PART I

The phenomena called either/all “drama,” “theatre,” “performance” occur among all the world’s peoples and date back as far as historians, archeologists, and anthropologists can go. Evidence indicates that dancing, singing, wearing masks and/or costumes, impersonating either other men, animals, or supernaturals, acting out stories, presenting time, at time, isolating and preparing special places and/or times for these presentations, and individual or group preparations or rehearsals are co-existent with the human condition. Of countless examples from paleolithic times none is more interesting than the cave at Tuc d’Audoubert:

A sunken river guards the fearsome Tuc d’Audoubert, two hundred long underground feet of which one breasts or boats upon before the first land; then comes a precarious thirty-foot steep shaft up ladders placed there and slippery pegs; and next a crawl through claus-

\[1\] See La Barre (1970), 387–432, and Giedion (1962). These, in turn, are copiously documented.
trophobic low passages, to reach the startling footprints of ancient dancers in bare feet and the models of copulating bisons, in clay on the floor beyond.²

This cave is not the only one to make difficult, if not altogether inaccessible, its performance space. These earliest theatres—or shall I call them temples?—are hidden in the earth, lit by torch; and the ceremonies enacted apparently concerned hunting-fertility. It is clear why the two are associated: Even today, among the hunters of the Kalahari Desert, for example, when large game is taken a brief ceremony entreats the gods for replenishment of “so large a life” converted into meat by the thrusting of spears.³ Hunters do not breed cattle—they depend on what game is available; the more prolific the species hunted the better the hunting.

But it was not only animal fertility that stone-age humans celebrated. Figures, carvings, paintings, and symbols depict human fertility as well. The most ancient are of enlarged vulvas and/or huge buttocks (not unlike what females of some species of monkeys and apes display during estrus), or of pendant, milkful breasts.⁴ Then the ubiquitous phallic symbols, many of them exaggerated replications of the original, others more far-fetched. Associated with these human fertility figures are dances, some of them persisting into historical times. One has to think only of the erotic sculptings at Konarak (Orissa, 13th Century) to recall how the association among fertility, dancing, and music has continued over the millennia. The sheer fecundity of the Konarak figures is overwhelming; and many of the copulatory and fondling poses are also dance positions. This is also true of paleolithic cave art.⁵ Nothing I know more succinctly shows the association in the mind/behavior of humans between fertility-sexuality, fertility-hunting, and performance than the second vestibule of the cave at El Castillo. There one sees “five bell-shaped signs. They have long been recognized as representing the vulva. They are red and very large (ca. 45 cm.) and are divided by a short vertical stroke. Between them is an (80 cm.) upright black line, feathered at the end. [. . .] The red female symbols and the single black male symbol are spectacularly situated within a slightly raised part of the so-called second vestibule of the cavern of El Castillo. Below the smoothened surface of the niche which they occupy is a small table-like projection of the rock, beside which fall the folds of a curtain-like rock formation. [. . .] Parts of this rock curtain show signs of having been rubbed smooth by long usage.”⁶ In India it is common practice to rub the representations of both phallus and vulva when one passes by them in a temple. Everywhere cult items are fondled; curing and blessing is commonly practiced by the “laying-on” of hands.

We know nothing of the scripts used by the dancer-shamans of the paleolithic temple-theatres. I don’t say “texts,” which mean written documents. I say “scripts,” which mean something that pre-exist any given enactment, which act as a blueprint for the enactment, and which persist from enactment to enactment. Extrapolating from the existing evidence and modern experience I assume that the dancing took a persistent (or “traditional”) shape which was kept from one event to another; that this

²La Barre (1970), 397.
³The film, The Hunters (NYU Film Library), depicts the giraffe hunt of a small group of Kalahari tribesmen.
⁴Note that contemporary sexual aesthetics prefer upright (dry) breasts; nor is sheer fecundity a value among us.
⁵See Giedion (1962) for many photographs supporting this assertion.
shape was known by the dancers and by the spectators (if there were any), and that the shape was taught by one group of dancers to another. Furthermore, the script was important: maintaining it contributed to the efficacy of the rite; abandoning it endangered that efficacy. Even more: the efficacy was not “a result of” dancing the script but “contained in” dancing the script. In other words, in prehistoric ritual theatre, as in contemporary ritual, the doing is a manifestation more than a communication.

However, the manifestation is merely implicit, or potential, in the script; it is not until much later that power is associated with the written word. To conceive of these very ancient performances—some as far back as 25,000 years ago—one has to imagine absolutely non-literate cultures: unlitertate is probably the better word. Drawings and sculptings, which in the modern world are associated with “signs” and “symbols” (word-likeness), are in paleolithic times associated with doings. Thus, the “scripts” I am talking about are patterns of doing, not modes of thinking. Even talking is not originally configurated (words-as-written) but sounded (breath-noise). Ultimately, long after writing was invented, drama arose as a specialized form of scripting. The potential manifestation that had previously been encoded in a pattern of doings was now encoded in a pattern of written words. The dramas of the Greeks, as Aristotle points out, continued to be codes for the transmission of action; but action no longer meant a specific, concrete way of moving/singing—it was understood “abstractly,” a movement in the lives of men. Historically speaking, in the West, drama detached itself from doing. Communication replaced manifestation.

From the Renaissance until very recently, concomitant with the rapid extension of literacy, the ancient relationship between doing and script was inverted. In the West the active sense of script was forgotten, entirely displaced by drama; and the doings of a particular production became the way to present a drama in a new way. Thus, the script no longer functioned as a code for transmitting action through time; instead the doings of each production became the code for re-presenting the words-of-the-drama. Maintaining the words intact grew in importance; how they were said, and what gestures accompanied them, was a matter of individual choice, and of lesser importance.

Thus, we are accustomed to concentrating our attention on a specialized kind of script called drama. But the avant-garde in the West, and traditional theatres elsewhere, refocuses attention on the doing-aspects of script, and beyond script altogether to “theatre” and “performance.” Before attempting a concrete, taxonomical presentation of these words I must acknowledge the difficulty of using them. Words like “script,” “drama,” “theatre,” and “performance” are loaded, and none have neutral synonyms. My choice is either to invent new words, which no one will pay attention to, or to use the old words in as precise a manner as I can, hoping to introduce regions of restrictive meaning into the more general areas covered by these words. To help in this task of definition/classification I offer a model of concentric, overlapping circles; a set of four discs with the largest on the bottom, each of the others resting on the one immediately larger than itself. The increase in size is meant literally, in time/space, and conceptually in the idea-area covered. Generally

Most probably this teaching was not formal, but through imitation. However, a case could be made that the inaccessibility of the caves indicates an esoteric cult, and that the “secrets” of the cult would be definitely and formally transmitted.
speaking, though not in every case, the larger disc contains all those smaller than itself.

**Drama:** the smallest, most intense (heated-up) circle. A written text, score, scenario, instruction, plan, or map. The drama can be taken from place to place or time to time independent of the person who carries it. This person may be purely a “messenger,” even unable to read the drama, no less comprehend or enact it.

**Script:** all that can be transmitted from time to time and place to place; the basic code of the event. The script is transmitted person to person and the transmitter is not a mere messenger; the transmitter of the script must know the script and be able to teach it to others. This teaching may be conscious or through empathetic, emphatic means.

**Theatre:** the event enacted by a specific group of performers; what actually occurs to the performers during a production. The theatre is concrete and immediate. Usually the theatre is the response of the performers to the drama and/or script; the manifestation or representation of the drama and/or script.

**Performance:** the broadest, most ill-defined disc. The whole constellation of events, most of them passing unnoticed, that takes place in both performers and audience from the time the first spectator enters the field of the performance—the precinct where the theatre takes place—to the time the last spectator leaves.

The drama is the domain of the author, composer, scenarist, shaman; the script is the domain of the teacher, guru, master; the theatre is the domain of the performers; the performance is the domain of the audience. Clearly, in many situations, the
author is also the guru and the performer; in some situations the performer is also the audience. Also, the boundary between the performance and everyday life is arbitrary. Different cultures mark the boundaries differently. Preparations may begin anywhere from minutes before a performance (an improvised guerrilla theatre action) to years before (the Hevehe cycle play of the Orokolo). However, wherever the boundaries are set, it is within the broad region of performance that theatre takes place, and at the center of the theatre is the script, sometimes the drama. And just as drama may be thought of as a specialized kind of script, so theatre can be considered a specialized kind of performance. Thus, another model can be generated, one of oppositional pairs:

![Diagram showing the relationship between Script, Drama, Performance, and Theatre]

Those cultures which emphasize the dyad drama-script de-emphasize theatre-performance; and vice-versa. In general terms, Asian, Oceanic, and African cultures emphasize theatre-performance and Western cultures emphasize drama-script. However, a strong Western influence is felt in non-Western nations; and an equally strong non-Western influence is felt within the Western avant-garde. But however de-emphasized the script is in relative terms, it still dominates Western performances, even in the avant-garde. What is happening is an increasing attention to the seams that apparently weld each disc to the others. Illusionistic theatre, or mimetic theatre, is based on hiding the seams joining drama to script to theatre to performance. Stanislavsky goes so far as to deny the existence of the performance altogether; that is the import of his famous assertion that going to the theatre ought to be like visiting the Prozorof household, with the fourth-wall removed. Many years, and much theatrical activity, has intervened between Stanislavsky’s assertion and now; at least since Meyerhold and Vakhtangov the performance has been admitted to consciousness. Brecht concentrated his work on exposing the seam between the theatre and the script: his V-effekt is a device revealing the script as of a different conceptual order than the theatre event in which it is contained. Currently persons like Richard Foreman and Robert Wilson explore the disjunctions between script and drama.

I don’t know why the seams, which traditionally have held the four elements together, are now being explored in ways that break them apart. It directs the attention of the audience not to the center of any event but to those structural welds where the presumed single event can be broken into disparate elements. Instead of being absorbed into the event the spectator is given the chance to observe the points where the event is “weak” and disjunctive. This breaking apart is analogous to the
process of de-figuration and abstraction that happened earlier in painting, and which has left a permanent mark on all the arts.

In rehearsing Sam Shepard’s *The Tooth of Crime*, The Performance Group opened the seam between performance and theatre. Ultimately these were experienced by performers and spectators alike as *separate systems*. This opening of the performance-theatre seam was facilitated by an environment that not only is dominated by a central construction that makes it impossible for a spectator to see everything from a single vantage, but which also requires the scenes to move from...
place to place, audience following; as this movement became orchestrated during months of rehearsal and performance, the Garage environment clearly developed two sides, a public side and a private side. This division into spatial-emotional areas strongly contributed to opening the performance-theatre seam. In a condensed and reduced way, TPG’s *Tooth* was like a medieval pageant play; the actual progression of events in space matched the awakening of consciousness on the part of the drama’s protagonist, Hoss.

Our contract with Shepard did not provide for restructuring his text; furthermore, what attracted us to *Tooth* was its wholeness, and its rich, allusive language. But as we worked on the play, and the seam between performance and theatre opened wider, definite changes occurred in the script, if not in the actual words of the drama.

1. The cast of seven males and one female became four males and two females. Four roles were condensed into two, and these became the Keepers, a kind of chorus of one man and one woman.

2. A song written to be sung by Hoss at the start of the play became a theme song: “So here’s another illusion to add to your confusion/Of the way things are.” The song is sung at the start, and three other times, but never by Hoss.

3. Crow appears at the end of the first act instead of at the start of the second act.

4. The rock band which Shepard wanted to play backup music is not used. The performers play the music, which they composed, and being musicians becomes an integral part of their roles.

*Scene in Act 1 between Galactic Max and Hoss.*

Photo Frederick Eberstadt
This last is very important because it builds into TPG’s *Tooth* a definite, widely accepted performance aspect: in American society musicians are performers, not actors; their “role-playing” is life-style role-playing not “characterization” as in a drama. By making the characters in *Tooth* musicians, we threw into doubt the nature of “characterization” in the play, and moved the entire production toward a mode of performance more identified with rock music life-style than with conventional drama. In this way, although our production lacks actual rock music, it is fundamentally an examination of rock music style.

The concentration on the seam between performance and theatre, the inclusion of the audience in the performance as the major collective architect of the action, stems partly from my lack of interest as a director in character work. I make no attempt to harmonize the feelings of the performers with the alleged feelings of the characters; I try not to question performers about what they are feeling. I am more interested in patterns of movement, arrangements of bodies, “iconography,” sonics, and the flow of audience throughout the environment. The criteria I use for evoking, guiding, and selecting patterns are complicated; but the “demands” of the drama are of low priority.

It is this that Shepard doubtlessly senses. He hasn’t seen TPG’s *Tooth*. He saw one rehearsal in Vancouver and helped us considerably then by giving a rendition of speaking-style he wanted in the Hoss-Crow fight. It is to his credit, and a testimony to the faith he has in his drama, that he never interfered with our work. He and I have had a reasonably extensive correspondence about *Tooth*; most of it is about basic tones, and very little about specific staging. In May, 1973, Shepard wrote:

> I can see from the reviews, eyewitness accounts from some of my friends, and your public writings [. . .] that the production is far from what I had in mind. But I never expected it to be any different and I don’t see why you should expect my vision of the play to change. [. . .] I’ve laid myself open to every kind of production for my plays in the hope of finding a situation where they’ll come to life in the way I envision them. Out of all these hundreds of productions, I’ve seen maybe five that worked. [. . .] For me, the reason a play is written is because a writer receives a vision which can’t be translated in any other way but a play. It’s not a novel or a poem or a short story or a movie but a play. It seems to me that the reason someone wants to put that play together in a production is because they are pulled to its vision. If that’s true then it seems they should respect the form that vision takes place in and not merely extrapolate its language and invent another form which isn’t the play. It may be interesting theatre but it’s not the play and it can never be the play. [. . .] I’m sure that if you attempt other plays by living writers you’re going to run into the same situation. It’s a question you should really look into rather than sweep it aside as being old-fashioned or even unimportant.

TPG’s production results in a dissociation between drama-script and theatre-performance, as well as a further dissociation between theatre and performance. The model can be re-drawn into utterly discrete units, each of which may be in opposition to one or more of the others.
It is this process of dissociation, and its consequent tensions, ambivalencies, and novel combinations that characterizes the contemporary avant-garde, including The New Dance.

A side issue of importance raised by Shepard in his May letter is what to do with the author’s “vision”? To what degree must the drama determine the script, theatre, and performance? The issue has mainly been avoided over the last 15 years because those most deeply into dissociating elements have either written their own dramas (Foreman, Wilson), brought dramatists into their theatres and controlled their visions (Chaikin-van Itallie, Brook-Hughes), or worked from existing public domain material that has been restructured according to need (TPG, Polish Laboratory Theatre). But I, for one, want to work with writers, and must therefore find a way of dealing with their “vision.”

I assume that plays “present” themselves to their authors as scenes, that this scening is coexistent with playwriting. (Beckett, with his ear for music and sense of wordness, may be an exception; he may not “see” his plays but “hear” them.) The act of playwriting is a translation of this internal scening into dialog + stage directions. The stage directions are vestiges and/or amplifications of the internal scening. The whole scening process is, in my view, a scaffold that is best dismantled entirely once the play takes shape as dialog. This was the Classical and Elizabethan convention; I think the survival of many of those plays is due to the fact that later generations have been spared stage directions and character descriptions. The work of those doing the production is to re-scene the play not as the writer might have envisioned it but as immediate circumstances reveal it. Generally, it is not possible to do the play in the author’s vision anyway. Either that vision is unknown, as with most premodern writers; or the play is produced in a culture outside that of origin; or the conventions and architecture of the theatre make it impossible. Re-scening is inevitable because the socio-cultural matrix of the play-as-visioned soon changes. The drama is, by definition, that which can be passed on through successive socio-cultural transformations. The original vision is tied to the original matrix, and decays with it. I don’t think
that even the first production of a drama is privileged in this regard—unless the author stages the play himself.

The Garage environment for *Tooth* facilitates the division into public and private sides. An 11-foot-high gallery overlooks the public side on three sides framing the fight arena, Cheyenne’s bandstand, and a narrow bridge 7-feet-high further define the arena. The centerpiece limits the depth of the public side to about 15-feet. Two rectangular archways connect the public to the private side, with additional flow spaces at either end of the centerpiece. The private side has an 8-foot gallery continuing around two short sides and one-half of the longest side of the theatre. The playing area is much narrower—never more than 9-feet—than on the public side. The private side really has two playing areas: the large, octagonal bed near the backstairs, and the breakfast table set a foot high on a patio near the front stairs. Also the Garage toilets, the entrance-exit to the theatre, and extensive wall posterings are on the private side.

During the first months of using the environment, scenes were staged randomly—I just wanted to keep the audience moving. But this movement got simpler and more tied into thematics; ultimately most scenes found their “right place.” I use quotation marks because the division between “public” and “private” emerged slowly as separations occurred between spectators/performance and performers/theatre. As I sensed the seam opening—and most of my work was intuitive, not analytic as it is presented here—I adjusted staging and environment to further advance what was already becoming explicit. By June, 1973, the following pattern was set:

**Private Side**

**Act One:**  Hoss’s first dressing scene, during which he meets with his astrologer; the breakfast table scene between Hoss and Becky; the second dressing scene during which Becky helps Hoss on with his fighting glove; the grandpa monologue; the first confrontation between Hoss and Crow when Crow emerges from the audience to sing his song; the end of the act when Hoss and Becky sleep on the bed, while Cheyenne guards them and Crow watches.

**Act Two:**  The second confrontation between Hoss and Crow, which ends with Hoss sending Crow into the public side to wait; the after fight scenes with Crow: first on the bed when Hoss offers Crow everything if Crow will teach him how to be a gypsy, then near the breakfast table as Crow teaches Hoss; the car scene where Becky acts out an incident from her past with Hoss and definitely signals that their relationship is over.

**Public Side**

**Act One:**  Hoss’s first scene with Cheyenne; the scene where Doc gives Hoss a shot of heroin; the scene where Becky explains to Hoss that power is all that counts—and Hoss tries to escape by literally climbing the wall; Hoss’s recollection of a fight he and two buddies won while in high school.

**Act Two:**  The third confrontation between Hoss and Crow; the duel between them; Hoss’s suicide and funeral; Crow’s last song and brief confrontation with Becky.

There is relatively little use of the centerpiece. It is mostly occupied by the Keepers; the scene between Hoss and Galactic Max ("Jack" in Shepard’s script) is played on the corner of the centerpiece overlooking the bed and is a private scene because, al-
though it can be viewed from both sides of the environment, more than 90 percent of the audience crowds around the bed to look up at it. The Ref officiates the third round of the fight from a director’s chair atop the highest point of the centerpiece. Generally, the centerpiece is used by the Keepers, occasionally by Becky and Cheyenne, never by Hoss or Crow. And although it could accommodate on its upper levels 25 to 30 spectators there are rarely more than 15 there. The galleries are not used for any scenes, except that during the first act Crow is there and he cheers Hoss on several times, and participates in the musical backup. Interestingly, although Timothy Shelton plays a saxophone on the gallery, and engages in several other obviously theatrical deeds, spectators are generally surprised when he emerges at the end of act one as Crow. The long pit on the public side of the environment is covered and trapped. For the funeral, the trap is opened and, after the orations, Hoss’s body is roughly pulled into the pit by the Keepers, and the door slams shut on him and them. Several scenes, which in terms of the drama are “private,” are played on the “public” side of the environment. For example, the first scene between Hoss and Cheyenne (the sidekick) becomes a public confrontation and rejection of Hoss; a big blow, because it is played on the public side and followed by the play’s theme song (sung four times during the performance). Were this scene played on the private side without the song it would simply be a disagreement between old friends; it would not have overtones of doom. Why is that? The public side of the Garage is performance oriented, rather than theatre-drama oriented. On the private side people are watching-in, present at intimate encounters in more or less familiar settings (bedroom, kitchen); a TV soap-opera mood is stirred, a version of the fourth-wall

Scene between Becky-Lou (Joan MacIntosh) and Hoss (Spalding Gray) in bed on private side.

Photo James Clayburgh
convention. This mood is undercut with irony, created by the asides given by performers to spectators, and by ironic gestures—the laughter shatters what otherwise could be sentimental. But on the public side the feeling is of a gathering: an athletic event, a party, a contest of some kind. The public is meant to be there, and it is meant to judge what happens. In conceptual terms, what happens on the private side is rehearsal for what happens on the public side. In moving from one side to the other, spectators and performers shift their mode of experiencing.

The audience quickly learns the conventions of the production. A full house of 120 is evenly distributed awaiting the play’s start. By the time of the third scene—around the breakfast table—spectators are sitting in a close semi-circle on the floor around the table; others are crowded onto the galleries, and some peer down from the centerpiece. Only a few people hang back in bad viewing places. Generally, people press in closer on the private side. Almost always a few spectators actually remain sitting on the bed during scenes that are played there. The bed scenes gather four groups of people: a close circle on the bed; a slightly more distant right angle on the low gallery over the bed; a few people peering straight down from the centerpiece; a distant group on the high gallery along the east wall. For the bed scenes, more than 90 percent of the audience gathers on the private side, although much of the action on the bed can be seen through windows and archways cut into the centerpiece. Not only the tone of the scenes—naturalism with irony—but the intensely focused lighting helps bring people in close. And the mood is of participating in a private scene. When asides break that mood, surprised laughter comes; sometimes embarrassment.

Special techniques help the audience learn the conventions. Each of these techniques dissociates the drama-theatre complex from the performance. When spectators arrive at the Garage lobby, I am selling tickets, Stephen Borst (Keeper) is selling refreshments. About 10 minutes before letting people into the theatre James Griffiths (Cheyenne) relieves me. Borst and Griffiths are in costume but not in character. No attempt is made to reconcile the contradiction. Just before sending the audience downstairs I explain the “ground rules.” I tell people they can move about, that hooks are provided so they can hang up their coats, and where the toilets are. Sometimes I say that they should think of the play as a movie they are filming, and that it is more fun if they frequently change their perspective. Upon entering the theatre spectators are greeted by performers who act as hosts, explaining once again the ground rules. Then, just before the play begins, Griffiths explains the conventions again, this time in a loud voice addressed to everyone. Then, at the beginning of the breakfast table scene, Spalding Gray (Hoss) invites everyone to “sit around the table.”

Up through mid-June I thought all these reinforcements were necessary. Then, as an experiment, we decided to say nothing for several performances. The audience moved just about the same as when they were supplied with information. There are differences, however. Older people move less. Pockets of people remain on the “wrong” side of the environment and watch through the centerpiece. It is much more likely that people will stay on the public-side gallery and watch private scenes than the other way around. When people do gather, they do so more irregularly, and their bodies are much “freer.” (When told to move, spectators arranged themselves in rows, and in neat semi-circles. When moving on their own, they arrange themselves in irregular patterns, with clumps of standees among the sitters.) At the same time, there was some grumbling from spectators and confusion. Some people didn’t know they could move—even though they saw many others do so. Presently
the only encouragement to movement is a brief announcement by Griffiths before the play starts.

Performer to spectator contact (as opposed to character to spectator contact) is not limited to before the play. During intermission the performers remain in the playing space. A crowd usually gathers around the bed to talk to Gray and Joan Macintosh (Becky), who are often joined by Elizabeth LeCompte (Keeper). Shelton puts on his costume near the bed. Griffiths and Borst sell refreshments. The conversations range over many topics, but the themes and style of production are not avoided. There is no attempt made to maintain a fictional reality concerning the play. The performers are telling a story by means of theatre. (In earlier TPG productions many spectators closely identified the performers with their roles; so much so in Dionysus and Commune that we were hard-pressed to explain that actions of the plays were not identical to what we did in “real life.”) There is a tendency in orthodox theatre to segregate actors from audiences in order to maintain an illusion of actuality. The need to foster such illusionism is diminishing. Environmental theatre certainly fosters fantasies, but these are of a different order than illusionistic make-believe.

The curtain-call ends when the house lights are switched on and the performers applaud the audience; sometimes the mutual applause is vigorous, and sometimes both performers and spectators walk away in disgust. Most of the time the play ends but the performance goes on in the form of conversation, even argument. On one occasion a man disrupted the performance several times by making inappropriate remarks, finally taking hold of the prop gun just before Hoss's suicide. The play stopped. Shelton said some things to the man, including a request to stick around after the play ended. About 15 spectators remained after the play and the argument almost became a fist-fight. I don't recommend the resolution of the performance by fisticuffs, but I do say that this event was definitely part of the constellation called The Tooth of Crime for that night.

To summarize the experience with TPG's Tooth, the environment developed into two interrelated spaces, each of which sponsored a special kind of interaction between performers and spectators. The private side featured intimacy, one-to-one scenes, sharply focused and defined lighting areas, soft-speaking, direct contact between performers and spectators (ad-libs and asides). The public side featured big numbers, agonistic stances, bright, general lighting, formal inclusion of the audience in a contest. The kinetic activity of the audience encourages a detachment, a critical attitude. Each spectator is self-conscious enough to move to where the action is, station himself in an advantageous position to see, and decide what his relationship to the theatre is to be. Often enough people change places in mid-scene. This is not participation in the Dionysus sense. It is each audience educating itself concerning the difference between performance and theatre. The theatre event they see remains the same regardless of what perspective spectators adapt. Instead of being in a predetermined relationship to the theatre event, each spectator determines this relationship point by point. The determination is not thought out, but usually automatic. And in moving, the spectator discovers his attitude regarding the play. He learns that he controls the performance, even if the performers control the theatre. As every member of TPG can testify, performances of Tooth vary widely, much more so than performances of Commune. This is so because the performance control aspect of the audience is activated in Tooth. The mood of the audience—as directly conveyed in how they move, position themselves, and react to scenes (and sometimes these signals are communicated very subtly) firmly controls the entire production.
This control occasionally ran against what I wanted to do, and in every case I had to yield to the audience. I wanted the second round of the fight to break the frame of the arena, travel around the space in a wide circle, and return to the arena. The Ref comments on the second round that “something’s funny, something’s out of whack,” and I felt that moving from the arena would incarnate the weirdness of the round. For several months, the round was staged according to my wishes. But the audience followed only grudgingly, with a great deal of noise. The performers found it difficult to concentrate, and most of the round was lost both to seeing and hearing. I compromised by staging most of the round in the northeast corner of the Garage, just on the other side of the narrow bridge that delineates one side of the arena. Still, it didn’t work. Spectators were loathe to move even a few feet; they simply dropped out of the scene and waited for round three. The fight was simply “public,” no matter what niceties of interpretation I wanted to emphasize. As the round is now played, Crow leaves the arena for only a few seconds as Hoss drives him around the supporting post of the narrow bridge. Crow immediately re-enters through the arch. The audience stays put; the scene has focus, intensity, rhythm, completeness.

Most of the dissociation in TPG’s Tooth is between the realms of performance and theatre; the audience is, as it were, enfranchised. For about 10 performances we experimented with dissociating the drama from the script and the theatre. During May–June, 1973, two scenes were repeated with no change whatsoever except for the repetition. After Hoss gets a shot of heroin from Doc, Gray stops the drama by saying: “That’s one of my favorite scenes, I’m going to do it again.” Usually there is a big laugh from the audience, some readjustment of bodies, and an appreciative delight in re-viewing the scene. After committing suicide, Gray again stops the drama and says: “I’m going to take the suicide again. Anyone who wants to watch it from a different perspective, just move around.” Most everyone makes an adjustment. The reaction to repeating the suicide was closer to shock. The second time through the house is extremely quiet. We discontinued repeating scenes because the performers felt the repetitions were becoming routine. As part of the script they were not exciting to perform. But, however much part of the script the repetitions were, they were always dissociations in terms of the drama.

Pirandello’s plays are an attempt to integrate into the dramatic mode dissociations between drama and script. Genet’s The Maids is a deeper elaboration of this theme. The action of The Maids is the drama, and the fantasy-life of the characters is the script. Claire/Madame and Solange/Claire ultimately convert their script into the drama, playing out once-and-for-all the murder of Madame. Genet turns the screw an extra time in Solange’s epilogue where she confesses that the whole enterprise has been a drama; and the example itself is suspicious because the riddle is contained in Genet’s drama and hardly needs a performance to explicate it.

In Bali, theatre and drama are fixed and the script floats in relation to them. The minute gestures of a trance dance—the movement of fingers and hands, the way a torso is held and bent, the facial expression (or lack of it, the famous Balinese “away” look)—are fixed; so is the traditional story or story fragment: often a contest between good and bad demons or a fragment from the Ramayana epic. But how long the theatrical gestures will be performed; how many repetitions of cycles of movement; what permutations or new combinations occur—these things are unknown, and depend on the “power” of the trance. In Carnatic music, the progression of the raga is known; this progression is the “drama” of the music. But how a specific performer or group will proceed from one phase or note of the raga to the next, and how the
Suicide Sequence

in The Tooth of Crime

Photos Frederick Eberstadt
progression will be organized (how many repetitions, sequences, speed, volume) are not known in advance, not even by the performer: the script evolves on the spot out of a relationship between the drama (raga) and the theatre (particular skills of the specific performer). In both the Balinese and Indian examples, the Western distinction between "author" and "performer" does not apply. Dancer and musician did not author the trance dance or the raga; neither are they conforming to an exact prior script or drama. Most Western improvisatory theatre is not a version of Asian theatre but a means by which the performers function as dramatists, ultimately arriving at a very orthodox form that is repeated night after night with little or no immediate invention or permutation.

To summarize thus far: the drama is what the writer writes; the script is the interior map of a particular production; the theatre is the specific set of gestures performed by the performers in any given performance; the performance is the whole event, including audience and performers (technicians, too, anyone who is there). It is hard to define "performance" because the boundaries separating it on the one side from the theatre and on the other from everyday life are arbitrary. For example, in Vancouver TPG did two "real time" performances of Commune in which audiences were invited to come to the theatre at the same time that the performers did. About 12 people showed up at 6 p.m., watched the Group clean up, set props, get into costume, do warm-ups, establish the box office, admit the regular audience, do the play, chat with spectators, remove costumes, clean up, and shut the theatre. Two different performances occurred simultaneously: one for the "real time" audience and one for the "regular" audience; for the "real time" audience the "regular" audience was part of the show, as were a number of events not normally included in the production of Commune.

My work in this area has been an attempt to make both performers and audiences aware of the overlapping but conceptually distinct realities of drama, script, theatre, and performance. Also to make myself more aware and definite. Others have gone further than I in the process of dissociating one reality from another, but usually at the expense of one system or another. I want to find ways of keeping three or all four in tension. I believe that none has precedence over the others.

In many rural areas, especially in Asia and Africa, what is important is the performance: the whole panoply of events at the center of which is theatre, or maybe a drama. (I distinguish a "performance" from a simple "gathering," such as for a party, by the presence in a performance of a theatrical event—something planned and designed for presentation. Party games are proto-theatrical but not sufficient to convert a party into a performance. On the other hand, the dancing of a Kathakali sequence by a professional troupe at an Indian wedding is enough to make the wedding-gathering into a performance. I know these distinctions are arbitrary. Taxonomy in a social science is based on structures that tend to blend into each other on a continuum rather than exist as compartments of "species" of events. Thus, the exact point at which a boundary is set marking one structure off from another is arbitrary. However, the center of each kind of structure is very different from the center of any other.

In another article, (Schechner, 1972) I described a pig-kill, dance, and meat-exchange at Kurumugl in the Highlands of Eastern New Guinea. Although the dancers exhibit considerable skills, and the music is vigorous, no one is much interested in appreciating these as such. At one time or another everyone is dancing/singing; the
Displaying the meat at pig-kill in Kurumugl in Eastern New Guinea.

At left, dancer puts on make-up. At right, he is ready for the ceremony. Below left, three performers pose before dancing.
move from the audience realm to the performer realm is an easy one. This ease of movement between these two realms is one of the characteristics of performance as distinct from theatre or drama where knowing particular techniques in an exact sequence/context makes movement between realms difficult. The climactic event of the two-day celebration at Kurumugl was the invasion of the "council grounds" by one group in order to get meat being given to them by another group. This invasion took four hours during which armed dancers from both groups confronted each other. The men charged at each other, raising their spears and arrows as if to throw or shoot. Then, they began a rapid, kicking from the knee dancing; a running in place accompanied by fierce shouting and whooping. With each charge by the invading (guest) group, the resisting (host) group retreated a few yards. Ultimately the invaders arrived at the center of the council grounds where the women and some men had assembled a huge, tangled pile of meat 75 feet in diameter, three feet deep. After a half-hour of running in big circles around the meat, shouting in high-pitched tones in which guests and hosts fused into one unit of about 1,200 men, orations began. Men climbed into the pile of heads, torsos, flanks, legs, foreparts of pig and cow and tugged at specific morsels, declaring and exhibiting the meat. In the Highlands meat is rare and valuable; so much meat in one place is a collection of terrific wealth, a focus of ecstatic energy. To one side were three white goats, still living, tethered to a small tree. These were not slaughtered; I don't know what happened to them. Slowly the meat was distributed; small groups departed for their home villages singing and carrying meat shoulder high on stretchers made from bamboo, vines, and leaves.

Such a celebration as that at Kurumugl is pure performance. There is no drama; the script is vague and shifting; no one cares much about the quality of the theatrical gesturing. But there are definite dance steps and shouts, a known style of singing, an over-all pattern consisting of accepted sequences of events. The dancing, mock-battling, circle dance, orating, distributing of meat, and recessional constitute, in Erving Goffman's rich phrase, a way in which the Highlanders "perform their realities."

Joan MacIntosh and I attended on January 15–16, 1972, a Thovil ceremony in Koratota, a Ceylonese village about an hour's drive from Colombo. A. J. Gunawardana took us there. The occasion was the fulfillment of an oath made six months before when an outbreak of chickenpox passed harmlessly. The performance took more than 30 hours and I saw about 14 hours of it. It consisted of dances, songs, chants, ritual observances, partying, gambling, clowning, and story-telling. These occurred sequentially rather than simultaneously. The main performing area was an oval about 80 feet by 60 feet, rising slightly to a 15-foot-high roofed shed enclosed on three sides containing an altar; five other altars scattered around the oval; a chair with ritual implements (flowers, incense, cup); and other decorations. The audience varied from less than 50 to more than 400 during the late-night trance dance. Some of the performers—such as the trance dancer, the musicians, and some of the other dancers—were professionals; others were local people. Appeals for money were interspersed with the performance. As Westerners and outsiders we were given a special place to view

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8A council grounds is a temporary village established by Australian authorities to facilitate cooperation and exchange rather than combat which had been the principle means of contact among many Highlands groups. Several forms of Asian drama and meditation have been derived from martial training. The dancing at Kurumugl was a direct adaptation of fighting modes; a conscious inhibition of combat which led to a transfer of energy from thrusting shoulders (shooting arrows or throwing spears) to the thighs and legs: the unique, knee-kicking, dancing-running-in-place.
the performance, inside the oval, almost part of the show. (As indeed we were, openly for the village children, and more discreetly for the adults.)

The portion of the Thovil I saw had five parts: (1) arrival and set up, (2) events before supper, (3) main dances and events until midnight, (4) intermission, side-events, slow-down until 4:25, (5) an hour-long trance dance. Gunawardana told me that the events of the following day would include more singing and dancing, and closing ceremonies. Each part of the Thovil had theatrical elements embedded in a performance matrix. There was no drama, and the script was very loose, adjusting itself for example to our arrival. Many of the early dances were danced to us, directly in front of our mat; the officiating priest took time to explain to us what he was doing. These were alterations of the script. The crowd's appreciation was divided between simply enjoying each other, a good-time-at-a-party feeling, and evaluating the quality of the dancers. At one point a local obvious amateur began dancing. No one stopped him or derided him, but he was studiously ignored, which in Ceylonese society is a distinct put-down. He was drunk or I'm sure he would have ended his dance even more abruptly than he did. On the other hand, a very old man who, I was told, was the village's chief "devil dancer" executed a few steps and sang a chant to the full appreciation of a very quiet crowd. The old man had no skills in the usual theatrical sense; he was thought to have "power," and was deeply respected, even feared, for this. His presence not his theatrical ability got attention.

Preparations for the trance dance began a little before 4 a.m. The Thovil had come almost to a complete halt before then. The musicians were drunk, most of the village was asleep except for about a dozen men who were gambling in a shelter about 50 feet from the oval. The trance dancer was a young medical technician from Colombo and we had driven to Koratota with him. On our way out I questioned him:

How did you become a trance dancer?
My teacher taught me.
Why do you do it?
I like it. I earn extra money.
Does your dancing conflict with the 'scientific ideas' of your work?
No. Why should it?

The preparations for the trance dance are very simple. The man sits in a chair behind the shelter containing the main altar. He looks at himself in a hand-mirror. Two assistants wrap his torso with a bandage like cloth, very stiffly. (This is very much how young trance dancing girls are wrapped in Bali.) When he is firmly wrapped, incense is lit, and he takes very deep draughts of it, holding the incense tray directly below his nose. Finally, he puts on his head dress, which is a turban-like thing. After about 20 minutes his assistants lift him from the chair and place him at the edge of the oval. A large crowd of about 400 has gathered, and they are very quiet. The musicians—two drummers, a flute player, and several singers—are sitting on their mats.

Very suddenly the drums begin a very loud, very fast beat and the dancer leaps to the center of the oval. I say leaps—the dance is incredibly athletic and consists of several parts. Some of it is sheer running up and down and around the oval. At another time the dancer lifts his knees very high, almost to his chest. The most spectacular part of the dance involves "fire-throwing." One of his assistants pursues him carrying a large pot of "fire dust," some kind of highly inflammable powder. The dancer is carrying one, sometimes two, kerosene soaked burning torches. Without
looking at the assistant, the dancer reaches into the pot, takes a fistful of fire dust, hurls it into the air, and ignites it. The flash explosion, and whoosh noise, generates exciting heat, light, sound.

For more than an hour—until 5:35—the trance dancer never broke rhythm; he never rested. The trance dances of Bali are often quiet, meditative affairs (the exception being the Barong kris-dance). But this Thovil was fierce. Finally, his two assistants enter the oval, the drumming stops, and they wrestle the dancer to the ground, unclenching his fists to pry the torches from him. It is an actual fight to get him to stop dancing. Then, as suddenly as he started, he relaxes; he is not even breathing heavily. He kneels, says a prayer. He is absolutely relaxed, alert, not tired. Not even sweating. As soon as the dance ends people disperse. The next morning we drive back to Colombo.

The trance dance is pure theatre. There is no drama, no script. There are certain steps to be done but these may be varied according to the strength of the possession. The thing the crowd loves most is the fire-throwing. They appreciate that with ooh’s and ahh’s; they are thrilled by the dancer’s stamina and energy. The spectators do not participate in the event, they simply watch; the dancer is totally oblivious to them. He is even, apparently, oblivious to his own assistants—though he has enough presence of mind to reach into the fire dust pot. But when the time comes to end the dance he must be wrestled out of trance. This is not a gradual process, as going into trance seems to be; but a sudden re-emergence, a letting go of the trance and a falling directly into full, relaxed ordinary consciousness. It is my belief that Western culture is generally unable to enjoy trance dancing because of our insistence on drama and scripts. However, in black and pentacostal churches—revivals, healing, chants and responses, talking in tongues, snake-charming, and the like—there is ample evidence that trance is a viable mode for theatre in the West, if we so choose.

Structurally, the Thovil presents a complicated picture. Entertainment, ritual, athletics, partying, gambling, spirit-possession are all mixed. There is no exact progression of events, and yet there is a special kind of building toward the trance dance that joins the darkest, stillest hour of night to dawn. What holds the Thovil together is a sequence of punctuations—ritual chants, further decoration of the performance oval, expected dances and farces—that keep up the people’s interest. Between these punctuations the space/time is open, and a variety of events transpire. Men move from gambling to watching dances and back; alcohol is dispensed; children play games to the side of the oval and then return for the farces; women watch, go away to prepare meals or nurse infants, then return. Even the musicians wander in and out so that sometimes the full orchestra is playing and sometimes only a single drummer.

Drama is tight, verbal, narrative; it allows for little improvisation; it exists as a code independent of any individual transmitter; it is a text. A script is either a traditional plan for a theatre event such as the Koratotan Thovil or the Kurumugl pig-kill, or it is developed during rehearsals to suit a specific text as in orthodox Western theatre. The theatre is the visible/sonic set of events consisting either of well-known components, as in Bali, or of a score invented during rehearsal, as in the West. To some degree the theatre is the visible aspect of the script, the exterior topography of an interior map. But script and theatre do not necessarily relate in this way; a script may be the cause of the theatre, and the theatre may influence the shape of a script. Performance is the widest possible circle of events condensing around theatre. The audience is the dominant element of any performance.
Drama, script, theatre, and performance need not all exist for any given event. But when they do, they enclose one another, overlap, interpenetrate, simultaneously and redundantly stimulating and using every channel of communication. This kind of behavior eventuates in many modes, even art.

PART II

I began this essay by describing some paleolithic caves; I indicated that ancient humans associated themselves with animals, connecting hunting with the need to replenish the hunted species. A parallel connection apparently was made between human and animal fertility; and initiation rites, which are closely associated with human fertility, were also often totemistic/animist in their essence and practice. I now want to return to those themes and elaborate on them in a direction that will link up to what has thus far been the main subject of my essay.

More than in the first part of my essay I caution now against accepting my remarks as definite. About performing I know something, having made many careful observations; about playing in man and some other primates I know very little, and hardly anything from observation. I present my speculations in the spirit of those 16th century cartographers who drew hilarious maps of the New World. All succeeding maps were revisions, not rejections, of those first shapes drawn on vellum: the New World existed, it had a definite shape, it remained merely to measure it accurately.

One can only speculate, and many have, about the origins, structure, and functions of totemism and animism. What is very clear is that men identify themselves with animals, dress in animal skins and heads, and develop specific ceremonies and observations to keep intact links connecting animal species to humans. Such phenomena are not new. In the Hall of Hieroglyphs at Pech-Merle "is the earliest known representation of the fusion of a human being with an animal"—a bird-headed woman apparently in some dancing attitude." Also "the celebrated 'Dancing Sorcerer' or 'Reindeer Shaman' of Trois Frères wears the antlers of a stag, an owl mask, wolf ears, bear paws and a horse-tail, but is otherwise a nude human male dancing, perhaps wearing streaks of body paint." La Barre (1972) emphasizes that shamanistic animal cults can be traced from contemporary subarctic cultures back to the Stone Age. "Similarities in European Paleolithic and Asiatic Paleosiberian shamanism, indeed, are present even down to arbitrary details. For example, the Old Stone Age had both bird and reindeer shamans quite like those of Paleosiberian tribes. [. . .] The reindeer shaman shows an extraordinary continuity in Europe down to proto-historic and modern ethnic times; the bird shaman can be traced from Magdalenian to modern Siberian times." There is hard evidence about dancing ceremonies accompanying the visual representations in the paleolithic caves. "Near the final chamber [of the cavern of Le Tuc d'Audoubert], which contains the high relief of two bison, footprints of the Magdalenian age have been preserved beneath a layer of crystalline lime deposit." These are interpreted as footprints of dancers.

If ancient man drew and carved beings who combined the physical attributes of humans and animals can we not assume that actual costumes were created; and if the

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9Giedion (1962), 284.
10La Barre (1972), 410.
11La Barre (1972), 410.
12Giedion (1962), 284.
artistic representations on the cave walls are of dances can we not assume that these men danced? We don’t know the structure of these dances, except as we may extrapolate from historic times. The dances were probably both evocations of animal spirits and emulations of animal movements. The ancient hunters who felt such a dependency on the animal world knew also of similarities between that world and their own. Generally those similarities extended animal nature into the realm of human life. Always it is the human who is adorned, who shows how he is like an animal. No animal dances wearing human skin, or puts over its head the face of a man. But there are connections I believe we can make without falling into the error of anthropomorphism.

Jan van Lawick-Goodall describes this scene in her masterful study of chimpanzee life in the wild:

At about noon the first heavy drops of rain began to fall. The chimpanzees climbed out of the tree and one after the other plodded up the steep grassy slope toward the open ridge at the top. There were seven adult males in the group [. . .] several females, and a few youngsters. As they reached the ridge the chimpanzees paused. At that moment the storm broke. The rain was torrential, and the sudden clap of thunder, right overhead, made me jump. As if this were a signal, one of the big males stood upright and as he swayed and swaggered rhythmically from foot to foot I could just hear the rising crescendo of his pant-hoots above the beating of the rain. Then he charged flat-out down the slope toward the trees he had just left. He ran some thirty yards, and then, swinging round the trunk of a small tree to break his headlong rush, leaped into the low branches and sat motionless.

Almost at once two other males charged after him. One broke off a low branch from a tree as he ran and brandished it in the air before hurling it ahead of him. The other, as he reached the end of his run, stood upright and rhythmically swayed the branches of a tree back and forth before seizing a huge branch and dragging it farther down the slope. A fourth male, as he too charged, leaped into a tree and, almost without breaking his speed, tore off a large branch, leaped with it to the ground, and continued down the slope. As the last two males called and charged down, so the one who had started the whole performance climbed from his tree and began plodding up the slope again. The others, who had also climbed into trees near the bottom of the slope, followed suit. When they reached the ridge, they started charging down all over again, one after the other, with equal vigor.

The females and youngsters had climbed into trees near the top of the ridge as soon as the displays had begun, and there they remained watching throughout the whole performance. As the males charged down and plodded back up, so the rain fell harder, jagged forks or brilliant flares of lightning lit the leaden sky, and the crashing of the thunder seemed to shake the very mountains.
My enthusiasm was not merely scientific as I watched, enthralled, from my grandstand seat on the opposite side of the narrow ravine, sheltering under a plastic sheet. [. . .] I could only watch, and marvel at the magnificence of those splendid creatures. With a display of strength and vigor such as this, primitive man himself might have challenged the elements.13

But don’t confuse “primitive man” with chimps. The chimps are not forerunners of man—chimps have been around as long or longer than man. Possibly both man and chimp have a common ancestor, the evolutionary tree branching some millions of years ago; since then homo sapiens has developed in one way, pan troglodytes in another. Thus, chimp performance is not a prototype of human performance, but a parallel. As such it is even more interesting than as a prototype. A prototype tells us nothing more than that human performing has antecedents; a parallel means that another species, developing in its own track, is engaged in deliberate, conscious, chosen activity that can best be described as “performing.” If this is true, so-called “aesthetics” is not the monopoly of humans; and theories about aesthetics that talk about art as a “luxury,” or a function of “leisure,” are put into question. Instead one ought to seek for the survival value of performance; what purpose does it serve in the behavior scheme of chimps and man, and possibly other species, too? It is necessary for the reader to study some of the literature on primate behavior to understand that I am not using words like “deliberate,” “conscious,” “chosen,” and “survival value” in any but the strict sense.

Examples abound of “animal rituals”14 or “playing,” which, viewed from a human perspective, appear to be performances. But these patterns of instinctive behavior are automatic and cannot be thought of as performance in the sense that human and chimpanzee displays are. However, even events as regulated by instinct as the “triumph dance of geese,” or the offering of the throat by a vanquished wolf to the victor, can indicate the bio-antiquity of behavior in which status, territory, and sexual priorities are mediated by rituals rather than by direct combat which, in most cases, would severely deplete at least the male population of many species. In the opinion of Lorenz (1967), Tinbergen (1965) and other ethologists, an instinctive animal ritual is an alternative to violent behavior; the rituals developed—were “selected” evolutionarily speaking—because those individuals within a species that had the rituals bred-in survived. In time, entire species instinctively respond to stimuli that evoke the rituals. In my terms, performance is something else, more conscious, and probably belongs only to a few primates, including man. The rituals of lower animals are indeed prototypes for primate performances. What humans do consciously, by choice, lower animals do automatically; the displaying peacock is not “self-conscious” in the way an adolescent male human is on Saturday night. The behavior of peacock and boy may be structurally identical; but self-consciousness and the ability to change behavior according to self-consciousness (and not just outside stimulation) sets animal ritual off from primate and human performance.

However, before examining some of the conscious behavior I call performance, I think it is necessary to scan the more ancient patterns of ritual behavior. These patterns involve display, fight-flight, turf, and mating. Many animals put on shows in

13Goodall (1972), 66–67.
14Lorenz (1967), 54–103.
order to demonstrate status, or to claim and defend territory, or to prepare for mating; these displays are aggressive. When challenged, the animal will either continue the display, transform it into a submissive gesture, flee, or fight. According to Lorenz, it was Julian Huxley who first called this kind of behavior “ritual.”

[Huxley] discovered the remarkable fact that certain movement patterns lose, in the course of phylogeny, their original specific function and become purely “symbolic” ceremonies. He called this process ritualization and used this term without quotation marks; in other words, he equated the cultural processes leading to the development of human rites with the phylogenetic processes giving rise to such remarkable “ceremonies” in animals. From a purely functional point of view this equation is justified, even bearing in mind the difference between the cultural and phylogenetic processes.15 

The triple function of suppressing fighting within the group, of holding the group together, and of setting it off, as an independent entity, against other, similar units, is performed by culturally developed ritual in so strictly analogous a manner as to merit deep consideration.16

Ritualized behavior extends across the entire range of human action; but performance is a particularly heated arena of ritual, and theatre, script, and drama are heated and compact areas of performance. However, something else is involved in performance, and that is play. Play also occurs in many species, but nowhere is it so extensive, nowhere does it permeate so many activities, as in human beings. This is only relatively less true of chimpanzees, and so on down the primate ladder. A tentative definition of performance may be: Ritualized behavior conditioned/permeated by play. The more “freely” a species plays, the more likely performance, theatre, scripts, and drama are to emerge in connection with ritualized behavior. Some animals, such as bees and ants, are rich in ritualized behavior but absolutely bereft of play. No species that I know of plays without also having a wide repertory of ritual behavior. But it is only in the primates that play and ritual coincide, mix, combine; it is only in man and closely related species that the aesthetic sense is consciously developed. The only theory of aesthetics that I can tolerate is one in which aesthetics is considered a specific coordination of play and ritual.

What is play? What are its characteristics, functions, and structure? Huizinga defines play as a free activity standing quite consciously outside “ordinary” life as being “not serious,” but at the same time absorbing the player intensely and utterly. It is an activity connected with no material interest, and no profit can be gained by it. It proceeds within its own proper boundaries of time and space according to fixed rules and in an orderly manner. It promotes the formation of social groupings

16Lorenz (1967), 74.
that tend to surround themselves with secrecy and to stress their difference from the common world by disguise or other means.\footnote{17}{Huizinga (1955), 13.}

Just as the 1908 publication of Van Gennep’s \textit{Les rites de passage} introduced a way of classifying and therefore understanding rituals, so the 1938 publication of Huizinga’s \textit{Homo Ludens} made it possible to speak of play in a full variety of cultural contexts. Huizinga connects playing to ritual, and stresses the idea of sacred time and place, and of contest (\textit{agon}). But, unfortunately, he rejects all ideas of function, believing that to discuss the function of play is to deny its unique nature, its “in-itselfness.” I agree with Huizinga that play is co-existent with the human condition; but I think an examination of its biological function—its survival value—will add to our understanding of its structure, and point the way to relating primate play behavior to human performances.

Loizos’ (1969) review of the functions of play in non-human primates identifies the following:

1. As schooling or practice for the young;
2. As an escape from or alternative to stress;
3. As a source of “vital information” about the environment;
4. As exercise for muscles involved in agonistic and reproductive behavior.

Loizos rejects these functions as not being either sufficient or necessary; but she maintains nevertheless that play has survival value. Instead of suggesting more functions she extrapolates from observations of primate behavior certain characteristics of play:

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One of \textit{[play’s]} immediately noticeable characteristics is that it is behavior that borrows or adopts patterns that appear in other contexts where they achieve immediate and obvious ends. When these patterns appear in play they seem to be divorced from their original motivation and are qualitatively distinct from the same patterns appearing in their originally motivated contexts. [\ldots] The \textit{[similarity between human and other primate play]} lies in the exaggerated and uneconomical quality of the motor patterns involved. Regardless of its motivation or its end-product, this is what all playful activity has in common; and it is possible that it is all that it has in common, since causation and function could vary from species to species.\footnote{18}{Loizos (1969), 228–229.}
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Loizos recounts that there is an ontogeny of play in chimps. At a very early age the animals begin “exploration and manipulation”; later comes “organized play, or play behavior that has a logical sequence to it”; then comes “bodily activity” in which things like acrobatics are practiced; and finally there is “social play,” such as threatening and swaggering, which needs playmates to be effective. The addition of
new ways of playing does not eliminate old ways; playing is additive and all kinds can be combined to form very complex activities.

What is particularly significant about Loizos’ observations is that she says that play apparently derives from “behavior that appeared earlier phylogenetically and for purposes other than play.” In other words, in her view, play is not rehearsal for life situations but a derivation from life situations, a ritualization and elaboration of “patterns of fight, flight, sexual and eating behavior.” And insofar as these patterns are specific to each species so will play be species-specific.

An interesting sidelight that most probably applies to human behavior as well as chimps is that experiments show that a reduction of sensory input, particularly deprivation in the mother-infant relationship, “increases the likelihood of repetitive, stereotyped behavior.” And that the “most damaging and least reversible of sources of stereotyping occurs in primates raised in restricted and, in particular, socially restricted circumstances.” The smaller the cage, the less interaction, the more the stereotyping. Also, by and large, laboratory-reared chimps are more stereotyped in their behavior, less given to creative play, than chimps in the wild.

Primate studies disclose more interesting aspects of play. According to Carpenter (1964), social play is a main means by which young monkeys find their place in the group. The agonistic nature of play itself establishes a dominance scale; and the practice of play prepares the young animal for similar kinds of ranking as an adult. Also, sexual elements make their appearance early in the play of primates. However, as animals approach adulthood many kinds of play seen in childhood give way to other activities like social grooming, actual mating or hunting. It is difficult to say that the swaggering and displays characteristic of maintaining social order in a troop of chimps is anything but play; whatever the function and consequences of these displays they are not actual combats. Ultimately, “play between fully grown adults is rare.” Here man is the spectacular exception.

Loizos speculates that “the more rigid the social hierarchy in a primate species, the less likely it is that play will occur among the adults of that species.” I am inclined to disagree as far as humans are concerned. I see no evidence indicating that democratic, flexible human societies play more than rigid societies. In fact, many rigid societies are given to great ritual displays; and if the connection between play and ritual is accepted the argument from apes to humans does not apply here. What I think can be said is that rigid social systems tend to generate events that concentrate on theatre and performance, on spectacular confirmations of existing social order; and flexible social systems tend towards drama, the expression of individual opinion as definitely set down in words. The impulse toward collectivity, groupness, identification with others leads toward theatre and performance; the impulse toward individuality, personal assertiveness, and confrontation between individuals leads toward drama. In certain periods—such as the heydays of Greek and Elizabethan theatre/drama—a palpable tension is felt between two contradictory modes. In the Greek, the tension is between the shamanistic and collective modes of celebration represented directly in the satyr plays and the Eleusinian mysteries and other Orphic ceremonies and a newly emerging rationalism and individuality. In the Elizabethan era, the tension arises between the variety of medieval collectives (guilds, feudalism, Catholicism) and a surging Renaissance spirit of rationalism and individuality (self,
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I won't elaborate these theories here. But studies of primate behavior is not incidental to understanding patterns of human culture.

I want to say a few words in favor of another theory of the function of play. It is not a new theory, and my contribution to it is to connect it to the whole field of performance; for I believe play is the factor that literally organizes performance, makes it comprehensible. If the distinction I made earlier between play and ritualized behavior is kept in mind, then clearly play belongs mainly to carnivorous and omnivorous species: hunters. It belongs to species that depend on other species for life, and in fact on stalking, attacking, killing prey. Furthermore, not only among lions, but also with chimps and certainly with man, hunting is group activity. Goodall says that “sometimes it appears that the capture of a prey is almost accidental. [...]. On other occasions the hunting seems to be a much more deliberate, purposeful activity, and often at such times the different individuals of a chimpanzee group show quite remarkable cooperation—as when different chimpanzees station themselves at the bases of trees offering escape routes to a cornered victim.”

Hunting demands not only cooperation but sudden bursts (climaxes) of energy balanced by extended periods of stealth; and a great deal of practice. This is where play comes in—especially creative or “free” play. One of the qualities of play in higher primates in the wild is its improvisational manner, and yet its orderliness: in fact, play is improvisational imposition of order, the making of order out of disorder. And where play is not autistic it is outer-directed, ultimately involving playmates. Although play prepares a young primate for more than hunting, hunting is a particularly full application of play activity. The main difficulty in hunting comes when the prey is intelligent and strong. To hunt baboons effectively chimps must develop strategies that take into account the formidable qualities of the resourceful baboon. Such strategy is actively futurist; the present moment is conditioned by what is to come next. The hunter must know what the prey is going to do, or the hunt will fail. What develops is a game in the true sense. This game involves the hunter, or hunting group, the prey, and the environment.

Hunting is inherently, not metaphorically, theatrical/dramatic. A script is necessary in order to develop strategies that culminate in a climactic attack-event; agonistic and cooperative behaviors combine in a complicated way so that a “we and them” mentality is heightened; signals are given that not only express feelings but direct actions; there usually is a leader of the hunt and a single, identifiable prey so that activity focuses toward a swift, violent, climactic confrontation during which the issue is settled; the activity that builds to a climax is itself active (this is the difference between hunting and trapping); after the kill there is a feast with meat being shared according to strict rules (a communion); and after the feast, total relaxation.

One aspect of the functional theory of play needs, I think, special elaboration because of its relationship to theatre. Most animals that play also engage in activities that call for sudden expenditures of kinetic energy: crises. This energy is spent on fighting, fleeing, hunting, mating, maintaining dominance, and defining and/or protecting turf. In the energy economy of any animal these crises arise relatively infrequently; but when a crisis arises an animal that cannot command great energy is doomed. An energy “bank” is necessary for survival. This bank has two primary “accounts,” erotic

22Goodall (1972), 205.
23Hunting is more strategic than farming. Farming involves the simplest strategies only; most of it is hoping that the right combination of rain and sun will bring the crop to fruition. The smaller the farm the less strategy needed; and the activity called “gathering” is the most passive of all.
and combative; and several secondary (displacement) accounts: display, dominance-submission gestures, marking (deposit or urine or feces, scratches on trees, etc.). But I use the word "bank" only metaphorically. The metabolisms of higher animals are ill-equipped for long-term storage. Instead, play maintains a regular, crisis-oriented expenditure of kinetic energy. In play, energy is spent in behavior that is not only harmless but fun. Kinetic potential is maintained not by being stored but by being spent; and the activity of play is also adaptive in the "creative" ways mentioned earlier. When a crisis arises, the animal is able to meet it by switching play-energy into

![Diagram showing the links between performance, hunting, ritual, and play.]

Crisis, the spending of kinetic energy, is the link between performance, hunting, ritual, and play. Each gives rise to the others; together they comprise a system through which the animal maintains an ability to spend kinetic energy irregularly, according to needs.

fight-energy, for example. The problem remains: How do animals (and persons) tell the difference between play and "for real?" Ritualized behavior, including performances, are means of continually testing the boundaries between play and "for real." The "special ordering of time and place" most observers note in play—even animal play—are signals that the behavior taking place within such brackets are "only play." Even so, confusions happen, and placative gestures, or the presence of a referee, are necessary to keep play in hand.

What might be the relationship between hunting and play, hunting and ritual, ritual and play, play and theatre? At the outset of this essay I suggested some connections between paleolithic cave art and hunting/fertility rituals; also between these rituals and theatre. Now I want to argue from a structural basis what I previously adduced from prehistory. To do so I assume a homology between the behavior of the higher primates and humans.

Recall that Loizos argues that "playful patterns owe their origin to behavior that appeared earlier phylogenetically and for purposes other than play." She describes "some of the ways in which motor patterns may be altered and elaborated upon when transferred to a playful context."

1. The sequence may be re-ordered.
2. The individual movements making up the sequence may become exaggerated.
3. Certain movements within the sequence may be repeated more than they would normally be.

4. The sequence may be broken off altogether by the introduction of irrelevant activities, and resumed later. This could be called **fragmentation**.

5. Movements may be both exaggerated and repeated.

6. Individual movements within the sequence may never be completed, and this incomplete element may be repeated many times. This applies equally to both the beginning of a movement (**the intention element**) and to its ending (**the completion element**).²⁴

These qualities are characteristic of “creative” or “free” play. In such play the animal is not bound by circumstances to stick to a pattern that will yield results. A cat playing with a crumpled-up paper ball may “hunt” it for a few moments and then stop; a chimp may chase a playmate through the tree-tops and stop before making contact; humans involve themselves in dozens of momentary, incomplete play activities each hour. In fact, the more advanced the animal, the more likely that each of the six play elements will be used. Behavior is recombined in new ways, exaggerated, repeated, fragmented, short-circuited. In lower animals, the flow of behavior is mostly one-directional; it is clear whether or not the animal is playing. But, as organisms grow more complicated, the flow becomes two ways. A cat with a captured mouse is “playing” with its prey; it is also completing the hunting process. Chimps will convert play behavior into serious behavior and back again, so that a play chase suddenly erupts into a fight, the fight is resolved by gestures of dominance and submission, this “contract” is “ratified” by mutual grooming, and soon enough there is another playful chase.

In humans, the situation is the most complicated. First off, humans hunt other humans with the same diligence that other species reserve for inter-specific warfare. But if human aggression is non-specific, so is human inventiveness. So-called “serious” work in humans is treated playfully; and so-called play becomes very serious indeed. Humans can speak truthfully of “war games” and “theatres of war,” and great issues can be carried on the shoulders of athletes or actors who become very important ambassadors indeed. I will not elaborate these ideas here except to insist that Huizinga is wrong when he decries the “deterioration” of play because serious issues get involved in it. Serious issues are always involved in play; just as, in humans, play is inextricably combined into all serious work. When through industrial or other means the play elements are taken out of work, work becomes drudgery and less efficient, not more; and when the seriousness is taken away from play, the playing grows sloppy and dull, not fun.

But what is “fun?” Everyone agrees that playing is fun. Certainly this is so for humans, and it appears to be so for animals, too. I think it is wrong to say that play is “free,” if Loizos is correct in saying that play is a restructuring of other behavior. Also, we know that the “rules of the game,” which orders an otherwise chaotic situation, adds to the fun while taking away from freedom. Playful activity constantly generates rules, and although these may change swiftly, there is no play without them. In other

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words, to use terms developed earlier, all play is "scripted." Thus, "fun" is not being "free from rules." It is something else. Let me again return to the hunt, which I think has particular significance regarding theatre. Hunting is not play when it eventuates in a kill. The actual killing, which is the climax of the hunt, expends more energy more swiftly than anything else in the animal's life (with the possible exception of fleeing from other hunters). In play this actual killing is avoided. If, "by accident," actual killing occurs, the hunt is no longer play. The difference in kinesthetic energy spent in actually killing and in playing is precisely what is felt as "fun." Fun is surplus kinesthetic energy. Fun is playing at killing.

Not all playing, but that which is related to hunting behavior. And it is this kind of playing that is also related to that kind of performance that has become drama. Drama, as distinct from performance and theatre, is not universal. It arises often in connection with hunting cultures and/or among peoples who engage in human sacrifice. Drama, as distinct from performance and theatre, is not universal. It arises often in connection with hunting cultures and/or among peoples who engage in human sacrifice. The dynamics of the relationships between hunting, playing, ritual, and drama might be modelled in this way:

The bottom half of each circle is the "source" of the top half, although there is a significant amount of feedback from the top. The bottom is, in psychological terms, "unconscious" and the top "conscious." The top half of each transaction becomes the bottom half in another transaction. All of the transactions exist in any culture that has one of them. Ecological and social circumstances determine which transaction is dominant in a given culture.

My thesis is that the play behavior of cultures with extensive hunting activity is of a special kind that is adapted from hunting; it also influences hunting. This kind of playing is strategic, futuristic, crisis oriented, violent and/or combatative; it has winners and losers, leaders and followers; it employs costumes and/or disguises (often as animals); it has a beginning, middle, and end; and its underlying themes are fertility, prowess, and animism/totemism. Also this kind of playing emphasizes individual or small-group action and teamwork. In time, playing and hunting behaviors generate secondary symbolic activities called rituals and dramas (scripts). This transformation may be a function of what Lorenz calls "displacement activity"—when two conflicting impulses prevent each other from being activated a third action results. In 'animals, displacement activity is often ritualized behavior. In humans, the conflicting impulses may be the wish to hunt people versus love bonds for members of one's own species or culture group. The displacement activity is a ritual or drama in which humans kill humans—but only "in play." Or the hunting of loved ones may become scarring, cir-

25 I know that traditional scholarship identifies sacrifice with agriculture, particularly in ancient Egypt and the mid-East; but I think it could also be connected to hunting. Furthermore, I believe that warfare is mainly an adaptation of hunting behavior, and in this sense all human societies are hunting societies, since all make war.
cumcizing, marking: some disfiguration or permanent alteration of the body. Through the ordeal of being prey, the initiated gains the status of hunter.

Like the behaviors they derive from and elaborate, rituals and dramas are violent and crisis oriented; they test individual courage, stamina, and ingenuity; participation in them is in itself status-raising; they occur within special times/places; they operate according to rules, traditions, strategies. Agricultural societies develop spectacles organized around proprietary ceremonies whose function it is to entreat the regularity of the seasons, the falling of rain, the warming of sun. Agricultural ceremonies emphasize what I have been calling performance and theatre; hunting rites emphasize script and drama.

I think drama as it developed in ancient China, Japan, Korea, India, America, and Greece derived from circumpolar hunting cultures (the remnants of which still exist in Siberia and in pockets throughout the Americas) that also developed shamanism. These cultures very early associated hunting-killing, fertility, animality, curing, spirit-possession, and crisis initiation through man-made ordeals. Most significantly, they translated strategic, futuristic hunting behavior into strategic, futuristic language: story-telling. This story-telling was done not merely through words but through songs, chants, dances, drumming, and “settings” (such as the caves). Ultimately, drama arose as a playful combination of strategic behaviors.

I don’t speak of Africa because I know little about Africa. But if I’m right, then African drama will also be associated with hunting. As for Australian, Melanesian, and Polynesian cultures, these deserve special discussion but from what I know, and what I’ve observed in New Guinea, I think my thesis will hold up. It is my belief that performance and theatre are universal, but that drama is not. I think that drama may develop independently of performance and theatre, as a special instance of performance and theatre. (All performance events have “scripts.”)

A particular difficulty arises in modern times. The world, which used to be made up of thousands of distinct cultures, is fast becoming global. The change is not merely technological; and the consequences of the change are barely known. In industrialized societies—East and West—“workshop” has developed as a way of recreating, at least temporarily, some of the security and circumstances of small, autonomous cultural groups. The workshop is a way of playing around with reality, a means of examining behavior by re-ordering, exaggerating, fragmenting, recombining, and adumbrating it. The workshop is a protected time/place where intra-group relationships may thrive without being threatened by inter-group aggression. In the workshop special gestures arise, definite sub-cultures emerge. The workshop is not restricted to theatre, it is ubiquitous. In science, it is the “experimental method,” the laboratory team, the research center, the field-work outpost. In psychotherapy, it is the “group,” the rehabilitation center, the “therapeutic community.” In living styles, it is the neighborhood, the commune, the collective. (When the workshop is repressive rather than facilitative, as in most “total institutions,” asylums, prisons, hospitals, and schools, it is the most completely abusive way possible of treating human beings.) The aim of the workshop is to construct an environment where rational, a-rational, and irrational behavior exist in balance. Or, to put it biologically, where cortical, brain-stem, motor, and instinctive operations exist in balance, and lead to expressive, symbolic, playful, ritualized, “scripted” behavior. It is my opinion that workshops are more important than most people dream of.

And if I may end on a somewhat fanciful note: I associate the workshop environment with those ancient, decorated caves that still give evidence of singing and dancing, people celebrating fertility in risky, sexy, violent, collective, playful ways.