmed not only from its ability to abstract the human form in clown acrobat and puppet but also from precisely that element of popular entertainment, part of an effort to blur the boundaries between 'high' and 'low' art This is something that the avant-garde lost sight of in many ways as it became more and more elitist and intellectual Brecht (and ironically also Artaud) resisted this trend, but Expressionism really succeeded in capturing popular attention in a way that few avant-garde styles ever did A sense of humor it may not have had, but it did enjoy many other circus elements of the circus

Though Expressionism gravitates toward the grotesque, it is unusual in this regard In the milieu of the modern avant-garde it is generally in the clown and circus that grotesque reveals itself This is the difficulty in too consistently associating the two the tendency does not make the rule The grotesque elements in Expressionism relate to the elements of horror in Strindberg's plays But, by the time Expressionism became popular in the nineteen-twenties, the opposition between lyrical and grotesque was already fading in importance in the light of the rising significance of the rational / anti-rational dichotomy As a movement, Expressionism clearly embraces grotesque Symbolism, but it is also firmly anti-rational in its approach to theatre, preferring, under the influence of Freud, to let the irrational subconscious emerge relatively unchecked In light of the war, perhaps, or of dada's growing influence, or both, the issues of the rational versus the anti-rational come to the fore Developments in Germany after Expressionism are cast in this light

EPIC THEATRE AND THE THEATRE OF THE BAUHAUS

In stark contrast to the situation in France, after the hey-day of dada and Expressionism, the tendency in German theatre was toward the rational rather than the irrational These two were essentially anti-rationalist theatres of protest, but conditions in Germany demanded a change in the way the theatre conducted itself Leading the way in this transition was the agitprop theatre This theatre worked toward social change, usually working in concert with the communist party which grew rapidly in popularity in the dismal post-war conditions of Weimar Germany The Epic Theatre - the work primarily of Piscator and Brecht - grew out of agitprop theatre In many ways, it echoed the development of Meyerhold's political theatre However, as an extension of the agitprop tradition, Epic Theatre developed in opposition to, rather than in support of, government

Though the two could not be farther apart in several respects, it was Expressionism that sowed the seeds for the development of Epic Theatre This is true in terms of the basic ideas and conventions of symbolic expression, but most importantly in its concern for social and political conditions They also shared some structural similarities

> With few exceptions, Expressionist drama conforms to an "epic" or narrative, rather than to a strictly dramatic pattern It is not based upon the clash of characters, but upon the showing and telling of themes The major influences for this truly epic or narrative character of Expressionist drama are the Christian passion play and Goethe's Faust, both of which deeply influenced Strindberg and with him the Expressionists, Shakespeare, Storm and Stress playwrights like Lenz, Buchner (especially in his *Wozzeck*), and the modern cabaret, with its brief skits and numbers From this type of Expressionist play, the left-wing director Erwin Piscator, Lion Feuchtwanger, and Bertolt Brecht developed in the twenties what is now known as the Epic Theatre (Sokel, xx)

In many ways Brecht's theatre can be viewed as Expressionism *sans* angst Apart from the structural elements outlined above, his early plays show "the influence of the Expressionist trend in their loose construction, their treatment of characters as types

rather than individuals, and their highly concentrated, poetic language" (Esslin 132) Brecht's later works continued to share with the Expressionism many of those characteristic elements associated with the morality play, especially the basic mission of conveying a message in the narrative "both Expressionism and Brecht's Epic Theatre emphasized theatre as 'show' and /or demonstration rather than as drama with emphasis on action and suspense" (Sokel xx) However, in Brecht's theatre the bathos that characterized much of Expressionism is completely rejected Even in the early years of his career Brecht "hated noisy emotional outbursts in the theatre" (Esslin 25) Epic Theatre seems to stem from a belief that Expressionism's angst clouds and complicates issues by clouding and complicating the judgment of the people involved "The difference was that most Expressionists (although by no means all) sought to appeal to the emotions, while Brecht's Epic Theatre tried to appeal to the critical intellect of its audience" (Sokel xxi)

Brecht's theatre embraced the idea of the cerebral/psychic stage, the metaphorical expression of an idea through the means of production, and shared the subversive – in this case communist – mission of the avant-garde Brecht also embraced its models The influence of the cabaret and clown on his theatre is well-known, particularly through the famous clown, Karl Valentin His adoption of the dream model appears in the allegorical tendencies of the passion-play structure As for the musical model, Brecht's theatre was dominated by the narrative (within the confines described above) However, the Brechtian dialectic, in which elements of production work against each other - sentimental music against heartless lyrics in a song, for example - has a distinctly contrapuntal nature found in some musical composition Despite Brecht's embrace of all these basic avant-garde performance conventions, his theatre clearly follows a rational mandate It is planned and measured to deliver a specific message toward a specific goal

In a fashion very similar to the manner in which Brecht's (and Piscator's) Epic Theatre grew out of Expressionism, Bauhaus could be said to have evolved out of dada The German versions of dada set the sights of their satire on Expressionism among other things, making it the target of sometimes blistering attacks This enmity revealed itself in

the first few years of the Bauhaus school Its theatrical component was initially expressionist in character However, when Oskar Schlemmer took control of the theatre workshop, he quickly began to institute changes to the program "Schlemmer had finally transformed the theatre workshop from its expressionist bias - under Lothar Schreyer's direction - to one more in line with Bauhaus sensibilities It had been said that students came to the Bauhaus to be cured of Expressionism" (Goldberg 110) In sharp contrast to Schreyer's sensibilities, Schlemmer worked under the influence of dada

> It was probably the legacy of the Dadaists to ridicule almost everything that smacked of solemnity or ethical precepts It found its nourishment in the travesty and in mocking the antiquated forms of the contemporary theatre Though its tendency was fundamentally negative, its evident recognition of the origin, conditions, and laws of theatrical play was a positive feature (qtd in Goldberg 110)

This "evident recognition" of formal elements created a platform for the experiments of the Bauhaus From the earliest moments of his Bauhaus tenure, Schlemmer displayed a great interest in the abstraction of traditionally realistic forms of representation, of the theatrical space and of the actors' bodies, trying to unify these abstractions in his theatrical expression It comes as little surprise, then, that the exploration of abstract correspondences and the application of the musical model figure prominently in Schlemmer's Bauhaus experiments Wassily Kandinsky's *Yellow Sound* had pursued this ideal, but later, in an even more blatant example, he had, " in 1928 used paintings as the characters of the performance itself "

> [He] designed visual equivalents to Mussorgsky's musical phrases, with movable coloured forms and light projections With the exception of two pictures out of sixteen, the whole setting was abstract Kandinsky explained that only a few shapes were vaguely objective but rather made use of the forms that appeared to my mind's eye while listening to the music (Goldberg 111)

Schlemmer followed suit His *Triadic Ballet* was named for "the three dancers and the three parts of the symphonic architectonic composition and the fusion of the dance, the costumes and the music" (Goldberg 111) Schlemmer's ideas are much more

than the vague, automatic, intuitive exercises of dada or even Surrealism They display not only the extent of experimental formalism in the Bauhaus, but also the execution of a methodical, even rational approach to that experiment

> Accompanied by a Hindemith score for player piano, 'the mechanical instrument which corresponds to the stereotypical dance style,' the music provided a parallel to the costumes and to the mathematical and mechanical outlines of the body In addition, the doll-like quality of the dancers corresponded to the music box quality of the music, thus making a unity of concept and style (Goldberg 111)

Schlemmer's Bauhaus reveals not only the overwhelming presence of the musical model but also an equally significant interest in the circus and its lessons for performance He instituted a series of warm-up exercises based on the clowning, and tried to introduce his students to the various arts of circus performances The spirit of the circus was accompanied by a love for variety theatre, offered in a spirit of an eclecticism that included Japanese and Javanese theatre and "introduced them to the more philosophical notion of metaphysical dance" (Goldberg 112)

In Germany, the war that undermined Futurism galvanized Expressionism, reinforcing the philosophy of angst It proved to be a relatively long-lived movement (at least within the milieu of the avant-garde), surviving long enough to become a target of German dada, and then to witness dada's decline Dada had a limited theatrical presence in Germany, but under that influence the artistic community eventually jettisoned the extremity of passion and emotionalism belonging to the expressionist movement It gravitated instead toward the experimental formalism of the Bauhaus theatre and the socialist formalism of the Epic Theatre In both cases, though the presence of grotesque Symbolism was maintained, it became less important as emotional bathos was set aside in favour of a more rational and measured approach to their respective goals Brecht (and Piscator) used very precise and rational means to achieve the aims of socially and politically oriented theatre Bauhaus on the other hand took a very methodical and precise approach to its experiments in pure theatrical formalism Brecht eventually inherited this rationalist legacy in terms of his approach to grotesque Symbolism

Through it all, however, the initial premise of Symbolism and its models of form, theme and approach provided the operating guidelines for the avant-garde experiment

There is a revealing correlation between the work of Brecht and the surrealists on the one hand, and Artaud and the school of Bauhaus on the other Both Brecht and the surrealists were proponents of communism and members of the party Both turned their attention to criticism of the institutions of state, education, and religion as (potential) instruments of repression and oppression However, where Brecht's politics are an outgrowth of pacifism, the politics of Surrealism seem to be an outgrowth of their artistic posture Since a significant part of their artistic mission was to free the subconscious from social oppression, it follows that Breton's decision for the Surrealists to join the communist party *en masse* was an extension of that desire Moreover, Surrealism is fundamentally irrational and intuitive, focusing on irrational content such as the workings of the subconscious and employing irrational techniques such as automatic writing Brecht's theatre, his attack on cultural institutions, is rational, methodical, measured and precise On the other hand, Artaud and the school of Bauhaus are concerned with exploiting formal aspects, such as the three-dimensionality and multimedia potentialities of theatre Additionally, both eschewed any overt political association and were intrigued by the metaphysical associations of the theatre However, both German approaches employed rational means whereas the French pursued the anti-rational In a manner similar to Brecht's, Bauhaus was extremely measured and rational in its approach, using charts and diagrams to plot the correspondence of design elements Artaud's theatre, in keeping with his surrealist roots, is a spontaneous, intuitive, almost pathological eruption of unconscious imagery

The correlation between these four is revealing in that it lays bare the increasing importance of *rationale* or conceptual orientation to the avant-garde's goals More than simply an issue of the quality of a given production, this applied to the initial approach to the *concept* of theatre, and the whole manner in which theatre is to be apprehended the reasoned, rational versus the intuited, irrational Because they most forcefully presented their respective cases, these polar orientations in the creation of theatre have come to be associated with Brecht and Artaud However, there are other relationships at work that

play an important role in terms of form versus content Though one might say that Brecht's work is still intent on uncovering primordial motivations of people in general, when he jettisoned emotionalism in his theatre he also eschewed any overt accommodation of psychological motivations The political is made personal in Brecht and the personal is made political, but the basic motivations of the characters are not explored, though they are offered for judgment Rather, the manner in which they seek to fulfill them is at issue The actions of the characters, and to some extent their intentions, are treated largely as questions of choice Artaud seems to deny the issue of choice, ascribing behaviours to subconscious impulses and denying the role of intellect (though his own writing clearly indicates a considerable intellectual ability) These worlds are very far apart Brecht leaves the issue of psychological motivation behind in his theatre, concentrating on conscious behaviours Artaud subverts the whole issue of conscious choice and intuits irrational unconscious motivations

Beckett's approach is destined to bridge these two approaches that in many ways has more in common perhaps with Bauhaus than either Brecht or Artaud The Bauhaus, as concerned as it was with a kind of formal rationalism, was focused on that formalism's association of artistic media and its metaphysical implications Thus they applied a kind of scenic rationalism to the exploration of ideas generally believed to be rooted in the irrational This kind of approach has a definite resonance with Beckett's theatre, which offers a precise and measured exploration of the dark recesses of the irrational mind Brecht offers a rational exploration of the rational (political or social) mind Artaud offers an irrational exploration of the irrational mind Beckett ultimately offers a rational exploration of the irrational mind It is this blending which leads us to a brief consideration of Jung's theories and their relevance to the milieu of the avant-garde They offer, among other things, a way in which a more or less rational method can be brought to bear on an irrational subject Though Freud may have been more influential in terms of direct effect on avant-garde theatre, particularly in the case of Expressionism and Surrealism, Jung's theories seem to represent a more refined expression Coming, as they do, later in the modern period, they operate in parallel with much of the avant-garde rather than as a stimulus to it Finally, Jung's theories are particularly important in this

context because of their influence on Beckett

JUNG, METAPHYSICS AND THE PSYCHOLOGY OF THE AVANT-GARDE

> It is the mark of all great religions that they not only possess a body of knowledge that can be taught in the form of cosmological information or ethical rules but that they also communicate the essence of this body of doctrine in the living, recurring poetic imagery of ritual It is the loss of the latter sphere, which responds to a deep inner need in all human beings, that the decline of religion has left a deeply felt deficiency in our civilization We possess at least an approximation to a coherent philosophy in the scientific method, but we lack the means to make it a living reality, an experienced focus of men's lives That is why the theatre, a place where men congregate to experience poetic or artistic insights, has in many ways assumed the function of a substitute church (Esslin, *The Theatre of the Absurd*, 312-313)

There is much to be learned by questioning the collective motivation of the theatrical avant-garde Identifying its basic motivations is helpful in discerning and understanding the conventions of performance We know that Symbolism began with attempts to express esoteric affinities with primordial ideas, but what, other than a knee-jerk reaction against realism, drove this purpose? The historical context suggests many possibilities It seems likely, as Esslin suggests above in "The Significance of the Absurd," that the pursuit of the primordial has at least something to do with the 'death' of God, according to Nietzsche The decay of traditional Judeo-Christian belief systems seems to have stimulated a new search for meaning in the context of modern life Though it is obvious that he had a profound influence on the avant-garde, Nietzsche merely articulated and focused a change that was already in progress at the time

The 'decline' of religion was accompanied by a rise in the sciences of psychiatry and psychology This saw a climax of sorts early in the twentieth century in the work of Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung, which was to have a decided impact on the avant-garde This is largely because they share a basic mission Both were engaged in probing the 'sub' / 'un'-conscious for clues to the fundamental aspects of psychic existence, those things that ultimately determine our experience of the world Inasmuch as the work of

Freud and Jung proved influential on the avant-garde (particularly Freud whose work came earlier), like the work of Nietzsche, it also articulated forces that were already at work in European society at the time. Thus the theories of these great thinkers can also offer significant clues to the motivations, intentions and methods of the avant-garde in the modern period. Because of a particular interest in the Symbolism of the unconscious, an essay of Jung's entitled *Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious* became increasingly useful for the startling degree to which it offered lucid insight into the dynamics of the modern avant-garde.

Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious begins by accurately, if coincidentally, identifying the basic initial motivation of avant-garde theatre: an effort to unearth and express the primordial. Where the symbolist manifesto describes primordial ideas, Jung identifies archetypes as primordial types (inviting a comparison with the theories of Swedenborg). In Jung's theories archetypes find their expression in various ways. Chief among these is the dream. He identifies it as the least mitigated vehicle for the expression of archetypal forces in our day-to-day experience (301). It seems more than a coincidence that the dream is the predominant model for the *mise-en-scene* of the avant-garde theatre, the most inclusive and flexible of its three primary models. A similar archetypal signification can also be seen in what Jung refers to as primitive esoteric teachings, myth and fairy-tale. These vehicles of expression also figure prominently among some specific models for the avant-garde, borrowing the form, as well as in many cases, the content. *From Morning 'til Midnight* is written in scenes that parallel the Stations of the Cross. Strindberg's *Road to Damascus* draws its title from the writings of the apostle Paul (Acts chap nine, vs. 1-20). *A Dream Play* borrows directly from Hindu culture and myth. The use of these vehicles suggests a search for the 'primordial ideas' outlined in *The Manifesto of Symbolist Literature*.

Similarly, Jung's essay describes the way in which the psychological power of Europe's traditional religious symbols, after dominating the culture for millennia, had begun to erode. Along with that erosion came a growing desire to look in other places (to other cultures) for new symbols to replace the old. This trend is echoed by artistic endeavours of the period, a trend sometimes described as neo-primitivism. For example,

the end of the nineteenth century saw a profusion of experiments with oriental Symbolism, not to mention the symbols of other cultures of the South Pacific Innes's *Holy Theatre* describes neo-primitivism as an essential criterion for avant-garde status Though it has enjoyed common use, this is a problematic term Even in its best light it is less than accurate, presumes the cultural superiority of western society, and subsequently that the exotic foreign cultures explored (appropriated?) by European artists can all be described by the word 'primitive' Ultimately the biggest problem with the use of the term and - particularly - its employment as a criterion for avant-garde status is that it is misleading There is no doubt that artists actively pursued an interest in other cultures, but this is a means to end, not an end in itself It is an extension of the artists' search for meaning in new modes of expression and is analogous to the search for new religious symbols that Jung describes He believed the trend to be ultimately misguided, that such searches fell "victims in their turn to the magic and novelty of eastern symbols," (Jung 304), and suggested that, instead of searching out a surrogate, modern society should be re-examining its own symbols to discover the psychological implications that lie underneath (such an approach would have impoverished the development of modern art, however) The fact that the "new" symbols of other cultures quickly lost their novelty is something which Jung predicted, but which the West failed to appreciate for the most part The profusion -- for better or worse -- of post-modernism seems a result of that tendency Regardless, the implications for theatrical art are self-evident Reflecting the neurosis of the age, the theatre became a tail-chasing search for new forms of expression and meaning, call it what you will spiritual or psychological Struggling to express primordial ideas, artists began to look at other cultural symbols

One of the things that characterize the modern avant-garde is the profusion of styles or approaches that spring up over a relatively short period of time In many ways, recognition of fundamental similarities in modern movements has been hampered by the fact that, to a certain extent, each movement struggled to distance itself from the others, as if they were anathema to each other This struggle is apparent in the repudiation of Symbolism by the Futurists, for example However, as Deak points out, they owe a considerable debt to the Symbolists from whom they learnt what it was to be avant-garde

in the first place (Deak 3) Jung identifies and deftly sums up this tendency "All esoteric teachings seek to apprehend the unseen happenings in the psyche, and all claim supreme authority for themselves What is true of primitive lore is true in even higher degree of the ruling world religions" (Jung 303) This is equally true of the various schools of the modern avant-garde The various "isms" are roughly analogous to various sects of a religion Their respective characters are similar issues of *specific* doctrine - philosophical, aesthetic or both - and divergent political views comprise the majority of their disagreements, albeit these can be vehemently or even violently asserted Yet, at root, the various sects are engaged in the same search Part of the difficulty here is also that the efforts of critical analysts and historians often amplify differences between avant-garde schools and ignore those things that link them to each other The lay person would no doubt find them all equally incomprehensible However, in the introduction to *An Anthology of German Expressionist Drama* Walter Sokel captures the character of the situation well

> An 'ism' is a convenience making rational discourse about the phenomena of cultural history easier or even possible Too many individual variations exist to permit us to expect hard and fast definitions There are as many styles as there are individual authors or, more accurately still, individual works It has recently become fashionable among German critics to deny altogether, or at least to doubt, the legitimacy of such generic terms as Expressionism Such an extreme view would unnecessarily impoverish our intellectual discourse, for terms that denote, however approximately, common elements in a literary period can serve a useful function, provided we keep in mind their limitations (xii)

That said, the aim is not to impoverish discourse by leaning in the opposite direction Rather it is simply to point out that the various "isms" are not so dissimilar as we are often led to believe Common intentions and common methods run throughout the whole period Jung's essay provides us with evidence of this, or at least a conduit to an understanding of it Jung and the avant-garde share the mission of charting the unconscious Ultimately, Jung's essay provides considerable insight as to the character of avant-garde theatre in the modern period, reinforcing common methods and agendas that have their root in the symbolist movement and their epitome in Beckett's oeuvre If the

avant-garde generally approaches this mission from the perspective of art, expressing (with some notable exceptions) a more right-brained, intuitive understanding, Jung approaches as a scientist, from a more carefully reasoned rational side His discoveries are laid out in a methodical fashion In *Man and His Symbols*, Jung characterizes the difference between his approach to dream interpretation and Freud's The latter encourages free association with the dream that leads the subject further away from it Jung's more methodical and rationalized approach focuses on the specific symbols of the dream in question and the form in which they are offerred (11-14) Whether this approach holds a greater value for approaching a work of art or not is arguable Certainly it could be seen as a 'rational' counterpart to Freud's intuitive or 'irrational' approach Ultimately it is Jung's 'rational' approach to essentially 'irrational' subject matter plays a crucial role in understanding of Beckett's theatre

Chapter Three

Beckett and the Modern Avant-garde

Jung's inadvertent explication of avant-garde motivations and methods naturally implies a connection to Beckett as well However, where Jung's theories coincidentally illuminate the general features of the modern avant-garde, in Beckett's case they provide a direct and significant influence Even a basic appreciation of Jung's work aids in developing an understanding of Beckett's plays, not in terms of determining the 'meaning' commonly sought (and consistently rebuffed by the playwright), but in terms of understanding the terrain in which the plays operate Jungian psychology provides a rare conduit to understanding the central images in Beckett's theatre, and the idea of Beckett's oeuvre as a culminating synthesis of avant-garde aesthetic values is supported by the Jungian influence Directly or indirectly it contributes to the distillation of avant-garde values in Beckett's theatre Though present in his initial forays into the theatre (*Godot*, *Endgame*), this quality becomes even more apparent in his later work, as he sheds the layers of artifice that mitigate the relationship between the basic impulses and ideas that underlie a theatrical presentation and the audience that receives it Even as Jung's theories help us to identify and understand the degree to which Beckett's theatre concentrates avant-garde values, in an instance of reciprocity, the character of Beckett's work also reinforces the degree to which Jung's theories, albeit inadvertently, capture the character of the avant-garde They help us to understand that the very things in the symbolist movement that Beckett echoes are the things that help establish the value of his theatre as the epitome of avant-garde values

That influence began to emerge in Beckett's personal life when Jung had the dubious distinction of being the twentieth professional consulted in the treatment of Lucia Joyce, who was infatuated with Beckett for a time The episode ended inauspiciously when Jung made some less than welcome observations about Lucia's relationship with her father, and was summarily dismissed (Cronin 210) Whether Beckett was influenced at all by this contact is difficult to determine However, it is

reasonable to conclude that he was aware of Jung's presence, considering that Lucia's well-being and treatment were likely of some interest to him, particularly since Lucia's unreciprocated interest in Beckett proved a sore point in his relationship with her father However, in terms of any possible influence on the playwright, the whole issue would probably be insignificant were it not for Beckett's later interest in Jung's ideas

While living in London in the early thirties, Beckett underwent psychoanalysis The course of treatment occasioned his attendance, in 1935, at a lecture given by Jung at the Tavistock clinic in London The lecture proved to be of considerable importance to Beckett and to his dramatic work This reveals itself in two particulars a chart of the unconscious employed in the lecture, which he subsequently 'appropriated' (Cronin 220), and a now-famous anecdote of the circumstances surrounding Jung's unsuccessful treatment of a little girl The two instances speak to two different levels of influence on Beckett's work The anecdote reveals a general emotional identification with Jung's ideas The chart, while further serving to confirm this general identification, also suggests a formal or procedural affinity In other words, these two instances of Jung's influence suggest not only an ideological affinity, but also an affinity with a method of locating, approaching or apprehending the ideology in question a rationale to get at or explicate archetypal imagery, or a method of getting at the madness, so to speak These affinities also underscore the way in which, by adhering to symbolist principles, Beckett's theatre epitomizes avant-garde values, ultimately the things that make his theatre a paradigm of the modern avant-garde are the same things which link Beckett to Symbolism

The anecdote is well known Mary Doll recounts the story in the following way

> That night in 1935, Jung once again was articulating his point--"We like to believe in our will power and in our energy and in what we can do, but when it comes to a real show-down we find we can do it only to a certain extent, because we are hampered by those little devils, the complexes " It is in this context that Jung then described the strange case of the little girl who had amazing mythological dreams and whose death, Jung said, was a result of her never having been born entirely (Doll 12)

The degree to which Beckett was impressed by this tale is indicated by the fact that

twenty years later it appeared in Beckett's radio play *All That Fall* The character of Mrs Rooney describes attending a lecture by "one of these new mind doctors," a lecture in which a "little girl, very strange and unhappy in her ways" died because "she had never really been born!" (*Collected Shorter Plays* 35) Tellingly, Beckett also used this story in a rehearsal of *Footfalls* in Germany in 1976, as a way to help an actress who was having difficulty relating to that part (Walter Asmus in Kalb 181), suggesting a conscious connection between the story and the creation of the play Clearly the story caught his imagination enough to be retold in one play twenty years later, and then used as a part of the basis for another play almost twenty years after that

The 'appropriated' chart of the unconscious further indicates Beckett's interest in Jung's ideas The chart represents the mind as a series of concentric circles "becoming ever darker till we reach the final darkness of the unconscious" (Cronin 221) This 'final darkness' also effectively describes the terrain of Beckett's plays, particularly the later ones, which tend to take place against a blank or black background It might be suggested, moreover, that the concentric circles of the chart parallel the circular dialogue and action of his plays, both the dialogue and the physicality of his plays tend to consist of repetitive signatures The plays' images and ideas unfold in the revelation of more detail in each cycle Ultimately the archetypal nature of the images also attests to the Jungian character of his collective *mise-en-scene* Those developing central images are generally set against a 'final darkness' as though in a sort of sculptural relief

The idea of an archetypal grounding for Beckett's work resonates well with the individual plays Probabilities and resonances are generally all one can expect of an archetype As Robertson Davies writes, "the thing about it which is most difficult to grasp is that it cannot be identified in any single form and is evident only through its manifestations You cannot nail it down but you can see what it does" (326) Jung himself writes that the " archetype is essentially an unconscious content that is altered becoming conscious and being perceived" (301) Nevertheless, archetypal qualities are still recognizable in Beckett's plays For instance, *Footfalls*' woman-wraith, May (coincidentally-- in a seminal, Beckett-directed performance by Billie Whitelaw -- bearing an astonishing resemblance to Munch's *The Cry*) paces across the stage, nine

steps to the right and nine to the left, in what seems to be a quest for proof of her existence As is revealed in the dialogue of mother and daughter, " the motion alone is not enough I must hear the feet however faint they fall" (C S P 241) Unfortunately for May, those footfalls are not enough either Each recurrent sequence of pacing is in fainter light at a slower pace Ultimately the lights brighten just enough to reveal that she is no longer there at all The central image in *That Time* is a disembodied head floating in space ten feet off the ground "Voices A B C are his own coming to him from both sides and above" (C S P 228) Here again a cycle of repetition gradually reveals more and more details of buried, uncertain but ominous memories In fact, the whole play seems to about the nature of memory and difficult memories in particular

> never the same after that never quite the same but that was nothing new if it wasn't this it was that common occurrence something you could never be the same after crawling about year after year sunk in your lifelong mess muttering to yourself who else you'll never be the same after this you were never the same after that (C S P 229)

Happy Days features a woman, Winnie, buried up to her waist in a growing pile of earth She is blissfully unaware of this and other environmental facts Mostly she is concerned with the contents of her handbag and the maintenance of a positive outlook Mary Doll draws a comparison between this image and Persephone These and many other images in Beckett's plays possess an archetypal resonance The entirely brief play, *Breath*, which Beckett created for Kenneth Tynan's *Oh Calcutta*, also exhibits an archetypal resonance Consider the play in light of these comments by Joseph Campbell "It is the wind, *spiritus*, the spirit, we got in Chief Seattle That's an archetype, the recognition of breath as the breath of life" (Campbell 31) A reading of *Breath* confirms the probability of this association (the breath of life), though it exhibits typical 'Beckettian' cynicism

Whatever else they may do, Beckett's plays certainly exhibit archetypal resonances in that their images display certain kinship with the "ferocious beasts that the caverns of the psychic underworld are supposed to harbour " (Jung 316) *Not I*, has a particular kinship with one such beast and -- other than the obvious example of *Footfalls* -- may be the most telling example of Jung's influence on Beckett's theatre The play

features a woman's "MOUTH, upstage audience right, about eight feet above stage level, faintly lit from close-up and below, rest of face in shadow " The action of the play consists of MOUTH'S stream of consciousness uttered to a faceless auditor in a somewhat repetitive and fractured process of self-discovery (C S P 216) Tellingly, *Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious* describes the anima as an archetype of what is "always the a priori element of [his] moods, reactions, impulses and whatever else is spontaneous in psychic life " Jung's further description of the anima's character reveals a still deeper kinship with Beckett's play

> she is not characteristic of the unconscious in its entirety She is only one of its aspects This is shown by the very fact of her femininity What is Not-I, not masculine, is most probably feminine, and because the Not-I is felt as not belonging to me and therefore as outside me, the anima image is usually projected upon women Either sex is inhabited by the opposite sex up to a point, for, biologically speaking, it is simply the greater number of masculine genes that tips the scales in favour of masculinity The smaller number of feminine genes seems to form a feminine character, which usually remains unconscious because of its subordinate position (323-324)

Given Beckett's proven interest in Jung's work, it is difficult to imagine the title as anything other than deliberate, particularly since the play presents just such a fragment of feminine character, struggling for self-awareness However, even were the archetypal affinities other than conscious, they clearly indicate an affinity with Jung's theories and support the case of an unconscious context for Beckett's plays This is especially so given that Jung's theories also indicate the manner in which the archetypal or primordial themes emerge in Beckett's work more or less singular, concentrated images set in repetitive verbal and physical cycles against a blank or dark background, though in earlier works two or more primordial images are brought together in almost astronomical configurations, as his career develops, the images appear more and more often by themselves Consequently even without a direct conscious link between Beckett and Jung, the archetypal aesthetic of his theatre is still apparent In *Beckett and Myth*, Mary Doll spends significant time on the connection between Jungian psychology and Beckett's work She describes "a shared agreement between an archetypal psychologist,

Jung, and a poet, Beckett"

> Beckett's actual experience of psychic forces bears out Jung's psychoanalytic theory of the collective unconscious This is a channel Jung and Beckett describe as emerging from deep recesses from non-rational material or from the lesser mind Properly channeled, this material source can give tremendous creative energy to the receptive waiting artist To describe the creative process as alive with complexes would seem to negate artistry Yet for Jung as for Beckett artistry is not a matter of ego control, rather it is a matter of opening to the phenomena of the collective unconscious, the material of which is greater than the mere surface events of personal daily life (Doll 12)

Beckett's affinity with Jung helps us to understand the way in which Beckett adheres to the fundamental principles of the avant-garde and the basic theories of Symbolism This is particularly true since Jung's theories so articulately explain the basic intentions of the avant-garde in the first place The conventions of avant-garde practice as I have explained them are that it is based on the expression of ideas, that it operates in accordance with Nietzsche's dynamic of simultaneous creation and destruction, that it operates according to three basic practical models, that it operates within the parameters of major aesthetic dichotomies of the avant-garde Beckett's work represents a culminating synthesis of the avant-garde because it incorporates all these conventions

The first principle of the avant-garde is that is based on the expression and discourse of ideas We have established that the plays of the avant-garde are more or less direct manifestations of varying ideologies, ideologies which may then extend into the spiritual metaphysical or the sociopolitical realms the avant-garde stage is a cerebral stage Beckett's theatre clearly demonstrates that focus Certainly his plays express sophisticated mental images in which "the necessary and needful reaction from the collective unconscious expresses itself in archetypally formed ideas" (Jung 317) Beckett's own words indicate the cerebral nature of his work when he declares "I am interested in the shape of ideas, even if I do not believe in them" (*Absurd Theatre* 20)

The second underlying principle of the avant-garde is the simultaneous urge to

destruction and creation described by Nietzsche The crux of this dynamic is explored by Jung in his description of the way in which traditional symbols are consciously undermined and the exotic symbols of other cultures put in their place Though subtle, Beckett's embrace of this aspect of the avant-garde is undeniable The initial public response to the first productions of *Waiting for Godot*, "which bewildered the sophisticated audiences of Paris, London and New York," attests to this There is a deliberate act of subversion in creating a play in which "nothing happens", echoing the "clear path of negation" (Kalb 155) that belongs to dada and is the legacy of Jarry

The relationship of Beckett's theatre to the dream model is indicated by its relationship with unconscious ideas, archetypes and myths His theatre manifests primordial or archetypal images in much the same way that dreams do The mythological implications of his work reinforce affinities with the dream Curiously enough, while he adheres to the model in other respects, particularly in the general atmosphere of his plays, little attempt is made to actually employ the *metaphor* of the dream as a kind of user-friendly analogy of understanding for the audience The only overt effort to stage a dream occurs in *Nacht und Traume* In that piece, originally created for television, an old man sits at a table He lays his head down on the table and behind him his dreamt self appears The dreamt self is visited by a pair of hands, which mop his brow and offer him drink, and for a moment come to rest long enough to generate sustained contact (C S P 303) Though this is the only overt application of the dream metaphor, the *mise-en-scene* in Beckett's theatre certainly evokes the atmosphere of the unconscious Beckett's plays can, in fact, be likened to a sort of waking dream, and thus can be approached in the same manner Furthermore, the 'dreamic' character of his work might help to explain his reluctance to discuss the meaning of his plays How does one explain the existence of dreams? They come unbidden and without instructions for use, at least not in any traditional sense, dreams require a different kind of perception and understanding to explain They are outside our normal realm of experience and control The Symbolism cannot be unlocked without specific reference to the character of the listener in question Jung explains, " it is not possible, except under very special conditions, to work out the meaning of a dream without the collaboration of the

dreamer " (*On the Nature of Dreams* 379) In fact *Nacht und Traume* presents the dreamer and the audience with just this kind of situation, though in an uncharacteristically (for Beckett) optimistic light Thus, even while he dispenses with the dream metaphor and assumes the cerebral stage, Beckett advances or develops the dream model, by actively exploring the unconscious and archetypal themes without attempting any convenient explanations or acknowledging any need for them

> "Drama," Beckett once wrote, "is following music" (McMillan and Fehsenfeld 16) Both critics and performers have often remarked on the musical quality of Beckett's work, which stems, not just from the melodic beauty and power of the language uttered on stage, but from the score-like precision with which the late plays set conditions on the actors' performances (Saltz 64)

The musical character of Beckett's plays quickly becomes evident when attempting to stage them Though it might be less apparent in his early works, it becomes increasingly difficult to miss the further one goes into his oeuvre However, even in the early works the musical elements of his theatre are clearly present The most obvious indications of this lie in the use of pause or silence so frequent in his plays In many ways these represent rests in a musical score and emphasize the rhythmic character of his work The concept of dialogue as interrupted silence has become well understood, but few playwrights make this clearer The musical character of his plays extends beyond the use of pause and silence, though even here their use has greater implications than the value of a simple rhythmic device The application of rhythm itself is far from simple In Beckett, "the deliberate use of the pause as a significant means of expression" (Sokel xix) is an understatement Ultimately, it is an issue of the character of the entire work Prominent directors of his plays have noted this quality Until his death, Alan Schneider directed every North-American premiere of Beckett's plays George Devine, prominent director of the Royal Court Theatre, directed the first English production of *Endgame*, among others Here Schneider discusses himself, Devine and the music of Beckett's theatre

> Every Beckett play possesses its own specific tonality, its special texture That which distinguishes it from anybody else's

> work. As the Royal Court's George Devine, one of the earliest and most loyal of Beckett's supporters and interpreters, once explained his own view of the Beckett terrain: "One has to think of the text as something like a musical score wherein the 'notes,' the sights and sounds, the pauses, have their own interrelated rhythms, and out of their composition comes the dramatic impact." (Schneider 249)

This testimony obviously supports the musical character of Beckett's language, helping us to understand the relation of music to Beckett's dialogue. Beckett's own words testify directly to the application of musical principles to the physical aspects of performance. He stressed a musical approach in his theatre, an emphasis he directly alluded to when discussing physical aspects of theatrical production in 1962:

> Producers don't seem to have any sense of form in movement. The kind of form one finds in music, for instance, where themes keep recurring. When in a text, actions are repeated, they ought to be made unusual the first time, so that when they happen again – in exactly the same way – an audience will recognize them from before. (qtd. in Cohn 231)

Kalb recognizes musical principles at work in the movement of the actors in plays directed by Beckett (Kalb 33). The movement patterns in his works generate a relationship to dance that Walter Asmus, another prominent director of Beckett's plays, describes as balletic. That kind of approach can be witnessed in a video of *Waiting for Godot* performed by San Quentin players in the video series *Beckett Directs*. Asmus made the observation in a rehearsal of *Waiting for Godot*, which Beckett directed:

> Beckett walks on stage, his eyes fixed on the ground, and shows the movement as he speaks Estragon's lines, 'You had something to say to me? You're angry? Forgive me. Come, Didi. Give me your hand.' With each sentence Beckett makes a step towards the imaginary partner. Always a step and then the line. Beckett calls this step-by-step approach a physical theme, it comes up five, six or seven times, and has got to be done very exactly. This is the element of ballet. (qtd. in Kalb 33)

The manifestation of musical principles through physicality becomes more and more obvious as one works through his oeuvre. Consider the stage directions for *Footfalls*. May takes nine steps to the right, starting with the right foot, then nine steps to

the left, starting with the left foot. At the beginning, each step is supposed to take one second, gradually slowing down as it progresses (C S P. 237). Such musicality is even more apparent in *Quad*, a piece entirely without words, described in Beckett's notes as "A piece for four players, light and percussion." The play involves a pattern of pacing by the four players in various combinations. Their own light, and their own percussive instrument accompany each of the players, so that the light and percussion and players all come together in various combinations as the play progresses to the rhythm of their pacing.

The pursuit of the musical model engenders the precision of Beckett's plays. The precise stage directions he provides are analogous to markings in a musical score. Given the character of the theatrical 'score,' the dialogue and the characters can be equated to melody, harmony and instrumentation. The pauses become rests, as Sokel describes above, and the stage directions suggest dynamics and tempo. Given his subtle application of stage directions, it is little wonder that Beckett would become somewhat sensitive to their alteration. It would be akin to changing the dynamic markings of a piece of music, some variation is allowable, but if alterations are made outside a fairly narrow range of parameters, the integrity of the piece is threatened, it is no longer Beethoven, or -- in this case -- Beckett. The settings, tempos, rhythms and moods, the variety of which, in rhythm or tone, create the theatrical texture of his plays, constitute the works' character and identity, acting as a kind of signature. In *The Theatre of the Absurd*, Esslin describes Beckett's plays as "essentially polyphonic... an organized structure of statements and images... rather like different themes in a symphony" (Esslin 13).

Recently research has been done on the association of music and mind. For many years the veracity of the so-called "Mozart effect" has been debated. The stimulation of intelligence responses by Mozart's (and others) music was embraced, rejected and (quite recently) embraced again. In a recent article in the *Globe and Mail*, researchers suggest the reason for the effect may have to do with the way that music mimics the patterns and rhythms of the brain's electrochemical activity, the rhythmic structure of ideas. Whether or not this is true, an exploration of the rhythmic character of pause and silence is a good

way to approach the primordial implications of the musical model in Beckett's theatre The phenomenological nature of the theatrical experience allows rest, pause, and silence some interesting possibilities States offers this perspective

> What happens in a Chekhov silence is that the tactile world, the visible world (which the talk is aimed unconsciously at keeping at bay), this history in objects, quietly encroaches on the human, like the creeping vegetation in Sartre's *Bouville* Suddenly, you can hear the ticking of the objects and the ceaseless flow of the future into past the world is no longer covered by conversation
>
> How different this silence is than Ibsen, which bristles with attentiveness and expectation, with thinking Out of Ibsen will come Pinter, out of Chekhov, Beckett (*Great Reckonings in Little Rooms* 73-74)

To suggest archetypal implications of music is, of course, entirely reasonable, and is bound up with the experiments of the modern avant-garde from their very conception If *The Birth of Tragedy* leans in this direction, the philosophy of Schopenhauer depends heavily on the notion that "aspects of music express in a universal or general form what lies behind the generality that conceptual thinking abstracts from phenomena " (Webster's)

The physical expression of musical forms relates closely to the application of the circus model in Beckett's theatre Physicality is linked to musicality by rhythm, which governs both the rhythm of performance is a vital manifestation of the abstract correspondences at work in his plays Though all three models represent an abstraction of the traditional narrative offered in realistic theatre, in the case of the circus model specifically, the abstraction relates to the human form (such as the contortionist, clown) In this regard, Beckett's theatre conforms to that model This can be seen in the situations of his characters and the physical demands of their performance From his first plays to his last, Beckett's theatre places stringent physical demands on its performers, less stringent and dangerous than those of the acrobat or tightrope walker, but no less real Often those demands are relatively subtle and have more to do with confinement than with physical virtuosity *per se* In fact, a profound sense of restraint or confinement

is a hallmark of his work For example, in *Endgame* the confinement of Hamm to a wheelchair throughout the play, his parents to garbage cans, and Clov's inability to sit, constrain the movement of the performers involved Consider also *Happy Days*, in which the principal character spends the entire course of the play buried, first up to her waist and then up to her neck, in a mound of sand *Footfalls*, described above, requires the actor to remain within the narrow confines of her walking space At rest, "she bows her poor head against the [imaginary] wall and snatches a little sleep" (C S P 241) That pervasive atmosphere of restraint may not seem terribly demanding, but immobility or stillness is a difficult acting problem and is a component of performance that actors tend to remember Billie Whitelaw, one of Beckett's favourites, said of *Footfalls*

> The walk in *Footfalls* – it's not just seven or nine paces depending on the size of the stage, it's not that I have actually twisted my spine by doing *Footfalls*, because in fact something happens whereby my spine starts to spiral down as though I am disappearing And it's physically very painful to do Each play I do I'm left with a legacy or scar (Kalb 236)

Though this kind of restraint or confinement is probably the most common physical demand of his plays, the more overt demands of physical virtuosity also play a substantial role In *Waiting for Godot*, the demands are generally those of the clown the orchestrated changing or trading of hats, the numerous pratfalls etc Beckett's own direction of the play, which Asmus discussed, gives a clear indication of the kind of precise physicality that he sought The physical reality is indispensable to the characters and situations involved Herbert Blau describes the importance of physicality to the identity of the characters

> On the physical level, the inexhaustibility of the plays is just plain exhausting Even thinking is a physical task, not only for Lucky Look at Didi's face agonized with the effort to use his intelligence Our actors discovered the physical investment demanded of them in this apparently intellectual play, as they discovered a new conception of character in action urinating, eating carrots, putting on boots, scratching the head, playing charades -- they compose an identity (Blau 259)

Nowhere in his theatre are the physical demands more obvious than in *Act*

Without Words I and *Act Without Words II*. Described as mimes for one and two players respectively, these pieces -- particularly the former -- are tremendously demanding in the physical sense. In *Act Without Words I*, the performer, in the playwright's own words, is "flung backwards on stage" several times during the play. The play largely consists of a precarious balancing act, and a rope-climbing lazzi (C S P. 41 & 47). These form the essential content of the piece.

The implications of physicality in Beckett's plays are considerable. Physical characterization is an essential element of meaning in Beckett's theatre, in that it generally determines or at least parallels the character of the plays themselves. Thus the physical context of a given work has strong implications in terms of its impact and potential meanings. Here the kinship with the circus is strong. When we as audience members watch an artist engaged in a high wire act, we do not have to struggle with metaphors about the precariousness of human existence. We are confronted with it. The same is true of Beckett's theatre. However, where in actual circuses the impact of the physicality is overt, in Beckett the effect is generally subtler, if no less real. The implication of physicality clearly informs plays like *Act Without Words I*, in a manner directly related to the circus, but it is equally present in the more subtle form in the play *Happy Day*. Winnie's situation conveys an immediate message. Beckett's effectiveness as a playwright is largely due to the degree to which an audience participates in the situations of the characters. the spectators are physically, temporally involved in the action of the play. Nowhere does this aspect of his writing appear more clearly than in *Waiting for Godot*. Not only do Vladimir and Estragon wait, but we also, as an audience, wait with them. Whether this fact registers consciously or not is ultimately irrelevant. Everybody waits. Godot never comes. This is akin to feeling existential sympathy for the tightrope walker. We do not need to believe in their world to feel it, though by meta-theatrical references in the play, Beckett seems to imply that the world of the play and the world of the stage are the same world anyway. Thus dialogue reinforces the notion of shared experience as well, in addition to manifesting its own circus elements, which extend beyond pure physicality. The clowning of Vladimir (Didi) and Estragon (Gogo), Lucky and Pozzo in *Waiting For Godot* is not just physical clowning but also verbal

clowning The dialogue's "peculiar repetitive quality of the cross-talk comedian's patter" has been thoroughly discussed by Esslin (*Absurd Theatre* 14), among others, who also points out that the connection " to the music hall and circus is even explicitly stated"

> Vladimir Charming evening we're having
> Estragon Unforgettable
> Vladimir And it's not over
> Estragon Apparently not
> Vladimir It's only the beginning
> Estragon It's awful
> Vladimir It's worse than being at the theatre
> Estragon The circus
> Vladimir The music hall
> Estragon The circus
> (qtd in *Absurd Theatre* 14)

The same style of delivery could be heard from the Marx Brothers, Abbott and Costello or Burns and Allen Here again, his drawing on the popular tradition of music-hall patter is turned to advantage References to the audience, which are a mundane component of Vaudeville performance, have broader and more far-reaching implications in Beckett Although a bit of a simplification, in essence the tramp's dialogue is music-hall banter with a metaphysical twist

In incorporating the popular vaudevillian tradition, Beckett draws on clowning's rich and ancient tradition The tramps are the descendants, direct or otherwise, of the tradition of *commedia dell' arte* or the even more ancient traditions on which it, in turn, was based Beckett's tramps are close kin to the fool In the context of a symbolic --and archetypally related -- tradition like that of the Tarot, for example, the Fool is often portrayed walking along a road The Symbolism of the Tarot supports the idea of the hero's journey, which in Beckett becomes subverted Jung identifies "the set of pictures in the Tarot" as being "distantly descended from archetypes of transformation" (Jung 334) The major trumps of the Tarot are assigned a numeric value, and according to some interpretations, the fool's card is the zero card, meaning it precedes all the others The fool, then, represents the material world, but also a kind of Everyman, walking through the other cards on a journey of spiritual development, walking the path of life (Manly P

Hall, *The Secret Teachings of All Ages* cxxx) The significance of this particular Symbolism in the context of the *Waiting for Godot* extends from the static nature of its situation these two fools are unable to make the journey, held up by their own inability to take any decisive action, waiting for the mysterious Godot to show them the way They divert themselves as they wait with what amount to games, possessing the distinct flavours of art, philosophy, religion, science mathematics etc Thus Beckett seems to send his (existentialist) message by invoking and then subverting the ancient metaphysical analogy for the journey of life (In fact, Mary Doll discusses the theme of the subverted Hero's journey in *Beckett and Myth*) The tramps are on a road going nowhere, waiting for someone else to provide guidance for their own journey in life They are waiting, but the physical reality of their situation puts them in another category

Beckett's incorporation of all three practical models of the avant-garde in his theatre emphasizes its position as the culminating synthesis of the avant-garde aesthetic That position is further emphasized by a quality in his work that embraces dichotomy, in particular the major dichotomies of the avant-garde The ability to straddle aesthetic boundaries is an important part of his character as a playwright Esslin alludes to it when he discusses Beckett's use of language to convey the inefficacy of language or " to communicate the incommunicable" (Esslin 46) This quality extends to the dichotomies which more or less define the avant-garde aesthetic the representational versus presentational, the abstract versus the concrete, the lyrical versus the grotesque, the rational versus the anti-rational, 'high' versus 'low' art Beckett's theatre addresses or resolves all of these

In *Beckett in Performance*, Kalb declares, "Beckett really represents a third category situated between Stanislavsky and Brecht because of the way in which he renders the presentational and representational indistinguishable" (Kalb 38) Beckett's accommodation of this dichotomy is also alluded to, by Deak in relation to Maeterlinck's plays "such aspects of the symbolist *mise-en-scene* were juxtaposed with a stage set and dramatic situation that had a degree of verisimilitude" (Deak 161) So here the theatres of the representational and the presentational find a kind of balance in lyrical Symbolism In a passage that further reinforces the connection between Beckett and the Symbolists,

States describes a situation that parallels the resolution of presentational and representational which Kalb identifies

> Such a play is perhaps best described in Frye's term, *archetypal masque*, which "takes place in a world of human types, which at its most concentrated becomes the interior of the human mind" (2) I am thinking particularly of that strain of impressionistic plays from Maeterlinck to Beckett where the characters seem to be enacting a drama of pure consciousness under a naturalistic shell of language For example, this passage from Maeterlinck's *Intruder*
>
> Uncle What shall we do while we are waiting?
> The Grandfather Waiting for what?
> The Uncle Waiting for our sister
> The Father You see nothing coming, Ursula?
> The Eldest daughter (At the window) No, father
> The Father And in the avenue? --You see the avenue?
> The Daughter Yes father, it is moonlight, and I see the avenue as far as the cypress wood
> The Grandfather And you see no one, Ursula?
> The Daughter No one, grandfather
>
> The similarity to Beckett here goes deeper than the static situation and the verbal images that recur in *Waiting for Godot* Here we see the peculiar cooperation of text and metatext so common in impressionism Apart from the slight stiltedness, we hear the pace and detail of real speech, speech concerned with a real out there but we also have the feeling that speech is referring to another landscape that can be seen only with the metaphysical eye (States 81-82)

The second of the dichotomies that define the avant-garde is between concrete and abstract correspondence The resolution of this particular tension is inherent in all the major movements The temporal character of the theatre and its uneasy relationship with the generally abstract concerns of the avant-garde mean that this dichotomy is embodied in virtually all schools of the avant-garde They must employ both modes of correspondence because, though they strive for abstract ideals, the medium is essentially concrete or, as pointed out by States, the theatre "is really a language whose words consist to an unusual degree of things that *are* what they seem to be" (20) It is worth mentioning, then, that both find a place in Beckett's theatre Obviously concrete Symbolism is at work in Beckett's plays The abstraction arises from rhythmic repetition and the applications of physicality in Beckett's plays, described above Superficially, the

characters and images in his plays are for the most part identifiably concrete Their essential abstraction arises out of how they behave or out of the juxtaposition with another concrete symbol

The dichotomy of the lyrical versus the grotesque is certainly the most important to truly emerge from, and define itself in, the symbolist movement This major schism of the symbolist movement, which began with the performance of *Ubu Roi*, represents such a drastic departure from Maeterlinck's plays that many still fail to associate Jarry with Symbolism at all This particular dichotomy is seldom if ever resolved throughout the course of the modern period, though it is possible that some of Meyerhold's productions, after his commitment to the grotesque in *The Fairground Booth*, may have reached this kind of equation or relationship, musicality is an important part of the lyrical tradition, whereas, the grotesque tends to march to the beat of its anarchy, but the importance of music to Meyerhold's productions was never lost Meyerhold's productions never seem to have abandoned themselves to the kind of anarchy that Jarry's grotesque engendered, the anarchy of Futurism and dada Even so, Meyerhold's successes, as a rule, depended on his treatment of already existing works What makes Beckett different in this regard is that he resolves this dichotomy as a *playwright* In a manner similar to that of Meyerhold, he creates a theatrical situation in which the lyrical and the grotesque seem to live together in a kind of harmonic discord Nowhere is that characteristic more clear than in *Waiting for Godot* It is in the uniting of lyrical and grotesque Symbolism that Beckett reveals his mastery of the avant-garde aesthetic and the value of his work as its paradigm, something he accomplishes in his first published and performed play Its affinity with lyrical Symbolism is evident in the undeniable poetry and inherent musicality of Beckett's writing, even under the self-imposed discipline of an unfamiliar tongue Yet there is no denying this play's association with the grotesque world of the clown He clearly draws on an earthy, crude or vulgar element It is central to the point of the play The combination of these two is part of what gives it its identity Esslin cites that combination as an important part of what constitutes absurdist theatre, a hallmark not only of Beckett's work but also of the whole tradition of the absurd, at least as far as Esslin originally described it

> If in the course of this book we have established that the theatre of the Absurd is concerned essentially with the evocation of concrete poetic images designed to communicate to the audience the sense of perplexity that their authors feel when confronted with the human condition, we must judge the success or failure of these works by the degree to which they succeed in communicating this mixture of poetry and grotesque, tragicomic horror (*Absurd Theatre* 308)

In *Waiting for Godot* the respective approaches of Maeterlinck and Jarry meet It captures the essence of the symbolist movement in its two major and generally oppositional manifestations Didi's and Gogo's pissing and farting (the legacy of Ubu's world) meet the poetic pre-occupations (conceits?) of symbolist dramatists like Maeterlinck Thus Beckett's play grounds its loftier moral or philosophical implications in the earth of the circus ring

The importance of Artaud and Brecht to twentieth-century theatre ultimately serves to make the dichotomy between rational and anti-rational approaches to Symbolism the single most important defining feature of avant-garde practice It stands to reason then that Beckett's resolution of that dichotomy is one of his more significant contributions Artaud's theories emerged largely out of his association with Surrealism Historically speaking, Beckett falls on the heels of the Surrealists There can be little doubt that some portion of his theatrical influences came from them There is a similarity between surrealist paintings and the central images in Beckett's theatre Here the significance of Jung's chart of the subconscious emerges again In both cases, objects and/ or characters, set in isolation, dominate the field of view The horizon is virtually empty and the objects of focus are isolated in that emptiness

Superficially, the similarity to Surrealism is fairly obvious subconscious concerns, dream-like imagery, similar ideas about visual composition as it pertains to painting This is not surprising given that, in the context of the avant-garde, the milieu of Surrealism is the one of which Beckett had the best working knowledge It is well known that he translated many of the works of the Surrealists, including some of Breton's poetry, during the early years of his time in Paris In a paper entitled "A

Surrealist Reading of Beckett's Theatrical Space" given at a Beckett conference at The University of Victoria in the spring of 1996, Jason Quinlan discusses this whole issue

> In *Beyond Minimalism*, Enoch Brater discusses similarities between Beckett's visual images and some belonging to the Surrealists, particularly several key scenes from the Dali / Bunuel classic *Un Chien Andalou* Beckett had brushes with surrealist art and literature (his translations of surrealist poetry and later work {with ?] Alberto Giacometti, for example) that make some surrealist influence on his work, conscious or subconscious, plausible, if not probable (142-143)

It is the direct association with Surrealism that underscores the relationship which Beckett's plays have with Artaud and the Theatre of Cruelty Some of this I have described above They enjoy commonality in their mutual rejection of realism in theatre and their shared interest in archetypal themes and concerns They also share a keen interest in visceral theatre In an essay regarding audience response in Beckett, Karen Laughlin writes "In their polyphonic insistence on the drama's material aspects, Beckett's later plays speak that language 'addressed first of all to the senses instead of being addressed primarily to the mind' demanded in Artaud's *Theatre and its Double*" (28) However, if Laughlin detects a resonance with Artaud in Beckett's later works, Roger Blin identified it in *Waiting for Godot* (the premiere of which he directed), identifying, "a whole dimension of cruelty that is clearly there in the play" (qtd in "Blin on Beckett," Bishop 229) This declaration is further substantiated by the fact that Blin personally knew and worked with Artaud In *Beckett in Performance*, Kalb too emphasizes this correspondence in his assessment of Beckett's work

> In as much as theatre since World War Two has in fact manifested the Artaud/Brecht split – internally focused performance acting on and through the psyche versus externally focused performance concerned with social forces and acting for social change -- Beckett fits squarely into the former camp Moreover, Artaud's call for religious intensity in performance also points to Beckett, his idea of an "affective athleticism" whereby actors could be trained to tap into primitive impulses that, when activated, would then evoke sympathetic responses in spectators (147)

Despite my personal belief in the "cruel" implications of Beckett's theatre, however, to associate him with the anti-rational to the exclusion of the rational, with Artaud to the exclusion of Brecht is, I think, a mistake First of all, the dynamic described by Kalb in the split between Artaud and Brecht does not do justice to the true nature of that relationship It is at once too simple and not simple enough In fact, though philosophically speaking Brecht and Artaud are generally regarded as being almost diametrically opposed, they are not as far apart as is generally thought There are some interesting similarities between them First, both are anti-illusionists neither believed in nor followed the realist / naturalist movement Both seek something more presentational than representational Despite their drastic differences regarding the place of the text, both sacrifice the intricacies of plot or psychological characterization to their respective, desired, particular theatrical goals Ultimately, both abstract the *mise-en-scene* to suit the shape of a particular idea, supporting a multimedia approach to theatrical production They emphasize a highly visual approach, believing in the power of the gesture and visual relationship to convey meaning They believe in farcical and/or physical humour in theatre (here the clown appears again) and in the importance of a musical and rhythmical approach Finally both theatres were designed to serve a 'higher' purpose than that of simple entertainment, or the demands of status quo realism Their theatres are pro-active, directly addressing themselves to the better 'health' of society Brecht's by attempting to stimulate social change, Artaud's by lancing society's spiritual boils "to drain abscesses collectively," thereby effecting a theatre of metaphysical transformation (*The Theatre and its Double* 31)

The chief differences between Artaud and Brecht come down to two important elements The first is the importance of text Artaud rejects it outright, whereas Brecht's theatre is certainly text-based The second point is one of organization and approach Brecht's approach is centred on essentially rational principles, around the intellect, supporting and promoting the value of rational judgment But Artaud's approach rejects the rational and logical outright Theatre is not to appeal to the intellect but rather to subvert it, to approach the audience on a more or less subliminal level This is where the essential differences in their respective theories lie Brecht's rationalism leads him to

adopt political explanations of the world and to subsequently attempt to effect social and political solutions. Artaud's irrationalism leads him to pursue the metaphysical, mystical or spiritual transformation. The bifurcation continues from that point, leading to markedly different theatrical styles.

Accepting these differences, it is difficult to assign Beckett's theatre exclusively to the realm of Artaud. His approach, though it has some distinct and important similarities with the aesthetic values of Surrealism and Theatre of Cruelty, disregards significant elements of Artaud's and has some equally distinct and important similarities with the Brechtian. The importance of text is one of the most pronounced. Beckett's theatre, like Brecht's, certainly places importance on the text. And though it plays a supporting rather than a leading role, the text in Beckett's theatre remains virtually sacrosanct. This is where his differences from Artaud lie, even while "he has long since convinced us that he understands the limitations of language articulated by Artaud" (Kalb 160).

Though he does so by attempting to dismiss them, Kalb himself provides evidence of further affinities with Brechtian Theatre. He cites three main points. The first, which he summarily dismisses, is that both attempt to dismantle naturalism.

> One can take a broad literary-historical stance and use the coincidence to view the authors as co-adjutants in the great modernist effort to dismantle naturalism, but in the end that approach robs both theatres of their specificity by lumping them together with innumerable others supposedly rebelling against the same nineteenth-century enemy. (45)

The point is well taken. Given that after naturalism, all of the avant-garde movement is a reaction against the dictates of realism, we might discard this as a significant point of agreement. However, it is worth noting, first that realism rather than naturalism is 'the enemy', and it is far from a nineteenth-century one. In fact, at the time that both Brecht and Beckett are writing (after WW II, and well into the twentieth century), it is by far the most dominant theatrical form. It remains so to this day. Recognizing both writers' (successful) attempts to dismantle, or at least to challenge, realism in no way robs them of their specificity. No attempt is made to "lump" them together. The recognition of the

similarity simply provides part of a basis for discourse that ultimately serves to recognize and confirm their specificity. But that similarity becomes more significant in light of more specific parallels. This brings us to Kalb's second and third points of similarity: clowns and the *verfremdungseffekt*.

> There are two usual bases for associations of Beckett with Brecht, apparently separate but actually related, the first of which is their shared interest in clowns. That interest in itself, however, proves nothing since almost every dramatic thinker of this century has had it in common with them. (Clowns are mentioned explicitly, for one thing, in the programs of all the major historical avant-garde movements.) It would only be significant if the clowns happened to have similar meta-theatrical responsibilities – e.g. as satirists commenting on their fictional situation – which indeed numerous critics have sought to demonstrate by pointing out the reflexivity in Brecht and Beckett's dramas. In this way, the issue of clowning leads into the second basis for association: the fact that the plays of both sometimes call attention to the machinery of the stage. (45)

Kalb dismisses the shared interest in clowns because they "are mentioned explicitly in the programs of all the major historical avant-garde movements." This is not good reasoning. (it does help to emphasize the pervasiveness of the circus model.) The shared interest recognizes and confirms a shared influence, which has deep roots. In fact, the prevalence of the circus model of the avant-garde *does* suggest similar metaphysical responsibilities. A specific clown may possess specific characteristics, but also possesses universal ones. It is more or less futile to deny the clown its Everyman quality, it is the fool of the Tarot. In the avant-garde it usually appears in the context of satirical commentary.

Two of the "numerous critics" whom Kalb mentions are Martin Esslin and Enoch Brater (from Brecht's *Berliner Ensemble*). Both comment on the quality of *verfremdungseffekt* (or alienation) in Beckett's plays. Kalb dismisses these observations on the basis that there is no similarity of purpose, something which they do not claim (in fact both note the difference), and no similarity of result, which, given any acquaintance with theories of audience reception, is difficult if not impossible to prove or disprove. The reasons that these writers employ self-reflexivity in their theatre may indeed be

different For example, Beckett seems to have little interest in political implications Those differences are not surprising given different temperaments and historical contexts They only mean that a similar technique is applied to a different end The technique is still a characteristic of advanced theatrical thinking, an implicit recognition of theatre as microcosm, and of the phenomenological nature of the theatrical event (self-reflexive metatheatre) Ultimately the point is that, in both cases, the self-referential element is being consciously, rationally applied That element of conscious rationalism is particularly important because it is distinctly opposed to the spirit of Artaud's theatre

> The most significant assumption he does not share with the avant-garde is that artistic goals must be pursued in a spirit of blind panic, which is really part of Artaud's legacy the conviction that the world and the theatre have deteriorated to such a state that the only appropriate response is to scream Beckett's inner calm, his unceasing effort to pare down, to weed out every inessential syllable, discarding all technical "gimmicks" stands diametrically opposed to the ethic of eclecticism and entropy in what is sometimes called 'pluralistic' performance The avant-garde has in fact ceased to search for the icon, as Beckett does in his late works, since that search represents a quest for unity and unity is antithetical to the model of a "radiating" action that explodes *from* a centre (Foreman) (Kalb 159)

In these statements Kalb's repudiation of Brechtian resonance in Beckett's theatre becomes somewhat suspect, though the "spirit of aggression and blind panic" is probably not a good way to characterize the avant-garde, to the extent that it is true of Artaud's theatre, it is also true of Surrealism, which was certainly "concerned with social forces and acting for social change " This undermines Kalb's appraisal of the Artaud / Brecht split The distinction is not so simple after all More important in this instance, however, is the "inner calm" and "unceasing effort to pare down, to weed out every inessential syllable" which Kalb describes in Beckett This assumes a certain methodical precision in his writing that belongs more squarely in the Brechtian camp than the Artaudian

It is Beckett's paring down in search of the icon that brings us to the Brechtian concept of *gestus* "Gestus is at once gesture and gist, attitude and point one aspect of the relation between two people, studied singly, cut to essentials and physically or

verbally expressed " (Willett, *Brecht* 173) Here a startling similarity is revealed Beckett's plays, especially his later ones, could easily be viewed as a sort of prolonged gestic exercise *Gestus* is at the centre of Brecht's theatre Beckett does not always limit himself to aspects of a relationship *per se*, but the essence of the concept is the same Consider Hamm's parents in garbage cans in *Endgame* Or May's relationship to her mother in *Footfalls*, expressed as a voice speaking out of the darkness (her own?) If we expand Willett's explanation of *gestus* only slightly, we can see that Beckett does express singly, and cut to essentials, aspects of his characters' relationship to their world, or their place in it One can easily see Beckett's theatre as an advancement of gestic principles, not necessarily of the same order but certainly of the same nature This brings the kinship of *verfremdungseffekt*, the shared interest in clowns, the attempt to dismantle realism and the importance of text into sharper focus Perhaps Beckett is not as squarely in the camp of Artaud as might at first be believed

Kalb's book is one the most useful on Beckett's theatre that I have encountered, and my intention is not to try to discredit that work, but rather to build on it If Beckett's theatre represents a third category between Stanislavsky and Brecht, between the representational and presentational, he can as easily represent a category between Brecht and Artaud, between rational and irrational formalism Brecht embraces intellect to arrive at the essence of social spirit Artaud eschews intellect to alleviate the pressure of a similar underlying social malaise Beckett refuses to deal with either in any overt manner However, his work recreates an essential dynamic of Theatre of Cruelty in appealing to the spirit by virtue of physical or temporal presence, but it is also profoundly intellectual, a kind of puzzle or riddle, implicitly embracing the intellect by its conscious weaving of patterns of sensory reception language, image, tone, tempo, rhythm etc Beckett's theatre may represent "internally focused performance acting on and through the psyche", but it also represents a triumph of formalism that is methodical, precise, conscious, even rational in its approach, and -- at least -- related to Brecht's rational formalism

Even without directly comparing Beckettian theatre with the general conventions of the avant-garde, it is readily apparent that Beckett's theatre is not an unheralded

anomaly in the world of theatrical art Like all others, it is a product of its time and has a kinship with previous as well as contemporary theatrical expressions On one hand it is the obvious inheritor of surrealist aesthetics in France On the other it captures many aspects of the German avant-garde The state of the art in Europe - before the developments of World War Two began to curb theatrical activity - are represented in France by Surrealism and the Theatre of Cruelty, and in Germany by Brechtian Theatre and Theatre of the Bauhaus

Affinities with the Bauhaus movement - though certainly present - are subtle and opaque Beckett visited Germany several times, but there is no reason to believe he had any contact with Schlemmer's school, though knowledge of it, at least an awareness of its existence, is highly likely But the period of Beckett's visits to Germany came well after the Bauhaus school had closed in 1933 With it, Beckett shares a formal approach to theatre, the same concerns with form, discussed in reference to music and movement in Beckett, are those that emerge from Bauhaus Regardless of subject matter, in their respective approaches they also share an almost clinical precision that speaks to the rational and a similar treatment of the primary models of the avant-garde Enthusiastic in their use of the music and circus, they make no attempt to encourage dream analogies, taking the cerebral stage – or *mise-en-scene* – more or less for granted

The tendency to avoid explanations is something which the Bauhaus school inherited from dada, but which reflects an attitude not uncommon in anti-rational, avant-garde art, it is contrary to an implicit code to attempt easy answers, or in fact to attempt any answer or rational explanation at all This was an important factor of Surrealism's separation from dada Breton cited Freud's theory as a building block of his approach This might be said to have offered -- in retrospect -- ideas or perspectives on the dada *raison d'etre*, but, in so far as I can determine, these ideas were never corroborated and were never espoused by dada's practitioners Breton's Surrealism saw a need to incorporate the dream analogy, a need that dada ignored and that Beckett's theatre dispensed with It stands to reason that Beckett's theatre shares something in common with dada The common ground is very basic Kalb describes the term dada as "a playful appellation for a clear path of negation" (155), and it is this basic essence that Beckett

has in common with that movement. This turns up in the way his characters often undercut themselves and each other (discussed by Esslin in *The Theatre of the Absurd*), but it also stems very simply from the manner and spirit of his theatrical presentation. He flies in the face of the well-made play and its realist progeny. From this point of view *Waiting for Godot* is perfectly dada, in the spirit of *Relache*. Moreover, Beckett drives the "clear path of negation" home in that he sustains it over the course of two full acts. His utilization of the clown's tradition also has parallels with dada and its theatre of nonsense. The general disregard for plot in Beckett plays presents us with an absurd circularity worthy of a dada nonsense poem, and the meta-theatrical elements of Beckett's plays, those statements or situations which include the audience in the world of the stage or vice versa, are an extension of those parts of grotesque modernism (dada) which blur the line between art and life. Though Beckett's nonsense is more subtly applied and may ultimately lead somewhere, it is as sure a rejection of traditional theatrical convention as anything dada offered. In the moment that the bowler-hatted tramps decide to leave and then do not move, the essential point of dada is perfectly articulated. This is the reason that Esslin includes dada in the tradition of the absurd (*Theatre of the Absurd* 261-267). In fact Esslin goes a long way toward demonstrating Beckett's position in the avant-garde. It is in the spirit of negation through the tradition of nonsense that the line of commonality extends through Surrealism and dada back to the Futurists.

Futurism is a movement with which Beckett would seem to have little affinity. There is little or nothing in Beckett that favours or embraces war or the dubious gifts of the future in a technologically advancing civilization. A real and notable exception to these differences is the shared attitude toward film, most especially toward the films of Chaplin and Keaton. (I suspect the Marx Brothers would have found favour with the Futurists in the way they did with the Surrealists). Beckett seems to have had a respect for the medium. It is the one with which he had the least discourse. As to these significant differences in attitude to the world of war, machines and war machines, this is true of all the other avant-garde movements. None of them display a special love for these things. Some of the more militant manifestations of dada in Germany flirted with

these attitudes, but this seems to have been more a question or issue of posturing than a deeply held belief (in fact the outrageousness of this flirtation is implicitly recognized in its exploitation) Ultimately the affinities of Beckett's theatre with Futurism are precisely those things that proved such an influence on the avant-garde in general its oppositional stance, its energy, its disregard for the restrictive tradition of realistic appearance, its simultaneous embrace of the physical and the cerebral However there is one notable way in which Beckett shares a significant affinity with Futurism Futurism springs from a recognition of the rising importance of technology in modern life, and it implicitly asserts the degree to which it will become a dominant force in modern life, mediating our understanding of the world Other than the cerebral energy of protest and challenge, this particular theme is the most lasting legacy of the Futurist movement It finds a strong voice in Eastern Europe in Russian constructivism Though not really Russian, Arthur Kopit's *RUR* deals with this theme to a considerable extent As it turns out, one of Beckett's most popular and apparently autobiographical plays, *Krapp's Last Tape*, deals specifically with the way in which technology -- the tape -- mediates Krapp's understanding and memory of events in his life Here again, Beckett recycles a theme from the historical avant-garde

Obvious affinities with Expressionism can be difficult to see They do share a sense of anarchism in the rejection of traditional theatrical values in terms of plots and characters But their theatre shares a deep sense of musicality, an affinity well outlined in a citation made above And indeed on the basis of that aspect of Beckett's work, it could be seen as an advancement of expressionist aims The affinity between Beckett and the Expressionists deepens in their shared evocation of Christian mythology It is further deepened by the simple fact that the characters of both are engaged in confrontation with the deep realms of the subconscious, a kind of psychic struggle that manifests itself in a theatre that either emulates or resembles the subjective realms of dream or nightmare And there is also an affinity in the (Artaudian) cruelty of their theatrical situations Consider this statement to Peter Brook "Samuel Beckett once confided in me that for him a play was a ship sinking not far from the coast while the audience watches helplessly from the cliffs as the gesticulating passengers drown"

(*Threads of Time* 172) Beckett's work goes farther than the Expressionists. Fundamentally, it displays a more developed understanding of the subconscious. This may be the result of Beckett's own experiences with psychotherapy or it may simply be that theories of the unconscious had developed in the time between the ascendancy of the Expressionists and the appearance of Beckett's theatrical works. To my mind Beckett's work represents an advancement in this regard precisely because of its concentrated nature and its rational attack. The aesthetic philosophy of Expressionism prevented any application of rational thinking to their theatrical cause. Beckett is able to advance a rejection of rational theatre of psychological realism, while making rational precision a tool in that attack.

The examination of all these movements reveals the position of Beckett's theatre as a culminating synthesis. He shares the exploration or revelation of the subconscious with the Surrealists, the "clear path of negation" (Kalb 155) with dada and Futurism, the aesthetic of the scream, and the panoply of the crippled or dissociated, with Expressionism. The degree to which Beckett's theatre resonates with that of both Artaud and Brecht attests to its function as a paradigm of the modern avant-garde. In achieving this synthesis, Beckett's theatre resolves what is the probably the most significant dichotomy of the modern avant-garde, and of twentieth-century theatre as a whole. Given that this dichotomy circumscribes the pantheon of the modern avant-garde, its resolution prefigures the incorporation of varying avant-garde aesthetics in Beckettian theatre. The accommodation of the avant-garde's fundamental dichotomies demonstrates its value as a culminating synthesis of the avant-garde: it encompasses the polar extremes that define the parameters of the avant-garde aesthetic. However, as this characteristic supports the idea of Beckett's theatre as the epitome of avant-garde values, it also further demonstrates his ties to the symbolist movement.

Beckett's theatre is an extension and confirmation of symbolist principles in the way that represents esoteric affinities with primordial ideas, it expresses the representational and the presentational, the lyrical and the grotesque, the rational and the irrational. It is here that one may begin to see how Beckett represents a culminating paradigm for the modern avant-garde theatre by capturing the essence of Theatrical

Symbolism For the issues of representation, of abstract and concrete correspondence, of a lyrical versus a grotesque presentation, and of a rational or anti-rational approach all have some grounding in questions or programs of exploration determined by the symbolist movement The issue of representation was fundamental to the establishment of the symbolist movement in the first place The premise of the whole aesthetic was based on a challenge to representational theatre Maeterlinck's plays manage to find harmony with both, as do Beckett's Maeterlinck's lyrical Symbolism allowed that dual nature, but the appearance of *Ubu Roi* embraced the grotesque orientation, flagrantly presentational, in which the whole concept of balance is swept aside This proved to be the pivotal schism of the symbolist movement, because the anarchy of the grotesque also sowed the seeds for the development of the schism between rational and anti-rational approaches With lyrical Symbolism increasingly devalued, the crucial decision in approaching avant-garde theatre became, rather than an issue of product -- grotesque versus lyrical -- an issue of process the rational versus anti-rational Though this dichotomy really came to a head in the wake of the First World War, the roots of the issue are still in Symbolism When Theatrical Symbolism first emerged, the repudiation of representationalism was equivalent to a repudiation of rationalism - the rational process of apprehending the world through a description of surfaces The dichotomy between rational and anti-rational began to develop after it was understood that presentational Symbolism could accommodate a rational approach (or vice versa) The nature of the approach thus became crucial to determining a course in modern avant-garde the anarchic, organic, intuitive processes of the anti-rationalists, versus the reasoned and ordered processes of the rationalists The relative poles came to be defined in the contrast between Artaudian and Brechtian approaches Therefore, when Beckett accommodates the dichotomies of the avant-garde, he is addressing questions that have their root in the symbolist movement

Leaving aside questions of the origins of the various avant-garde dichotomies, in the history of the modern avant-garde, Beckett's theatre finds its greatest resonance in the theatre of Symbolism A direct comparison of Beckett's theatre to the symbolist movement reveals his affinity with this progenitor of the avant-garde mission Clearly

Beckett's theatre incorporates the lyrical and grotesque applications originally belonging to the symbolist movement. That is a good indication of his relationship to the symbolist aesthetic. But his particular affinity with the symbolist movement begins at the most basic level. His theatre clearly echoes the symbolist's mission of creating "perceptible appearances designed to express esoteric affinities with primordial Ideas" stated in the movement's literary manifesto. It would be entirely appropriate to say that Beckett's work is commonly considered esoteric. In this his work possesses the same subtlety of approach favoured by the Symbolists, preferring to surround an idea rather than name it. "Poetry lies in the *contemplation* of things, in the image emanating from the reveries which things arouse in us. To *name* an object is largely to destroy poetic enjoyment, which comes from gradual divination. The ideal is to *suggest* the object" (Mallarmé qtd. in Deak 23).

That Beckett is dealing with primordial ideas is difficult to dispute. The concentrated nature of his theatre suggests that he is striving for the essence of a theatrical idea. The Jungian influence only reinforces the notion. There is an obvious affinity between the primordial idea and the archetype. The reason for this is that they have a similar pedigree. In fact they are different expressions of the same thing. For example, in discussing the archetype and its origins Jung describes it as a "*primordial* type," which clearly reveals the affinity. Furthermore, in defining the word idea, the connection becomes clearer still.

> Take for instance, the word idea. It goes back to the concept of Plato, and the eternal ideas are primordial images stored up (in a supracelestial place) as eternal transcendent forms. The eye of the seer perceives them as "*imagines et lares*," or as images in dreams and revelatory visions. I will not go on needlessly giving examples. It is sufficient to know that there is not a single important idea that does not possess historical antecedents. Ultimately they are all founded on primordial archetypal forms whose concreteness dates from a time when consciousness did not *think*, but only perceived. ("Definitions (abridged)" in *The Basic Writings of C. G. Jung* 328-329)

The evidence makes Beckett's compliance with the fundamental mission of the

symbolist movement fairly clear, at least in so far as it is articulated by the literary manifesto. But how does Beckett compare to the specific practical dictates of the movement? It has been established that he fully employs the practical models that emerged from Symbolism -- the dream, music and circus models. It is also fairly clear that all of these have roots in the five genres of symbolist theatre described by Kahn, the practical models are their natural extension. So it could be said that Beckett's application of the practical models adheres to the basic aesthetic demands of the symbolist movement. But a closer look reveals his deeper affinity with Symbolism, because in Beckett's theatre all five symbolist genres find some expression.

The correspondence of Beckett's work to the genre of 'poetic drama' is of primary importance in establishing his symbolist status. The Symbolists were trying very hard to create stage poetry above all else. The poetry of the event itself was of central importance, something that led to the adoption and exploration of abstract correspondences. Certainly the avant-garde theatre preserves in essence the poetic aesthetic of Symbolism, but for the most part the role of poetic language in avant-garde theatre itself clearly diminishes over time. This is an aspect of theatre into which Beckett breathes new life. In a broad sense, his theatre brings attention back to the importance of poetry in the theatrical event. He is a wordsmith of the highest order. Consequently one of the most illuminating things that can be said of Beckett's theatre is that it is poetry for the stage. But in accomplishing this, it is theatre that embraces the visual and phenomenological elements, not abandoning the contribution of spoken text, but bringing them together instead into a single poetic theatrical statement.

> Things happen in *Waiting for Godot*, but these happenings do not constitute a plot or story, they are an image of Beckett's intuition that nothing ever happens in man's existence. The whole play is a complex poetic image made up of a complicated pattern of subsidiary images and themes, which are interwoven like the themes of a musical composition, not as in most well-made plays to present a line of development, but to make in the spectators mind a total complex impression of a basic and static situation. In this the Theatre of the Absurd is analogous to a Symbolist or Imagist poem, which also presents a pattern of images and associations in a mutually interdependent structure (*Theatre of the Absurd* 294)

According to Kahn, poetic drama is that which is based on musicality "verbal orchestration, or the application of the principles of music to drama and theatre" (Deak 29) Beckett's use of musical principles has been discussed adequately enough to forgo much re-examination of it here However, it is worth re-visiting the relationship between the pauses of Beckett and Chekhov addressed earlier in reference to Bert O States That relationship suggests the further implications of verbal orchestration it is the pre-occupation with silence associated with verbal orchestration that forms a part of the special bond between Beckett and Symbolism While he generally questions Beckett's place in the avant-garde, Innes still identifies the peculiar similarities in their respective approaches to silence These stem directly from the Symbolists' notions of abstract correspondence in the tradition of Baudelaire In this insightful passage Innes not only puts his finger on an element of Beckett's affinities with Symbolism but also lays bare an aspect of the avant-garde's continuity in this regard

> The negative value placed on rational structures of thought was what led the Symbolists to attempt to find direct as opposed to discursive ways of communicating – a language at once both sensual and subliminal – and it is this linking of apparent opposites that has become a basic characteristic of all avant-garde drama, leading straight to Artaud's ideal of 'directly affecting the organism' of the spectator by creating a 'concrete language, intended for the senses and independent of speech', which would give a 'physical knowledge of images' in a manner comparable to acupuncture Following this symbolist line, Maeterlinck worked toward a 'theatre of silence', implicitly dismissing the discussion basis of pineroesque or ibsenite problem plays Words (in an argument that strikingly anticipates Samuel Beckett) automatically substitute habitual reactions for existential awareness, verbalizing emotion deprives it of authenticity, and 'static drama' replaces external conflict, which by definition is superficial (Innes 20)

The tendency to describe essentially static situations relates to the genre of poetic drama, and it is indeed something that Beckett and Maeterlinck have in common *The Intruder*, *The Sightless*, and *Interior* reveal that tendency in Maeterlinck In the case of Beckett, even a play like *Waiting for Godot*, which sees a good deal of stage activity in

terms of movement, still offers an essentially static situation In fact it is the premise of the entire work *Endgame* too explores such a circumstance, *Happy Days* another such A static situation is part of the given circumstances of virtually every play Beckett wrote But regardless of that, given the nature of his work it would still be appropriate to associate Beckett's theatre with poetic drama

The musical component of his theatre, the quality of silence, as well as the shared exploration of static situations offer ample grounds to confirm Beckett's position as a symbolist playwright But his adherence to the principles of the first symbolist genre only introduces further parallels in other genres After poetic drama, the next genre as described by Kahn is 'character comedy in an undefined setting ' This second symbolist genre accurately describes the character of many of Beckett's plays, an undefined setting is almost *de rigeur* in his theatre The issue of comedy is central to Beckett's theatre, occupying a somewhat ironic position As with tragedy, comedy is always ironically present in Beckett's plays So though one cannot assert their status as comedies, one cannot really deny that either And if the lines between comedy and tragedy quickly become immaterial here, that is part of the character of Beckett's plays I do not believe that the term comedy is inappropriate At least Beckett's plays are comedies in the tradition of Chekhov's *The Seagull*

The element of comedy applies in part to the third and fourth genres, 'modern and clownish pantomime,' and 'circus comedy', which I group together, because of their shared circus element Where the aspects of 'poetic drama' tend to conform to lyrical Symbolism, these genres tend to the grotesque In Beckett's theatre, the third and fourth genres manifest as a kind of hybrid Certainly Beckett has written several pantomimes both modern and clownish The most obvious examples of this are *Act Without Words One* and *Act Without Words Two* However, the quality of pantomime is ever-present in Beckett's theatre, perhaps because the substance of Beckett's plays is revealed as much in the progression or evolution of the unfolding stage imagery as in the dialogue The words serve to reinforce the image or rather the words and images serve to reinforce each other, as opposed to either being the sole vehicle of meaning This sharing of emphasis recalls the character of *synesthesia* in Symbolist theatre, the practical extension of

Baudelaire's theories of correspondence, in which different sense media express similar ideas Clearly, however, the plots (such as they are) of Beckett's plays are realized by the stage image in a manner similar to that of a pantomime This is one of the defining features of the Theatre of the Absurd The stage image is meant to embody the principles of absurdity, along with the characters, plot etc The principle of the pantomime in Beckett's theatre supports the presence of 'circus comedy ' *Waiting for Godot* and *Endgame* could both be described as 'circus comedy' for the presence of their clowns

The last of Kahn's five genres is visual spectacle The genre of visual spectacle evokes certain elements of the pantomime, in that the visual elements bear the weight of meaning Kahn's descriptions of the genre as "a series of short and expressive images" and "poems of form and colour" serve to describe the specific character of individual plays (*Nacht und Traume* for example) but also the general character of all of them This description suits Beckett's later works well It is important to mention that, as originally conceived by Kahn, 'visual spectacle' was to be a form of text-less theatre and was not necessarily intended to be staged Instead it would "inspire a visual evocation which would be of a completely different character than one based on language" (Deak 29-30) The genre as described is accommodated by many of Beckett's later plays *Nacht und Traume*, and *Quad* stand out particularly, but also *Breath*, not to mention the pantomimes themselves But even in Beckett's language-oriented plays the visual element (the central stage image) is an indispensable part of the play which the language ultimately only serves to deepen and reinforce

Beckett's theatre manages to capture the various faces of the symbolist movement its poetry, subtlety, musicality, its ambiguity and refusal to name ideas (preferring instead to surround them), the aesthetic of the clown with attendant flavour of chaos Beckett's theatre accommodates all the practical models which emerged from Symbolism, and all five of the theoretical genres as well All in accord with the fundamental premises of symbolist art, this serves to drive home Beckett's affinity with Theatrical Symbolism But Beckett's theatre not only recaptures the specific characteristics of Symbolism, but captures and incorporates aesthetic subtleties of subsequent movements as well

Beckett as Symbolist

Conclusion

This thesis begins with questions. Why is he so often identified as the most important playwright of his generation? What makes Beckett's theatre so widely admired? Why has it resonated so strongly with audiences and critics? What is it his theatre accomplishes so successfully? I believe that this thesis helps to offer some perspective on these kinds of questions. The identification of modern performance conventions and their origins in Symbolism are valuable observations in and of themselves. Placing Beckett in that context reveals certain important characteristics of his theatre. Beckett's theatre emerges as the culminating synthesis of modern avant-garde principles. Moreover it accomplishes this while renewing fundamental conventions of symbolist performance that ushered in the modern era in the first place.

In addressing these questions even my rudimentary knowledge of Jungian theory and its relationship to Beckett's work has played a crucial role. *Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious* is extremely useful not only in helping to determine the common underlying motivations of avant-garde art so often lost in the chaotic milieu of the modern avant-garde, but subsequently also in identifying how Beckett's plays so successfully satisfy those motivations. Ultimately, the consideration of Jung's theories (or Freud's for that matter) helps us to understand that the success of avant-garde plays is dependent on the degree to which they resonate with the psyche. I think Beckett's plays are particularly successful in this. We respond to his theatre because it touches something inside our minds, something familiar, perhaps one of the "ferocious beasts" that live in the psyche. But while maintaining the necessary flexible ambiguity required to engender their broad symbolic impact, Beckett's plays do so with a precision which gives the impact a cutting edge. They embody the principle in which, in the words of Peter Brook, "a true symbol is specific, it is the only form a certain truth can take" (*Empty Space* 7).

Beckett's plays are profound and precise In his theatre, powerful archetypal images are presented to us in such a way that their ambiguity itself is precise In this the rational and irrational find an effective balance Perhaps this helps to account for his critical and popular success But of course there is more to it Identifying specific characteristics of the avant-garde and of Beckett's theatre helps us to identify the pattern of development Thus Beckett and his historical context emerge as organic components of eachother The consistent, almost organic progression defines a consistent personality for the avant-garde in which we can recognize the innovative character of Beckett's theatre as a natural outgrowth In the body of his dramatic output Beckett has captured all of the major aesthetic conventions of the period the basic premise of the psychic stage, the oppositional dynamic described in Nietzsche, the primary models of performance (Music, Dream and Circus), and -- in almost Herculean fashion -- all the major conceptual dichotomies (representational versus presentational, abstract versus concrete, lyrical versus grotesque, rational versus anti-rational) This by itself is clearly an impressive accomplishment But, while Beckett's theatre firmly establishes itself as thenatural outgrowth of a developing modern aesthetic, its affinity with Symbolism brings the modern avant-garde full circle, and further reinforces its essential unity

If Beckett's plays could be said to embody various individual archetypes, then, in the light of his achievement, the modern period could be said to embody one of its own In *Man and His Symbols*, Jung describes how a nineteenth-century German chemist, researching the molecular structure of Benzene, solved his professional problem when he dreamed of an image dating back to at least the third century B C that coincidentally captures the character of the avant-garde the snake with its tail in its mouth (26) The image finds some further resonance in "The Significance of the Absurd" when Esslin draws a comparison between absurd theatre and Zen Buddhism, which seems particularly apt here in Beckett's reintegration of symbolist values we can find something akin to the Zen concept of the endpoint as beginning

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The Sound of Music -- Rodgers and Hammerstein

Kamloops Symphony Orchestra 2001

A Family of Sorts -- Rona Murray

Playwright's Theatre 2000

The Lover -- Harold Pinter

Eclectic Circus Productions 2000

Risk Everything -- George F Walker

University of Victoria (Satco 4th yr independant acting project) 1999

Criminal Genius -- George F Walker

University of Victoria (Satco 4th yr independant acting project) 1999

A Table for Four (9 episodes) -- Collective

Eclectic Circus Productions 1998

Fragments of a Journal in Hell -- adapted from Antonin Artaud

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MacBeth -- Wm Shakespeare

University of Victoria (UCFV director's festival) 1997

The Crucible -- Arthur Miller

Oak Bay Community Theatre Society 1997

The Ruffian on the Stair -- Joe Orton

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(Bill Gaston, Margaret Hollingsworth instructing) 2000

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