

Points of Contact Between Anthropology and Theatre, Again

Richard Schechner

I don't want to forget that anthropology as an idea, a practice, an epistemology (of "other" cultures) began as, and in service to, both capitalist-colonial expansion and aggressive Christian missionaryism. The colonial powers and corporations had to "know" the "natives" they were ruling and exploiting; and the churches wanted to expand their belief-reach, perhaps to save souls, but more pertinently to transform populations from "strange" (*verfremdung*, in Brecht's sense) to "familiar," the better to manage. This is not to deny that many, if not most, individual anthropologists were "good people," sympathetic to those they were investigating, determined to "improve" their standards of living, and so on. It was not the first time, nor the last, that good soldiers were enlisted in a bad war.

There are points of contact linking anthropology to theatre.¹ Performance is a broad spectrum of actions including but far surpassing the performing arts. The spectrum ranges from secular and sacred rituals, play, and arts to politics, sports, popular entertainments, business, government, medicine, and the activities of everyday life. In what ways are acting, shamanizing, marketing, ruling, competing, healing, and presenting ourselves socially and personally expressions of the same process? What is this process? It is imagination, the human ability to pretend, the human capacity to be self and other simultaneously, to exist in the here and now as well as in the enormously diverse possibilities of wherever, whenever, and whomever.

¹A version of this essay, called "Points of Contact Between Anthropological and Theatrical Thought," was the first chapter of my pointedly titled *Between Theatre and Anthropology* (1985: 3-33). Published two years after Victor Turner's death, I wanted "between" to announce my intention of further extending Turner's ideas about liminality into the then almost-brand-new field of Performance Studies whose first academic department had come into existence at New York University in 1980. I revised the essay for my *Performed Imaginaries* (2015: 151-182), where it was the last chapter. At hand, is still another version.

The six "points of contact" discussed in *Between Theatre and Anthropology* were:

1. Transformation of being and/or consciousness
2. Intensity of performance
3. Audience-performer interactions
4. The whole performance sequence
5. Transmission of performance knowledge
6. How are performances generated and evaluated?

These points of contact are just that: arenas of human imagination where performance theorists and practitioners hailing from the arts and anthropologists find common concerns. In this regard, anthropology is not a quantitative problem-solving "science" in the STEM sense, but a creative "art," thinking that is imaginative, that creates its objects of study by studying them, that (if you will) plays "deeply" in Clifford Geertz's sense of taking risks.²

Where do I stand today on these points of contact? Paradoxically, even with the advent of big data and algorithmic "solutions" to so many problems, the points of contact are valid. Even further, I would add three more which I think would please the Turners:

1. Embodiment. Epistemologies and practices which enact the unity of feeling, thinking, and doing. This work follows from the Turners' theories and practices of "performing ethnographies" of the 1970s-80s.³ It critiques classical "objective" scholarship and respects indigenous theory-in/as-action.

2. The sources of human culture are performative. What makes humans "different," if not unique? Upright stance and bipedal locomotion, thumb and finger dexterity, controlling fire, tool making, clothing, metaphoric language, story-telling, depicting and enacting fantasy? No single biological, behavioral, or cultural trait sets humans apart. It is the confluence of them all, the incredible diversity and complexity of the package, that marks *homo sapiens*. This package is "performativity": the ability of humans to "twice behave," to play with behavior.

² See Geertz 1972.

³ More on these later in this essay.

3. The brain as a performance site. What do trance performances, catharsis and empathy, mirror neurons, and emotional training techniques such as "rasaboxes"⁴ have in common? To what degree can the brain be "tuned" by rhythm, music, dance, and song? This was the bundle of ideas Victor Turner was exploring in "Body, Brain, and Culture."⁵

Twice-behaved behavior is restored behavior⁶: a broad spectrum of entertainments, arts, rituals, politics, economics, and person to-person interactions. Everything and anything can be studied "as" performance.

Let me now look in a little more at each of the new points of contact.

Embodiment. Experience as the basis of indigenous knowledge that is shared through performing. Magnat begins her 2011 essay, "Conducting Embodied Research at the Intersection of Performance Studies, Experimental Ethnography, and Indigenous Methodologies":

Embodiment, lived experience and intersubjectivity are key to experimental approaches articulated at the intersection of performance and ethnography. [...] Since embodied experience eludes and possibly exceeds cognitive control, accounting for its destabilizing function within the research process potentially endangers dominant conceptions of knowledge upon which the legitimacy of academic discourses so crucially depends (2011: 213).

Magnat demands that we take seriously not only the world views but the epistemologies-methodologies of "indigenous" peoples. As Manulani Aluli Meyer writes: "knowing is

⁴ Rasaboxes is a performer training technique I developed in the 1990s -- and which is practiced and further developed today. Rasaboxes combines South Asian and Western theories and practices. See Mee 2014 and Bowditch, Cole, and Minnick 2020 (forthcoming). I will discuss rasaboxes later in this essay.

⁵ See Turner, Victor 1983.

⁶ I have developed the notion of "restored behavior" in several essays, most particularly in "Restoration of Behavior" in *Between Theater and Anthropology* (35-116).

embodied and in union with cognition. [...] Genuine knowledge must be experienced directly" (2008: 224).

This "genuine knowledge" is the indigenous knowledge that Candomblé and Capoeira practitioners -- and the practitioners of 100s of other kinds of performances all around the world -- experience. Is this kind of knowledge any less "genuine" than what a person learns via books, lectures, classroom study, or over the internet? And who is "indigenous"? We are each and all "indigenous" to someone else. It used to be that everyone not-Western, not following the dictates of the Enlightenment, were outside the pale of knowledge. Knowledge itself was deemed to be Western. This conclusion went hand-in-glove with the work of missionaries, colonialists, and the plyers of global trade -- including especially the massive slave trade that brought millions from Africa to the Western Hemisphere. The enslaved brought their cultures with them. Almost from the very start of the invasion-settlement of the Western Hemisphere, the European was infused on the one side by African practices and on the other by Native American theories and practices.

Over time some non-Western literate cultures -- of India, China, and Japan especially, -- were admitted to the superior "Club of Us" while cultures whose knowledge was expressed via orature⁷, shamanizing, music, dance, costume, masks, and visual arts were relegated to the "Club of Not Yet." With globalization -- a circulation of ideas, objects, people, and performances -- it is no longer feasible to separate out these clubs. Especially in the world of arts where people working in/from New York or Sao Paulo or Tokyo or Shanghai or Dubai or Lagos or Capetown ... and on through a very long list the notion of "native" or "indigenous" as distinct from "cultivated" or "cosmopolitan" has evaporated along with notions of "wild" or "wilderness." All that's left are reserves, parks, and zoos. To put it bluntly, "nature" no longer exists on its own; it is dependent on homo sapiens.

In all this dispersal of the indigenous, of embodied knowledge, a profound collaboration between performative and anthropological thought is entrained. But, for all that, is knowledge really equal? Anthropology still, and

⁷To better understand "orature," see Ngugi wa Thiong'o 1998 and 2007.

correctly in my opinion, depends on a positivist discourse. And where do we house the "truths" of religions ranging from the Big Five (Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, and Judaism) to the myriad other belief systems accounting for the physical and spirit worlds? Not to mention Creationists, Scientologists, Wiccans, and hundreds of other -- what shall I call them -- "cults"? Is the knowledge danced at a Candomblé terreiro to be given equal weight to the existence of the Higgs boson, "a long-sought particle that is a key to understanding why elementary particles have mass and indeed to the existence of diversity and life in the universe"?⁸ Is the Large Hadron Collider's work and discovery less mysterious than the trance dancing of Shango or the other orixa? In terms of people's daily lives, which has more effect?

Edith Turner continued this work. Near the end of her 2012 book, *Communitas: The Anthropology of Collective Joy*, she writes:

Communitas--what is it? [...] Communitas is activity, not an object or state. Therefore, the only way to catch [communitas is] in the middle of its elusive activity, in process. [...] It is the *space between things* that makes communitas happen (2012: 220-21).

Is this kind work "objective" scholarship? Does objective scholarship exist? Ought it exist?

The sources of human culture are performative. Early homo sapiens -- anatomically modern humans -- arrived in Western Europe about 50,000 years BP replacing Neandertals but also interacting and even inter-breeding with them. These modern humans were not farmers or villagers; they were hunter-gatherers. Their bands didn't stay rooted in one spot, but neither did they wander aimlessly. Each band had its own circuit: a more or less fixed route through time/space. This route was determined by seasonal vegetation and the movement of prey. Ceremonial centers were used over and over for vast stretches of time, millennia. Cave art evidences these centers, but maybe there were also fresh-air sites, long obliterated. The cultural level of these early modern Europeans -- at least in terms of painting and sculpting -- was very high: the masterpieces of the caves of Southwest Europe and the

⁸New York Times, July 4, 2012.

mobile art of Eurasia are testimony enough. Cave art from far back exists in many parts of the world. In fact, the earliest known depictions are from Indonesia.⁹

Of course, this art was not objects-to-be-collected-and-sold or "art for art's sake." The cave art, footprints of adolescents moving in a circular pattern, and bone flutes are the remains of what were complex ceremonial-ritual practices. That the art were part of or accompanied performances and was not designed for relaxed viewing as in museums or art galleries is clear from what the caves were: pitch-dark except for animal-oil lamps and torches; some are cold and wet; much of the art is difficult to access, made in cramped, out of the way spaces -- almost as if part of the "message" is the effort, almost ordeal, necessary to come face-to-face with the representations.

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 [neither probably there in paleolithic times]; and next a crawl through claustrophobic 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 (La Barre 1972: 397).

Certainly, this is not the Louvre, or any venue where people stand back and admire works.

And, don't forget, there was a lot more going on in the caves than image-making. The shamans were performers. They danced; they initiated the youths whose footprints remain on cave floors. No doubt people sang stories through long dark nights. As Homer reminds us: "These nights are endless, and a man can sleep through them, or he can enjoy listening to stories" (*The Odyssey* XV, 392-3). The ability to story-tell -- to weave a single narrative fabric of truths, lies, and fantasies -- is one of humankind's most impressive and unique accomplishments. Part of the great cultural leap forward of the paleolithic was the integration of story-telling, dancing, and singing. This performative was transferred from one event to another: the style, if not the substance, of the

⁹See Price 2019.

narrations, choreographies, melodies, and rhythms, were known by makers and partakers. Were there any spectators as such? The performances were taught by one group, or shaman-artist, to the next. As the word tradition denotes, performance knowledge was passed on by means of cultural trade.

Furthermore, there were scripts -- not something carved in stone or inscribed on parchment, but embodied "known" scenarios that pre-and-post-dated every particular enactment: a what to do and a way to do it. Each specific evanescent performance kept and transmitted the script which was more important than any single re-presentation. The scripts are performance knowledge, life-sustaining knowledge; knowledge that later would be called "sacred." And, when so, the performances would be called "rituals." But at first there were no such categories. People did these things for many reasons, including entertainment, which must not be thought of disparagingly. Keeping the scripts intact guaranteed the efficacy of the rites; abandoning the scripts endangered the cultural continuity of the group. In other words, in paleolithic ritual performance, as today, doing is a manifestation more than a representation. At least some of the caves were theatres. We probably will never know with certainty what the functions of the cave art were. Indeed, the functions may have changed over time. Some caves were in use for millennia.

Mostly scholars focus on the visuals, the paintings and sculptings, plus some enigmatic dots and other signs and handprints, are what survives. But what *happened* in the caves is as important -- if we can find it out -- then the visual traces. I believe that what actually grabbed people at the time was experiential: the sounds and movements enacted within caves, probably with an emphasis on the sounds. As John Pfeiffer writes:

caves are wonderful places for acoustic as well as visual effects. Underground ceremonies must have been designed to take advantage of and shatter the silence as well as the darkness, to bombard the ear as well as the eye with a variety of sensations planned to arouse and inform. [...] Imagine the sound of bullroarers nearby in an underground labyrinth, the sound of flutes rising high and clear as a human cry or a bird from place impossible to locate (1982: 183).

In 2009, a bone five-finger hole flute dated 35k BP was discovered in Hohle Fels, Germany; in 2012, flutes from the nearby Geissenkosterle cave were dated to 42-43k BP. Pfeiffer notes that:

archeologists digging at a site on a tributary of the Dnieper River northeast of Kiev unearthed a set of mammoth bones painted red which they believe served as percussion instruments: hip-bone xylophone, skull and shoulder blade drums, and jawbone castanets. [...] The high-stepping, bison-horned man in Trois Frères seems to be playing an instrument which has been interpreted as a pipe or musical bow (1982: 180).

Theatres are what Yann-Pierre Montelle thinks the caves were. Montelle reminds us that in Latin *cava*, meaning "cave," is etymologically related to *cavea*, the auditorium of a theatre, or the theatre itself. The link is in the sense of a "cavity" or hollow space. Montelle theorizes the continuity from the paleolithic caves to ancient theatre is not in narrative patterns but in theatre architecture. Of course, the flaw in his reasoning is that ancient theatres were outdoor open spaces, and caves are concealed, dark, "indoor" spaces. But Montelle's notion that "theatricality" -- rather than ritual, shamanism, etc. -- is what we should be looking for in the paleolithic is worth paying attention to. Montelle says the essence of theatricality is

a space providing a locale for alterity, a site in which to frame 'otherness'. Indeed, the power of transforming the habitual into a constructed otherness seems to have been with us all along and has always been a powerful (while undeniably transgressive) tool (2009: 3).

Montelle points out that this paleolithic theatricality -- though clearly present in Europe -- is seen also "in the Americas, Australia, China, India, Central Asia, [Southeast Asia], and the Middle East. This global phenomenon helps confirm the emergence and ubiquity of theatricality on a global scale" (2009: 4).

The brain as a performance site. Recent studies of the brain -- supported by fMRI imaging, lead in two contradictory directions. First:

the case is being made for the biological basis of a wide range of behaviors and social problems once thought to be moral or psychological matters. In the

law, neuroscientific knowledge is being presented as a challenge to notions of free will and personal responsibility, and biologized notions of morality are being offered through the use of fMRI in courtroom settings. In evolutionary psychology the brain has been marshaled to support conservative ideas about social roles (Pitts-Taylor 2010:636).

On the other hand:

[...] there is also much public excitement about brain plasticity. Brain plasticity or neuroplasticity refers to the capacity of the brain to modify itself in response to changes in its functioning or environment (Pitts-Taylor 2010: 636).

Not so long ago it was thought that the brain is "set" early in life; that neural learning was an early-life phenomenon. But now scientists know that the brain changes throughout life. Not only does it deteriorate, as in Alzheimer's and similar dementias, but, more importantly for what I am discussing, new neurons are created, new synaptic connections made, and older connections weakened or strengthened. In other words, the brain can be trained throughout life. Such training can proceed "automatically" or in response to conscious control. A brain able to learn and rewire itself challenges biological reductionism. "The plastic brain is a situated brain, culturally, biologically and socially. [...] Each brain responds to its environment and also to its own workings over the lifespan" (Pitts-Taylor 2010: 637).

To date, most neural experiments and brain studies deal with the "brain in the head," what is encased in the skull. But there is also a very important second brain, a "brain the belly." This brain is the enteric nervous system (ENS). The ENS is about 400 million neurons -- about the same number as in the spinal cord -- lining the esophagus, stomach, small and large intestines, pancreas, gallbladder, and biliary tree; the nerves within the muscles of the gut's wall; and the nerve fibers that connect these neurons to each other. The ENS operates more or less independently from the brain to which it is linked by the vagus nerve. Vagus -- meaning wandering (as in vagrant) -- goes from the brain stem through the neck, thorax, and digestive system affecting breathing, digestion, and heart beat. About 90% of the vagus nerve sends messages from the ENS to the brain

informing the brain about what's going on "down there." About 10% of the vagus nerve sends regulatory messages from the brain back to the belly (and other organs affected by the vagus). The ENS is a complex neuron network able to act independently, learn, remember, and, as the saying goes, produce gut feelings (See Blakeslee 1996:C1).

I learned about the ENS in relation to developing rasaboxes, a psychophysical training method I devised that links Sanskrit performance theory as expounded in the *Natyasastra*, a manual of theatre training from about 2000 years ago, to modern theatre practice, and my own work in actor training. The rasabox work organically linked the ENS, Asian martial arts, and actor training. Rasa theory in *Natyasastra* states that aesthetic experience -- both from the performer's and the partakers' experience -- is of tasting and sharing the flavor, the "juice" (rasa), of what is performed. Aesthetic experience is not so much visual as it is visceral. The Asian martial arts speak often and in detail about the region between the pubic bone and the navel as the center of the body's energy. My rasaboxes work concentrated on exploring the connections between these realms of knowledge.

I wrote to Michael Gershon, a leading expert on the ENS (see Gershon 1998). He replied:

Thank you for your letter. You touch a bit of raw nerve. You are certainly correct in that we in the West who consider ourselves "hard" scientists have not taken Eastern thought very seriously. The problem with a great deal of Eastern thought is that it is not based on documentable observation. You cannot quantify ideas about strong feelings or deep power. We therefore, either ignore Eastern ideas about the navel, or take them as metaphors, which are not very different from our own metaphors about "gut feelings". On the other hand, I have recently become aware of quantifiable research that establishes, without question, that vagus nerve stimulation can be used to treat epilepsy and depression. Vagus nerve stimulation also improves learning and memory. Vagus nerve stimulation is something physicians do and is not natural, but 90% of the vagus carries ascending information from the gut to the brain. It is thus possible that vagus nerve stimulation mimics natural stimulation of the vagus nerve by the "second brain".

[...] In short, I now take the possibility that the gut affects emotions very seriously.

Rasabox training explores the deep empathy confirmed by the observation of "mirror neurons": when someone performs an action and/or feels an emotion, specific neurons fire -- and when spectators watch performances in life, dance, theatre, film, etc. -- the *same neurons* fire in the observers' brain as in the performers. In other words, spectators perform in their imagination along with the performers they observe. This is true not only visually, but with regard to all the senses. In fact, smell and taste are more powerful and "primal" than sight and hearing in this regard. It all goes to demonstrate that emotions are physical, embodied, and contagious. I do not have the space here to go into detail about rasaboxes training. The important point is that both brains -- the one in the head, the other in the belly, can be trained. What's needed are more systematic efforts at enhancing and enlarging the communication between the two neuronal systems -- and further explorations of our complicated neuronal networks connecting people to each other. Our bodies do not end with our skin but extend beyond into the brains of others.

Where does anthropology and performance come in? If the brain is plastic, if it is shaped by the environment and can be trained, then we can envision new ways of understanding how culture actually "inhabits" the brain. Many traditional rituals -- especially those using trance -- operate performatively by means of repetition and rhythm (drumming, singing, dancing). The psychotropic effects of trance are well known.¹⁰ The paradox of trance is that for those who know or have learned how, entry into trance is willed and controlled; but once a person is "in" trance, the expected or normative trance behavior takes over. The gateways to trance -- whirling, singing, meditating: there multitudinous many ways to induce trance -- are consciously controlled; but once in trance, a mind-brain state similar to that of dream-sleep takes over. Trance may be thought of

¹⁰See Rouget 1985; Castillo 1995; Kawai, Honda, Manabu et al. 2001; Oohashi, Tsutomo; Kawai, Norie; et al. 2002; Schmidt and Huskinson 2010.

as a kind of "lucid dreaming," dreaming where the dreamer to some degree controls the trajectory of the dream. As Richard Castillo notes:

Parallel to the example of sleep, I suggest that trance is a behavior based on a narrowed focus of attention, which with repeated experience will result in its own unique tuning of the CNS [central nervous system] with its own related psychophysical characteristics contrasting to those which sustain the usual experience of consciousness, and, thus, the environment and the self. I suggest this process can be intentional and based on culture-based behavioral norms such as religious practices. I further suggest that through repeated behavior, alternative neural networks can be strengthened, extended with new learning and associations (so-called "state dependent learning"), and even (at the extreme) developed into integrated, alternative conscious entities capable of independent thought and action (dissociation) (1995:27).

Trance, of course, is performance, a physical doing, a powerful way of injecting cultural practices deep into brain structure, actually altering the brain. Obviously -- but sometimes the most powerful truths have been out there staring us in the face -- trance performing is both a cause and a result of retrained brains. Masters of trance -- shamans, Candomblé performers, and other traditional performers, and some artists -- have trained their bodybrains using traditional methods. It is time now to investigate and characterize these methods -- to treat them as embodied knowledges. The old-fashioned opposition between "rational" and "instinctual" thought/action needs to be discarded in favor of holistic studies that treat master performers not as "objects of study" but as partners in research.

This approach is in harmony with rapidly developing digital technologies that are erasing what separates the "inside" from "outside," as Brian Rotman writes:

[...] artifacts, from windowed screens to hypertexts are rewiring the very brain/minds that imagined them. In this way we are facilitating the emergence of a larger -- collectivized, distributed, pluralized -- "intelligence" by allowing ourselves to become more

"othered," more parallelist, more multi, less individualized -- able to see, think, enjoy, feel, and do more than one thing at a time (Rotman 2000: 74).

As you might expect, there is a counter-narrative to this neuro-triumphalism. The ultimately flexible and trainable brain can also be regarded as a neo-liberal post-Fordist value added object: "the ultimate biological resource [...] the brain is seen as a smarter, better version of any man-made high tech tool (Pitts-Taylor 2010: 642). As in the industrial epoch when bio-mechanics translated people into machines, in our digital epoch, computers and brains converge. In a time when everything biological is for sale -- organs, blood, human eggs, genes, etc. -- Catherine Waldby's (2000) "biovalue" comes into play. The flexibility without limits of the trained -- and retrained -- brain is equivalent to outsourcing, breaking up what once were unified made-to-order or at least manufactured all in one place things into the widely dispersed multi-focused processes of post-Fordism.

In my opinion, both possibilities are actualities. The brain is trainable, and performance in its broadest sense, including indigenous methodologies, are excellent examples of such training as well as models for how-to-do-it; what is done with this knowledge is another question.

The deep fetches evidenced by paleolithic performances are what Jerzy Grotowski researched during his Art as Vehicle phase from 1986 to his death in 1999. This work continues today guided by Thomas Richards and Mario Biagini of the Grotowski Workcenter in Pontedera, Italy. As Dominika Laster writes, "Grotowski examined the role of the body in the transmission of transgenerational collective memory" (2016: 21). In Grotowski's words (as quoted by Laster):

Memories are always physical reactions. It is our skin which has not forgotten, our eyes which have not forgotten. What we have heard can still resound within us (2016: 21-22).

It is not that the body remembers. The body itself is memory. That which as to be done is the unblocking of body-memory" (2016: 25).

Grotowski devised extremely detailed and precise ways of "unblocking" body-memory. He sought collective memory in Haitian Vodou¹¹, Islamic *dhikr*, and the Baul songs of Bengal. He guided Richards -- whose grandfather was Jamaican -- toward his Caribbean roots. Richards himself describes the process:

What I did was to enter a process of questioning. I remember through action. It is an approach that can lead to an alive doing, because I am not trying to produce an effect, a result -- also I am not trying to reproduce the effect of yesterday. [...] Grotowski often said: "You need to be *looking for*." To keep looking for. Even when you are finding keep looking for (in Laster 2012: 215-16).

Richards looked in Afro-Haitian vibratory songs. Sometimes he walks holding a stick, a very old -- an ancient -- man; his voice is both deeply resonant and limpidly fluid.

Grotowski's life-work, if it can be summarized, is parallel to what anthropologists -- in their own way, with their own methodologies -- seek. As Laster notes:

Grotowski's lifelong work was deeply engaged in the potentialities of performance as a form of embodied transmission. In attempting to decode the performative artifacts of ancient ritual practice, Grotowski sought to penetrate the embodied knowledge of ancestral traditions connected with precise structures, or yantra, which facilitate a method of deep knowing. Grotowski sought to revalorize oral and embodied transmission (2016: 36).

¹¹Grotowski's interest in Haitian vibratory songs is part of a fascinating network of people and practices. One aspect of this network are the Polish soldiers who were part of a force dispatched by Napoleon to Haiti in 1802 to suppress the revolution of the slaves. The campaign failed; Haiti won independence in 1804. Some Poles joined the revolution and in gratitude were offered Haitian citizenship. About 240 accepted and their descendants are known today as Polone-Ayisyens. In 1980, Grotowski came to Haiti in search of possible relatives. He invited one man, Amon Fremon, a houngan (Voodoo priest), to Poland for the Theatre of Sources. For more on Grotowski's Haitian connection, see Kolankiewicz 2012.

Respecting oral tradition, Grotowski walked the walk. Grotowski wrote very little. He spoke and we listened. He insisted that people not audio-record or even take notes at his lectures. Grotowski explained that "note-taking [...] prevents participants from being fully present and attentive to the moment" (Laster 2016: 36). Zen.

This kind of work connects to the brain's ability to mirror and project. As James K. Rilling writes:

Another of the remarkable aspects of human cognition is our ability to project ourselves into other times and places so that we are not limited to thinking about the immediate here and now. In other words, we can simulate alternative worlds that are separate from the one being directly experienced. We can project ourselves into the past to remember things that have happened to us, into the future to formulate and rehearse plans, and even into the minds of others to understand their mental states. How do they feel? What do they know? (Rilling 2008: 22).

Grotowski believed that in addition to this "horizontal ability" to connect with others was also a "vertical ability" to connect with the past and with "higher powers." I do not share Grotowski's belief in higher powers, or even know exactly what he meant: he was not an orthodoxly religious man. But I do respond to his sense -- shared by tragedians of several cultures that human life is to some degree "shaped" by gods, genes, history, ecology, other human beings -- who knows for sure?

Here I end, not conclude. What performance does is create worlds or -- if you accept at face value what masters of sacred ceremonies aver -- performance gains admittance to other worlds and interactive relations both with other people and with nonhuman beings. Is what physicists do at CERN (Conseil Européen pour la Recherche Nucléaire) less mysterious than the trance dancing of Candomble's Shango or the other orixa? The dancers I experienced near Rio in July 2012 located their Higgs boson. Isn't our job as anthropologists and artists -- as human beings with big brains -- to foster actual and respectful communication between those possessed by the orixas and those possessed by the Large Hadron Collider?

After the End

Ultimately, for me, the strongest "point of contact" is personal: my relationship with Victor Turner and with Edith Turner from 1977 to Vic's death in 1983 and Edie's in 2016. From 1977 to 1982, Victor and I collaborated on four conferences and one 12 day workshop delving into performance. "Cultural Frames and Reflections: Ritual, Drama and Spectacle" (August 27-September 6, 1977, Burg Wartenstein, Austria) was my first extended face-to-face work with Turner. The second -- a workshop on ritual and theatre (June 12-23, 1978, The Performing Garage, New York) -- was a course offered by the Tisch School of the Arts, New York University. The third was a conference on Yaqui Ritual and Performance (November 19-24 1981 at New Pascua and the Oracle Conference Center, Arizona); the fourth a conference on Contemporary Japanese Theatre (May 19-24 1982, The Japan Society, New York). The fifth, the culmination of the series, was the International Symposium on Theatre and Ritual (August 23-September 1 1982, at several locations in New York). The goal of these conferences was fully articulated only after they were history:

was to approach the genres of theatre, dance, music, sports, and ritual as a single, coherent group as *performance*. The underlying question became whether or not the same methodological tools and approaches would be used to understand a noh drama, a football game, a Yaqui deer dance, a Broadway musical, a Roman Catholic Mass, an Umbanda curing ritual, a Yoruba masked dance, and a postmodern experimental performance? We knew that very few people qualified as "comparative performatologists" and so the basic question would have to be dealt with genre by genre, culture by culture. We hoped that the conferences would lay the groundwork for proposing general principles or, as Turner called them, "universals of performance"¹² (Schechner and Appel 1990: 3).

¹² Turner lectured on "universals of performance" at Smith College in 1982. After his death, the lecture was published as the Epilogue of his *On the Edge of the Bush* (1985), edited by Edith Turner. "Are There Universals of Performance in Myth, Ritual, and Drama?" synthesizes much of the work Turner and I explored together.

Only Turner and I were at all five, but several others attended more than one: Lita Osmundsen¹³ (4), Edith Turner (3), Barbara Myerhoff¹⁴ (3), Jerome Rothenberg¹⁵ (2), Phillip Zarrilli¹⁶ (2), Herbert Blau¹⁷ (2), Paul Bouissac¹⁸ (2), and Willa Appel¹⁹ (2). A total of 71 scholars and artists plus

¹³ The Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research sponsored these meetings, except for the 1978 workshop which was under the auspices of NYU. Lita Osmundsen (1926-1998) of the Foundation was instrumental to the convening of the conferences and therefore to the development of performance studies.

¹⁴ A very close friend and colleague of Victor Turner, anthropologist Myerhoff's (1935-1985) books include *The Peyote Hunt* (1974) and *Number Our Days* (1978). She won an Academy Award in 1977 for Documentary Short Subject for the film of *Number Our Days*.

¹⁵ Jerome Rothenberg (b. 1931) is a poet, performer, and anthologist whose work connects the avantgarde with tribal poetics, especially that of Native North Americans. His books include *Technicians of the Sacred* (1968), *Shaking the Pumpkin* (1972, 2014), *Symposium of the Whole* (1983), and *Poetics & Polemics 1980-2005* (2008).

¹⁶ Phillip Zarrilli (b. 1947) is a performance theorist and theatre director. His books include: *The Kathakali Complex* (1984), *The Psychophysical Actor at Work* (2012), and *Toward a Phenomenology of Acting* (2019).

¹⁷ Herbert Blau (1926-2013) was a performance scholar, theatre director, and professor. He was co-founder of the pioneering San Francisco Actors' Workshop, co-director of the Repertory Theatre of Lincoln Center, Dean of Theatre and Dance at the California Institute of the Arts, and founder of KRAKEN, an experimental theatre. His books include: *The Impossible Theatre* (1964), *Take Up the Bodies* (1982), *The Audience* (1990), *To All Appearances: Ideology and Performance* (1992), and *As If: An Autobiography* (2011).

¹⁸ Paul Bouissac (b. 1934) is a semiotician whose specialty is circus. His books include: *Circus and Culture* (1976), *Semiotics at the Circus* (2010), and *The Semiotics of Clowns and Clowning Rituals of Transgression and the Theory of Laughter* (2015).

¹⁹ Willa Appel (b1946) worked closely with Victor Turner and me in developing the program for the Arizona and New York conferences. She and I co-edited *By Means of Performance* 1990, a continuation of the work of the 1981 and 1982 conferences. Appel is the author of *Cults in America* 1985.

27 students in the NYU workshop participated, a total of 98 people. Most of the sessions were closed to the public, but a few were open and well attended. To my knowledge, two books and several articles have dealt with these conferences and workshop.²⁰

Turner and I first met face-to-face after he phoned me in the spring of 1977. "I am in New York to introduce a lecture by Clifford Geertz at Columbia," Turner said. "Why not you and I go out for a beer after?" Knowing Turner's writing, I was eager to meet him. When we did, what should have been a 45 minute getting-to-know-you chat turned into a 3+ hour seminar-of-two. Really, we were made for each other: inquisitive, good sense of humor, wide-ranging interests, not afraid to go out on a limb, rampant with appetites. And, of course, performance. What Vic called "process" I called performance. It was social drama, liminal-liminoid, communitas, ritual, and more. Vic's mother was an actress; theatre was in his upbringing. He had an urgent belief in the efficacy of human enactment; and a delight in it also. At that first meeting, Vic asked me to participate in the Wenner-Gren Symposium on Cultural Frames, etc. From then till his all-too-soon death in 1983, Vic and I were in continuous contact. Through Vic I met his "star group" of anthropologists and culture-workers, Edith Turner, Barbara Myerhoff, Barbara Babcock, John MacAloon, and Paul Bouissac, among a group of about 25. Here I want to share a few notes and recollections. First, of the 1978 two week summer workshop convened at my theatre, The Performing Garage (home of The Performance Group, which I founded) and sponsored by the School of the Arts²¹, New York University.

The workshop brought together 27 graduate students, professors, performers, and devisers of performances to work with the Turners, Alexander Alland, Erving Goffman

Currently, she is the Executive Director of the New York Structural Biology Center.

²⁰ Papers from the 1977 Burg Wartenstein Symposium formed the basis for MacAloon 1984; Victor Turner 1979 deals with aspects of the 1978 NYU workshop; Victor and Edith Turner 1982 continues the discussion of "performing ethnography"; the 1981 and 1982 conferences are the subject of Schechner and Appel 1990.

²¹ After a gift from Lawrence A. and Preston Robert Tisch, renamed in 1982 the Tisch School of the Arts.

(for a few days, three I think), and me. The modus operandi of the workshop was interaction. We talked, performed, partied (some), took a weekend trip to Baltimore for a theatre festival, and dove deep into each other's ideas and felt experiences, past and present. The key information in the workshop's announcement was:

This is an intensive workshop -- two sessions daily, 5 days per week with all faculty participating in most of the sessions so that there will be maximum interaction among faculty and among faculty and students. The workshop will explore the interface between ritual and theatre. [...] The aim of the workshop is to shatter boundaries between performance and social sciences and between art and cognitive studies. [...] participants will be selected to ensure a balance between artists, scholars and scientists.

The group of 16 women and 11 men fulfilled that mix; the individual sessions were lively, sometimes moving, often emotionally and intellectually risky. In a letter I wrote to the three instructors on 1 May 1978, I followed Vic's lead for the program:

Victor suggested the following skeletal scheme for our workshop [...] and I think it's a good idea, and so I pass it on for your acceptance, revision, transformation:

1. Students work in teams (2 or 3) and these teams are [...] interdisciplinary. Each team takes a classic ethnography -- either from nonWestern or Western (i.e., urban) culture, and they transpose [...] this data into a theatrical script. They discuss the staging, costuming, preparations, role playing. In fact, they tell how they would stage this event if they were to stage it and/or film it. [...] And/or all social events may be, as Goffman says, understood as performances. [...]

2. Sometime during the 2 weeks each of us presents our own most current work. [...]

3. Some field work take [sic] into account the unique environment of NY: in the summer especially the parks are full of various street entertainers; certain neighborhoods have strong personalities as total

environments: Times Square, Little Italy, Chinatown, West Village, etc. Also that we see several performances of a more formal kind in theatres, nite-spots [...], discos.

I realize that this is a lot to cover in 2 weeks, but at the same time from the applications [...] we will have a rich diversity of students. [...] Should be a good show.

It certainly was that, and a lot more.

I made more than 50 pages of notes.²² These tell me of vigorous discussions among Turner, Goffman, Alland, and I - especially during the days Goffman was there. Later in the workshop Vic and Edie devised their first "performed ethnography," described in detail in Victor's 1979 article (so I won't say anything about it here)²³.

From my notes, let me give you a precious three of Vic's remarks, out of context but in character:

Every society creates a pod where ludic activity goes on, is privileged to go on. A society that doesn't cut out of itself a piece of itself - where every part of itself can be taken out and examined - this society is likely to die.

In Africa, a great performance by a great performer -- and each dancer is good at a particular dance -- elicits power. In the West, it is enough that the ceremony be performed -- even a decrepit priest can do it. But in Africa, the performance itself elicits power.

The great archesymbol of the ineffable is to destroy all that is constructed. It's who can transgress superbly. When Julius Erving goes up in the air with

²² Since the 1950s, I've written and drawn in notebooks. The 1978 NYU workshop is described in Notebook 59, February-August 1978.

²³ See Turner, Victor 1979 for a detailed account.

his back to the basket -- what makes that kind of arc?
What makes a superstar?

Turner was a transgressive superstar for sure. The take away, 41 years later, from that workshop is a flash of memories. Sitting in a circle on the second floor of The Performing Garage in SoHo. Participating in, evoking, and responding to Vic's ebullience, brilliance, jouissance, and appetite to go where few if any anthropologists have ventured. This in contrast to Goffman's profound skepticism and irony and Alland's academic probity. And to recall that Edie was there with Vic, coaching and coaxing, sometimes critiquing, never passive, a player.

After the NYU workshop, two more conferences. Then, in early fall 1983, Vic was struck by a massive heart attack. On December 18 that year, shortly after breakfast, a second attack killed him.²⁴ His funeral in Charlottesville, Virginia, took place on December 21, the winter solstice. Being Roman Catholic, there was a Mass and a solemn procession. Then family, friends, colleagues, and students -- about 50 people -- gathered at the Turners' Carrsbrook Drive home. In December 2019 I wrote to Vic's youngest son, Rory, asking him about the ceremony. Rory replied and passed my email on to his siblings Robert, Frederick, Alex, and Irene Wellman. Here is a composite of the Turners' response to me:

There were two funerals, the requiem Mass in the Holy Comforter Church in Charlottesville and the basement ritual based on the Ndembu chief's funeral ceremony. Roy Wagner, great anthropologist now departed [1938-2018], donned a home-made Ikishi²⁵ mask, built according to traditional specifications by Vic's students, and danced. Rory powerfully played the necessary drums. Fred's seven-year-old son Benjamin was made the Lord of Misrule, a role he played with remarkable awareness. There were many readings from

²⁴ For two moving celebrations of Victor Turner at the point of this death, see Babcock 1984 and Turner and Turner 1985.

²⁵Most probably a Makishi mask used in initiation rites. Robert Turner emailed me: "We kids used to know it as 'Ikishi', which might have been local dialect--but it corresponds to the Makishi mask that you describe" (29 December 2019).

books that Vic loved, including a passage from the final chapter of *The Lord of the Rings* that brought many of us to tears.

Two years later, I [Robert], Edie, and Rene (with Rene's daughter Rose and Fred's son Daniel) came to Scotland with Vic's ashes, and we made the complicated journey to the island of Barra in the Outer Hebrides, a place Vic regarded as our family's ancestral home. We climbed with some effort to the peak of its mountain, Heaval, in high winds, mist and rain, and gave Vic's ashes to the wind and heather, as Edie knew Vic would have wanted. I scratched Vic's initials and dates deeply with a stone into the lid of the container that had held the ashes, and buried it on the peak of Heaval as a memorial for him. As we descended the mountain the clouds suddenly lifted, and we could see the peak clearly where we had laid the old man to rest.

My own memories of the ceremony in the Turner home are of an Ndembu seclusion hut, built by I don't know whom, but definitely supervised by Edie. She went into the hut and we collectively performed the rite for the passing of a headman. I could hear Edie weeping, wailing, suffering her enormous loss. Outside, people were telling jokes, singing, dancing, describing Vic, enticing Edie to step from her isolation and rejoin her community. To transform mourning into celebration; to combine the two; to enact the ritual process. Wife of 40 years, mother of five, anthropologist and now widow, Edie brought herself and the Victor she both lost and incorporated from the hut back into the world.

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