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“Glory, the Grape”:
Investigating Theatre, Intoxication, and Theatrical Intoxication

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A departmental senior thesis submitted to the Department of Speech and
Drama at Trinity University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
graduation with departmental honors.

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Chloë Rae Edmonson

*My Jamaican vacation's gonna start right here
If the phone's for me you can tell 'em I just sailed away and...
Pour me something tall and strong
Make it a hurricane
Before I go insane
It's only half past 12
But, I don't care
It's 5 o'clock somewhere¹*

– Jimmy Buffet, “Five o’clock somewhere”

I. INTRODUCTION

I walk down a dark stairwell towards the candle-lit wine cellar. Inside, there are already a half dozen masked audience members looking around. Two suited actors stand behind a bar – one portly man and his sidekick. The larger man wears a dingy pinstriped vest, a gold pocket watch glinting from the pocket, while his balding sidekick wears a monocle. They lean toward each other and speak in low whispers as I try to eavesdrop. Hardly aware of the audience members around them, the performers pour blood-red wine into three goblets and arrange them on a tarnished silver tray. Although I have had nothing to drink myself, I begin to feel drunk with the excitement of the experience: no other play had ever piqued my interest on such an interactive level. Sensing my gaze, the portly man pivots toward me and commands my eye contact.

Well, I think, He's caught me.

Sure enough, the man picks up the tray and crosses toward my corner of the cellar. Before me, he slides the goblets around like a magician performing a trick. As he does this, I am drawn further in to the performance as I try to resist being disoriented by his mind games. One, two, then three. Three, one, two. Two, one...Eventually, I lose track of which is which. He extends the tray toward me.

“Choose wisely,” he booms, offering the goblets. I take the goblet most conveniently within reach. Then, I linger awkwardly with my libation in hand.

“Drink,” he orders. I do, thinking I could benefit from one. It’s red wine: woody, bitter, not too strong. After finishing, I place my glass back on the tray with a *tink*. After he returns the tray to the bar and wipes his hands on his vest, the performer re-focuses on me.

“One of those,” he grins, “was poisoned.”

A feeling of dread sets in, which embarrasses me. *This isn’t real*, I tell myself, but I am not fully convinced. This experience ignores the usual separation between performer and observer, which in turn makes it harder for me to separate reality and theatricality. Am I drunk, poisoned, or just imagining things? One thing is certain: the interaction leaves me reeling with questions about the relationship of theatre to intoxication.

This actor’s “hospitable” gesture extended drama into reality through a distorted, Eucharistic ritual – with the wine acting as a link between the performer and me. It was one of several personal encounters I had while attending Punchdrunk Theatre Company’s 2007 performance of *The Masque of the Red Death* at the Battersea Arts Center, London.² The plot was a web of Edgar Allan Poe stories; while none of the tales played out from beginning to end, the combination of the stories created an ambience of Poe-ish terror. The performance space – reeking of cloves and old linen – was an old theatre-turned-mansion, honeycombed with rooms and hidden chambers containing wisps of the author’s lore. My theatrical experience in the wine cellar, evocative of *The Cask of Amontillado*, penetrated my own corporeality – a feat less attainable by the conventions of proscenium theatre. I was a participant within the illusion *and* the reality of the Punchdrunk production. Leaving the performance warehouse, my heart beat loudly in my chest, my adrenaline pumped, and I was even a little *drunk* from the wine I had ingested. During this experience, I felt more intoxicated by theatre than ever before. The

extreme nature of the Punchdrunk experience – almost like a haunted house in intensity – brought to mind the relationship of intoxication to theatre in less “intense” productions. Can naturalistic theatre be intoxicating in some fashion? What about highly ritualized theater, such as Greek tragedy? This thesis concludes that theatre, at its essence, has the ability to intoxicate. Theatre and intoxication, as we shall see, share many of the same transformative abilities.

For the purpose of this thesis, then, the term *intoxication* shall refer to (1) the physiological state of being drunk on alcohol or the state of frenzy induced by Dionysus, god of wine and theatre and (2) the transformed mental state of participating wholly, as an audience member, in a theatrical performance. By merging both of these meanings – physical drunkenness and theatrical intoxication – into one term, the main argument of this thesis is demonstrated: that intoxication and theatre are essentially linked.

Experiential theatre like Punchdrunk’s, then, is especially equipped to intoxicate the audience, whereas traditional theatre does so in less obvious ways. Demonstrating audience participation at its most extreme – in which the actors share wine with the audience – the experience unites physical and theatrical intoxication. Yet, theatrical intoxication inhabits a wide variety of theatrical genres – from Ancient Greek tragedy to Strindbergian naturalism – in a much subtler way. This thesis explores the nature of theatrical intoxication: how it builds, what it causes, and how it subsides. To widen the scope of genres, each chapter focuses on three works at distinct revolutionary moments throughout theatre history: Euripides’ *Bacchae*, August Strindberg’s *Miss Julie*, and The Performance Group’s *Dionysus in 69*. Through the lens of these three dramatic works, the multi-functionality of theatrical intoxication is revealed.

Peripheral examples are also drawn from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, and *The Iceman Cometh* – plays which demonstrate the versatility of intoxication in drama.

The first chapter explores the build-up of theatrical intoxication – or by definition, the *party scene*. In the party scene, intoxication allows for rules to be broken and boundaries to be crossed. Gender and class roles reverse themselves; for a moment, the dramatic universe turns topsy-turvy. Erich Segal first described this phenomenon in his book *Roman Laughter* as “dramatic saturnalia,” when “those who enjoy authority and respect...are unseated and ridiculed, while the lowliest...mount to their pedestals.”³ In Euripides’ *Bacchae*, the chorus of Bacchantes crosses the boundary between performer and observer by addressing the audience directly, thereby implicating the audience in its revelries. In *Miss Julie*, a group of peasants inverts their class status and lives royally for a night by invading Julie’s estate for their own private party. The hospitable nature of *Dionysus in 69* also defies the traditional actor-audience-relationship by welcoming the audience to participate physically in the performance. Chapter one examines the rule-breaking and inversions that go on within the party scene, exploring also how the carnivalesque nature of the party intoxicates both actors and audience. The notion of the carnivalesque, coined by Russian philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin, will be explored in within the party scene.⁴

After the introduction of the party scene, chapter two delves into the sexual liberties taken by characters once they are fully intoxicated by the festivities. This chapter explains how intoxication makes sexual rule-breaking possible: characters engage in sexual acts, play with notions of their own genders, and even shed their clothing. As a convention, intoxication enables the characters to make uncharacteristic sexual decisions. Pentheus, under Dionysus’ intoxicating

power, cross-dresses; Jean and Julie, in a decision lubricated by alcohol, sleep together; in *Dionysus in 69*, the performers engage in a ritual of sex and birth. Chapter two, then, explores the sexual boundaries blurred by intoxication.

The “pleasures” of intoxication, however, cannot last forever. Once the festival atmosphere and sexuality wears off, characters and audience are often left to deal with consequences. Chapter three explains this stage of intoxication as a theatrical *hangover*—a reflection of the state of self-realization or moral regret that might occur after a real night of drunken decision-making. Agave, who kills her own son in *The Bacchae*, finds herself with his head in her hands and the burden of responsibility. Jean and Julie’s moment of weakness haunts them in the second half of *Miss Julie*, when they must decide how to cover it up. In *Dionysus in 69*, the audience snaps out of their intoxication with The Performance Group experience, spilling out into the streets of the real city. Regardless of the residual feeling after theatrical intoxication, the theatrical hangover initiates an essential realization: an awareness of a previously drunken state. This awareness synthesizes the decisions made during the party scene, allowing characters and audience to give thought to the events that were thoughtless in the making.

Working Monday through Friday

Takes up all of my time

If I can get to the weekend

Everything will work out just fine

That's when I can go crazy

That's when I can have fun

Time to be with my baby

Time to come undone

Where's the party, I want to free my soul

*Where's the party, I want to lose control*⁵

– Madonna, “Where’s the Party”

II. THE PARTY SCENE

Whether it's an ancient Greek festival for Dionysus or a college frat party, alcohol plays a major role in human culture. For example, many celebrations traditionally incorporate drinking – such as weddings, holidays, and birthday parties. Certain drinks, such as champagne on New Year's Eve, embody the celebratory mood of the holiday. We relate to these customs when we see them on stage, such as the peasant's celebratory drinking on Midsummer's Eve in August Strindberg's *Miss Julie*. According to Marvin A. Block's study of alcohol and alcoholism, drinking socially and in moderation “relieves self-consciousness, loosens the tongue, encourages congeniality, and raises our level of tolerance for the inadequacies we encounter both in others and in ourselves.”⁶ Therefore, our view of ourselves and the world around us *transforms* when we drink. We recognize this transformation on stage, too, when we see characters change significantly as they partake of alcohol.

Beyond the stage and into reality, however, a similar mental transformation occurs in an audience member when she goes to the theatre. At a play, custom dictates that she goes from her everyday mentality to a participatory, theatrical mindset. Samuel Taylor Coleridge describes this process (as applied to reading poetry) in his *Biographia Literaria* as the “willing suspension of disbelief,” or the process of trading our real-world experience for the make-believe knowledge of fiction. That way, we can engage in, without skepticism, the imaginative world of a piece. In a sense, the audience member is intoxicated by the fictional world. Just as, according to Block, we tolerate flaws in ourselves and others more easily when we drink, so do we tolerate the discrepancies between reality and fiction when we go to the theatre. The ancient Greeks, for instance, accepted the fact that the male actor playing Agave represented a woman. Aristotle

called the process of man-playing-woman *mimesis*, or representation; he believed that audiences derived pleasure from interpreting and learning from such representations.⁷ Although some philosophers oppose Coleridge's idea of willing suspension of disbelief, I argue for its essential truth as it applies to the ability of theatre and intoxication to make us forget ourselves – even if for just a moment.⁸

In theatre, as drinking increases, inhibition decreases, yielding a period of time when characters do things “out of character.” The messenger in Euripides' *Bacchae* describes this transformation of the Bacchantes: once Greek women, they change to intoxicated worshipers via the intoxication of the god Dionysus. “The women seemed honest,” the messenger says, but under Dionysus' power “they come undone.”⁹ In a social setting, many characters get together and this intoxication occurs *en masse*. For the purpose of this chapter, this phenomenon is called the “party scene.” The party scene has the particular ability to draw the audience in: while we watch a group of characters become intoxicated, we too may find ourselves intoxicated by the chaotic moment. Often, the party scene uses spectacle, dance, and noise: true to real-world revelry, these elements replicate the atmosphere of an actual party. As we suspend our disbelief, the music, movement, and chatter of a party scene excites us on an actual – and not theatrical – level.

Dionysus' Bacchantes

The original party scene has its roots in antiquity: in Dionysus and the tragic Greek chorus. As the god of wine, festival, and theatre, Dionysus' divinity is more questionable

compared to other gods in the pantheon. Born of a mortal mother, Semele, and Zeus, Dionysus was still gestating when Semele perished – her death incited by the jealous goddess, Hera. Zeus rescued the fetal Dionysus, sewing him into his thigh for the rest of his son’s gestation. Thus, when Dionysus was conceived, he bore the title “twice-born god.”¹⁰ Dionysus’ intermediacy between mortality and divinity, therefore, began at his birth. As the patron of carnal pleasures, Dionysus transverses both mortal and immortal realms. Dan Stanislawski credits Dionysus with the earthly introduction of wine as a stimulant – both to the human consciousness and the economy.¹¹ Dionysus’ connection to humanity and divinity allows him to flow between Earth and Olympus, and between consciousness and sub-consciousness. This also allows Dionysus to command the *party scene*, using his powers as wine-god to intoxicate as well as his powers as theatre-god to preside over the merry-makers. For example, Dionysus directs the Bacchantes to shed their clothing, go into nature, and to dance and sing wildly.

Dionysus’ versatility, then, makes him fit to be a god of transformation and metamorphosis. His interplay between reality and illusion mirrors the same process that plays out in theatre; in fact, Western theatre may have derived from Dionysian worship rituals. In his seminal work on dithyrambs, Arthur Pickard-Cambridge argues that, beginning with the dithyrambs – choral performances dedicated to Dionysus – the competitive tradition of Dionysian worship evolved into theatre as we know it.¹² Eventually, actors stepped out of this chorus to play specific, individual roles. The transformative process of acting became a popular entertainment and continues to be today. Friedrich Nietzsche, in *The Birth of Tragedy*, described *enchantment* as an essential element of the theatrical experience, or the moment when an audience of revelers is *enchanted* by Dionysus’ transformative nature.¹³ Since Dionysus presides over intoxication and theatre, this enchantment seems appropriate. According to

Nietzsche, both audience and actors are enchanted by Dionysus' metamorphosis. Nietzsche juxtaposes this enchantment-by-intoxication with the dream-state induced by the god Apollo in his Apollonian-Dionysian binary:

at this stage artistic urges are satisfied directly, on the one hand through the imagery of [Apollonian] dreams, whose perfection is quite independent of the intellectual rank, the artistic development of the individual; on the other hand, through an ecstatic [Dionysian] reality which once again takes no account of the individual and may even destroy him, or else redeem him through a mystical experience of the collective.¹⁴

In Euripides' *Bacchae*, the actor playing Dionysus inhabits the same ontological limbo that the god himself mediates. As Dionysus floats between Olympus and Earth, the actor lingers between the reality of his true self and the artistic fiction of playing the character. The transformative process of acting "intoxicates" the actor, a process not unlike Dionysian transformation.

Furthermore, the chorus in *The Bacchae* is a throng of female Dionysian devotees – Bacchantes – whose zeal for the charismatic god emphasizes his potency. Dionysus' Bacchantes enliven the performance space with their dancing and chanting; most importantly, their spectacular fervor for Dionysus might infect the audience, too. By creating a spectacle around the god, the chorus demonstrates and enacts his intoxicating presence. Yet Aristotle would not invest such dramatic responsibility in spectacle. In his *Poetics*, Aristotle strips spectacle of its importance, deeming it the "lowest form of theatre;" as the sixth of six Aristotelian qualitative parts of tragedy, spectacle exists beneath the elements of plot, thought, and character, as "something enthralling, but...very artless."¹⁵ While Aristotle dismisses the artfulness of

theatrical enthrallment, I argue that this element of spectacle contributes to a performance's intoxicating quality. Similar to Nietzsche's description of Dionysian enchantment, spectacle enthralls, and thus draws in, the audience. In *The Bacchae*, the spectacle of the chorus enhances its presence and separates it from the rest of the play. For example, the crowd of Bacchantes creates an aurally and visually exciting atmosphere that entrances the characters within the play and the audience without. In their first appearance, Euripides describes their Dionysian revelry:

...Now earth flows
with milk and wine and honey;
Syrian incense fills the air...
When you hear the sacred melody
of the flute, playful and sweet
and feet start to move with the beat
then it's time for the wild Bacchants
like foals in their mother's sight
in a field, to get up and dance.¹⁶

As if Dionysus' charisma were not intoxicating enough, the god inebriates his chorus of Bacchantes; in turn, they love him for it. For the Bacchantes, transformation is at the heart of their hedonism, giving them ecstatic pleasure. For them, Dionysus is the quintessential life-of-the-party, inducing them with wine and encouraging merriment. Rush Rehm, in his discourse on the "Theatrical Body" in the *Bacchae*, aligns Dionysus to a director giving stage-directions to the chorus of *Bacchae*, who willingly obey. According to Rehm, Dionysus is

...the (anthropomorphic) god of physical transformation, intoxication, and various boundary transgressions (gender, class, age, ethnicity), [and he] works in and through the bodies of all the characters in the play, radically transforming the space they occupy.¹⁷

As he exercises control over the chorus, they perform in a way stylistically aberrant to the rest of the tragedy; this stylistic departure draws us out of the realm of reason and into the realm of spectacle – in other words, the party scene. During these party scenes, the chorus of Bacchantes expresses its devotion through evocative language and dance. Rehm estimates that “the Greek chorus did not eschew mimetic and expressive movements;” using its own lyrical language, the chorus recreates the revelry and chaos of a party scene.¹⁸ Although actual wine goblets may not be passed around, the Bacchante chorus uses colorful imagery and dance to portray a party scene for audience members. The way an audience perceives the dramatic world in *The Bacchae* transforms when the chorus takes over; Oliver Taplin describes this transformation in his book Greek Tragedy in Action describing the role of the chorus as

not tied down in place and time, in language, in the reasoned sequence of speech and thought...they swerve through a sequence of associative, often emotional, links into a highly coloured world of more wide-ranging, universal and abstract trains of thought by deserting direct ‘humdrum’ relevance for the poetic connections of imagination and universality.¹⁹

According to Taplin, all Greek choruses occupy an imaginative and unconventional space in the play – whether intoxicated themselves or not. Euripides’ chorus of Bacchantes possesses this abstracted choral role, as well as the uninhibited quality of being intoxicated by Dionysus; as the character of Dionysus intoxicates his Bacchantes, he also intoxicates the audience with

emotional and imaginative content not found elsewhere in the tragedy. Dionysus, who opens *The Bacchae*, describes the intoxicated mental state of his Bacchantes:

These are the women I've worked into a frenzy
and driven from their homes to roam the hills,
out of their minds.²⁰

By describing the women as crazed runaways, Dionysus displaces them both physically and mentally from their usual domestic spheres. In this process, he sets up the audience's expectation of the chorus as a character displaced physically and mentally from the rest of the play.

Today, however, the stylized performance of the Greek chorus is hard to fathom and often overlooked: would a modern audience still be intoxicated by the traditional Greek evocation of Dionysian revelry? Helene P. Foley outlines the two major obstacles for a *modern* chorus: a proscenium stage (rather than the outdoor, circular setup of the City Dionysia) and an audience largely unfamiliar with choral customs.²¹ Contriving a chorus – drunk with devotion for Dionysus – that also entertains, and intoxicates, a modern audience proves one of the most looming directorial choices for contemporary directors of *The Bacchae*.

In the National Theatre of Scotland's 2007 production of David Grieg's *Bacchae* for the Edinburgh International Festival, director John Tiffany modernizes the chorus, augmenting its ability to intoxicate a contemporary audience. He casts the Bacchantes as an ultra-sexy, voluptuous, chorus of backup singers that smack of Motown, thereby enticing the audience with their charisma and sexuality. Tiffany's directorial choice partially avoids the strangeness of the traditional Greek chorus, inviting the audience in with a cocktail of sex appeal, sultry voices, and

spectacle. The women's mellifluous vocals and fire-engine red dresses tempt us, as they should: these women are under the tutelage of the great Dionysus, who tempts mortals with his goblet of wine. During one scene, the Bacchantes emerge amidst a burst of pyrotechnic flames; the sensation of their heat raises the danger level of the experience – a reminder of their seductive immediacy.²²

On the other hand, Tiffany reflects the “otherness” of the chorus by casting a chorus of only black women. While it remains true that their sexuality and heat draw the audience in, these women also represent a group of social others in contemporary society: they are black *and* female. This choice keeps with the ancient Greek convention of a chorus of “others.” Likewise, in Euripides' original text, the male actors portrayed a chorus of exotic Asian Bacchantes. Using this paradox –the magnetism of female sexuality and the repellent of social otherness – Tiffany plays with modern day desires and prejudices. What we witness, then, is a spectacle catered to our societal experience, appealing to a culture that worships sex and adores the female form. Similarly, Euripides' tragic Greek chorus pertained to contemporary Greek dithyrambic custom. On the surface, both choruses speak to the cultural associations of their respective audience: Tiffany's armada of sexy, ethnic Bacchantes both enthralls us with spectacle and resonates within our societal experience. Here, Tiffany gives us something that we can relate to in our contemporary world, using images and sounds of sultry soul-singing that draw us in to the party scene. Relating to the cultural world of the play on stage, the audience feels more comfortable joining in “the party.”

Since Euripides' first production of *The Bacchae*, the chorus has largely disappeared, yet its influences on contemporary conventions have not. Helen P. Foley, in her article “The Tragic

Chorus on the Modern Stage,” describes the Broadway musical *The Music Man* as “the Bacchae moved to the mid-West...[where] a traveling con-artist mesmerizes a frontier town with the promise of music and dance.”²³ In fact, most musicals incorporate a unified chorus of characters: the townspeople in *Oklahoma!*, the medieval villagers in *Once Upon a Mattress*, and the high-school students in *Footloose* all represent a segment of that play’s particular society. Even in naturalism, a genre devoted to portraying “real life” on stage, a crowd of guests at a party *evokes* rather than *describes* a festive atmosphere by chatting and toasting, much like the Bacchantes evoke festivity in *The Bacchae* with dance. This distinction illuminates the contrasting effects of each type of performance; creating a party on stage will more likely intoxicate an audience than just a description of that party.

The Peasant Dance in *Miss Julie*

Centuries after Euripides’ Dionysian choral party scenes, August Strindberg also echoes a choral interlude in his play, *Miss Julie*. Like the Greek chorus, Strindberg’s interlude works twofold: it welcomes the audience into the “party,” yet it departs from the surrounding play stylistically. This departure yields an intoxicating theatrical experience that differs from the rest of the play. Although Strindberg professed himself as naturalistic playwright, the interlude of dancing peasants interrupts the *Miss Julie*’s naturalism with choral-like dance and music.

At the end of the 19th Century, many actors, directors, and critics participated in a great shift in the contemporary medium of theatre. The artificiality of grandiose acting and declamatory style – faults attributed to romanticism and melodrama – gave way to more natural,

conversational style of theatre. Emile Zola, a pioneer in this shift towards naturalism and a heavy influence on Strindberg after 1887, believed that “naturalism flows out of classical art,” and that romanticism only provided a vehicle between classicism and naturalism. In his letters to Andre Antoine and his various essays, Zola strove for a theatre that staged the every day, investing more value in daily life than in idealistic settings. Everything on stage was to be as lifelike as possible.²⁴ August Strindberg, in pursuit of Zola’s naturalistic goals, incorporated contemporary class and gender tensions in his play, *Miss Julie*. A scene between Jean and Julie mirrors the real-life gender and class tensions at the time:

JEAN: I’m not partial to beer, but if it’s an order...

JULIE: An order? Surely you know that a gentleman should never allow a lady to drink alone.

JEAN: A point well taken. (*opens a bottle and raises a glass*)

JULIE: Now drink to my health! (*he hesitates*) What? A man of the world – and shy? (*in mock romantic fashion, he kneels and raises his glass*)

JEAN: To my lady’s health! (*he drinks*)

JULIE: Bravo! Now kiss my shoe and everything will be perfect. (*Jean hesitates, then boldly seizes her foot and kisses it lightly*)²⁵

In this final gesture, Jean and Julie form an image of servant and master, but the sexual tension between the characters foreshadows their brewing love affair. This scene exemplifies the play’s relation to contemporary society, as Strindberg flushes out Jean and Julie’s socially-determined roles as “servant” and “lady.” Here, Jean plays against his low class by refusing beer – a typically blue collar drink. Julie – in an ironically aggressive fashion – demands beer for herself as she also plays up her status as a “lady,” citing chivalry as Jean’s motivation to share a

drink with her. Alcohol's silent presence raises the danger level of this exchange: so quickly can one glass of dutiful hospitality turn into three bottles of irreverent overindulgence. On one hand, the alcohol they drink signifies their class; on the other, it intoxicates the characters to the point where they transcend the social class boundaries.

As tensions increase – as well as Blood Alcohol Content – the two characters move closer to consummating their sexual desires. As they exchange drinks, they also exchange their intentions to break social rules. The scene above foreshadows their decision to have sex, a scene which – in the interest of naturalism – takes place in another room. In other impressionistic forms of theatre, perhaps Jean and Julie could “evoke” their sex act through a lyrical ballet; in naturalism, however, Jean and Julie cannot realistically play out their sex act on stage. Instead, Strindberg substitutes something else to evoke their sexual act – a dance sequence performed by the peasants from Miss Julie's estate:

*(Led by a fiddler, the servants and farm people enter, dressed festively, with flowers in their hats. On the table, they place a small barrel of beer and a keg of liquor, both garlanded. Glasses are brought out, and the drinking starts. A dance circle is formed and “Two Ladies Came from in the Trees” is sung. When the dance is finished, everyone leaves, singing.)*²⁶

Here, servants live like kings: they parade about Julie's estate, drinking and celebrating instead of working, without a care in the world. In this scene, their world turns topsy-turvy from labor to revelry, a transition accelerated by the effects of alcohol. This scene, then, envelops the sensory experience of the audience as well as symbolizing a social upturn: it is a party scene. This social upheaval concurs with Bakhtin's theory on subversion in the carnival: when carnival happens, so does the abandonment of social norms, the insurrection of class structure –

essentially, life as we know it goes topsy-turvy. When applied to theatre, the carnivalesque even overturns the customary audience-actor separation:

In fact, carnival does not know footlights, in the sense that it does not acknowledge any distinction between actors and spectators...Carnival is not a spectacle seen by the people; they live in it, and everyone participates²⁷

The carnivalesque nature of *Miss Julie*'s peasant dance, therefore, turns over the social roles of the servants within the play, as well as inviting the audience in and rejecting the separation between the stage and the real world. Both character roles and real world conventions go topsy-turvy.

Occurring at a critical point in the play, the peasant dance eclipses a moment of metamorphosis between Jean and Julie. Upon the first clink of their glasses, the audience is prepared for the imminent consummation of Jean and Julie's attraction. Their magnetism – taboo within the rule-dictated world of Strindberg's realism – finally reaches its zenith and explodes in the frenzied peasant dance. The spectacle that ensues departs from *Miss Julie*'s inherent realism; until this moment, the audience must read into the subtext to discover Jean and Julie's objectives. The party of peasants, in contrast, physically symbolizes their decision to make love – painting an emotional landscape that evokes the pivotal nature of the moment. Gender and class hierarchies fall away for both the peasants and Jean and Julie: for a moment, everyone is equal.

The dancing also returns us to the choral odes of Greek tragedy; these odes, according to Simon Goldhill, have a transitional feel, “always look[ing] back to the scene just past and forward to the action to come.”²⁸ Just before this scene in *Miss Julie* – during the drinking scene

– sexual tensions between the couple crescendo exponentially. After the dance, however, a bitter morning-after taste lingers; we know by the mere sight of Julie “*wringing her hands*” and “*powdering her nose*” that the couple erred gravely by consummating their desires.²⁹ In this light, the peasant dance serves as a dramatic hinge on which the action changes course significantly. Like a Greek Chorus, the peasants enact the crucial action that goes unseen; *Miss Julie*’s chorus, then, affords us with an evocative spectacle that also furthers the action. During the peasant dance, not only does the world of the characters turn upside down, but so does the play’s genre. For one scene, we are called out of realism’s stuffy waiting room and thrust into a Bacchic carnival where the wine flows, the music is loud, and the dancers revel. What we witness is both a scene-depicting-intoxication – as the peasants become drunker – and a scene-which-intoxicates – awing us with its spectacular elements.

Not much scholarship exists on the peasant dance in *Miss Julie*, largely due to the play’s status as an exemplar of dramatic naturalism. The peasant dance contributes little to the play’s naturalism; in fact, it *deters* from the reality of the piece, injecting a dance sequence that seems *less* believable – yet still credible – in the world of the play. What the peasant dance offers us is a break from the play’s naturalism, much like the Greek chorus provided a lyrical break from the logical discourse of the actors.³⁰ Even though a contemporary production of *Miss Julie* would have incorporated a very traditional Swedish circle dance, the dancing itself departs from the style of the emotional and physical struggle between Jean and Julie.

In retrospect, though, today’s audiences experience *Miss Julie* with more than naturalism in mind; since realism made such a large impact on drama, various other genres arose in response. Today, even the most casual theatergoers may have heard of Bertolt Brecht or Samuel

Beckett, two playwrights that worked outside the realm of naturalism. For this reason, some contemporary productions incorporate *Miss Julie*'s original naturalism with other influences like expressionism, epic theatre, and Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty. Some directors use the peasant dance to add meaning and symbolism to their production as a whole. The Unicorn Theatre's 2002 production at the Berkshire Theatre Festival literally stages the idiomatic saying "the tables have turned:"

Atop each end of the kitchen table, pairs of drunken servants mimed copulation while others spun the table on its pivot. The more frenzied the couples grew, the faster the table spun.³¹

Visually a world away from Strindberg's original garlanded servants, this production stages a modern sexual spectacle. The dance's correlative symbolism, however, extends it *beyond* spectacle into metaphor. Director Anders Cato uses dance, sex, and ritual as a language to express Jean and Miss Julie's sex act in the background. As an audience witnesses this spectacle, they may discern its pointed symbolism. Also, Cato uses the colliding media – drama and dance – to his advantage, expressing Jean and Julie's encounter in the background through a provoking dance in the foreground. The presence of an alternative medium injects symbolic meaning into the production, even though the penetrating medium – dance – has arguably less "intellectual" appeal. Instead, the production uses dance as expressionists might: as a way to paint the emotional landscape of the characters for the audience to *feel*. In fact, the influence of expressionism in Cato's *Miss Julie* reflects Strindberg's move to that genre later in his playwrighting career. While we watch the peasants dance, we partake in their intoxication too; this viewing experience differs from observations we might make of Jean and Julie. While we observe Jean and Julie like we would dolls in a diorama, the peasants step beyond this

observation space, calling us into their party and offering us a drink. Our notion of audience-performer relationship warps, a phenomenon which plays into a more participatory theatrical experience. While Zola's idea of naturalism might exclude the spectacle of the peasant dance, it is now open to question whether the inherent "reality" of the scene is, in a sense, more "real" than the surrounding play. The audience experiences the clamor of the scene on a sensual level, unlike the loaded interactions between Jean and Julie, which they see, hear, and *interpret*. The peasant dance affects the audience viscerally and experientially; in the 1960s and 70s, the Performance Group exaggerated this visceral and experiential appeal in their performance, *Dionysus in 69*.

The Birth Ritual in *Dionysus in 69*

Under the influence of naturalism, Zola and Strindberg stayed within the proscenium to overthrow the lofty conventions of romanticism. Richard Schechner – under the influence of experimental theatre of the 60s, including Jerzy Grotowski – went beyond the proscenium in order to question the very nature of the theatrical medium. Due to his overarching challenge of theatre, debate continues to this day over whether Schechner's work with his company, The Performance Group, should be considered "plays" or even "theatre." Regardless of its classification, Schechner's idea of the audience-as-participant in a performance provides key insights into the concept of theatre-as-intoxicant. Like the immersive experience of contemporary Punchdrunk Theatre Company performances, the extreme audience involvement incorporated into The Performance Group's *Dionysus in 69* makes this performance particularly intoxicating.

In 1968-9 The Performance Group produced a theatrical experience based on Euripides' *Bacchae*. Entitled *Dionysus in 69*, the performance abandoned the original Greek text for language that flows between verse, poetry, monologue, and other styles. The company draws from the original characters – including Dionysus, Pentheus, and Agave – but the roles shift according to which actor in the company plays the character and what night they are performing. Even the performance space transcended traditional rules:

Here was no set construction, or even the building of an environment within an already articulated space. Rather, we found a space, made it ours through work, and slowly squeezed out the Dionysus environment through our labor.³²

This actor-space relationship mirrors the artistic process of The Performance Group. Instead of adhering to a script, The Performance Group created their own; rather than build a set in an existing theatre, they built one out of an existing garage; finally, rather than obeying the traditional rules of theatre and audience-actor relationship, The Performance Group made it a point to break away from convention. Amidst all the rule-breaking, however, *Dionysus in 69* drew upon the Greek chorus' intermediacy between audience and drama. Therefore, while the Performance Group's experimental theatre defied conventional theatre of the time, it still drew upon the most essential conventions, introduced by some of the earliest theatre performances known. The chorus of performers in *Dionysus in 69*, like the original Greek chorus, afforded an outsider's view to the traditional dramatic action, engaged the audience personally, and strayed into poetic and lyrical language.

The Performance Group's version of the party scene goes beyond experiential evocation or social commentary by inviting direct audience participation in the performance. Tiresias confronts the audience, weaving in and out of them and asking: "Would you like to go through

our ordeal with us?”³³ The production penetrates traditional audience-performer relationship, pushing observation into experience. Richard Schechner, director of the Performance Group, aligns the experience of *Dionysus in 69* to a party scene, the actors playing host to an audience of guests:

If we think of theatre as a social occasion, then several things follow. The event rises from the audience in a space shared by the audience and performers during a time when the two groups have agreed to meet. For the most part, there is an agenda: the play.... There are built into the event open spaces, and each of these allows the performers and the audience to meet each other on equal terms.³⁴

In this exchange, the metaphorical goblet is passed directly to the audience, extending the party scene into the real world. There are no “footlights,” as Bakhtin would say; his notion of carnival plays out as the distinction between actor and observer blurs and “everyone participates.”³⁵ The hospitality of this gesture surpasses that of the heated Bacchantes in Tiffany’s *Bacchae* because the actors are penetrating our – the audience’s – reality. Furthermore, the performers engage in a performance much like the peasants’ in *Miss Julie*, taking the extra step to encourage audience participation. The actor playing Dionysus speaks to the audience as if they were his own chorus of Bacchantes:

MCDERMOTT AS DIONYSUS:

What we do next is called an ecstasy.

It’s a circle dance around the spot of my birth,

and the more people that join, the bigger the

circle gets. Oh, yes, it’s a ritual. If you don’t

know what a ritual is, a ritual is an intrauterine

device that is not prophylactic. It's a celebration
of me, a celebration of my nativity.³⁶

This moment interweaves elements of theatre, ritual and audience participation. Dionysus' birth ritual signifies myth, symbolizing the process by which the god entered the world twice-over. Enacting the ritual, the Performance Group makes the audience present to their character's performative ecstasy; ideally, in his ecstatic state of ritual performance, the actor experiences theatrical intoxication. At this point in *Dionysus in 69*, the entire company is naked. During the birth-ritual the men lay supine in a row, like sardines, as the women stand astride them, also in a row. Richard Schechner describes the ritual in his book on *Dionysus in 69*:

As each man takes his position for the birth ritual – adapted from the Asmats of New Guinea – he stops speaking. Soon only the women speak, very quietly, intoning the prayers that blend into the motions of birthing. The women speak/sing their lines simultaneously.³⁷



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This performance rite combines Greek mythology, New Guinean ritual and improvisation into a significant moment. Like the peasant dance, the ritual stands out from the surrounding performance. Its significance derives, in part, from the weight of ritual on

performance. In his studies on the relationship between ritual and performance, Leo Howe distinguishes ritual performance from that of other performance:

Ritual action...works not only on the level of meaning but also emotionally and socially, the events of any particular occasion being conditioned by many factors other than the prescribed rules³⁹

The Dionysian birth-ritual, then, makes the audience present to transformation. As a further extension of the ritual performance, the actors step into the audience, extending the drama into the real world and making the ritual available to every person in the theatre. Form merges with content: we are intoxicated as audience members by the god of intoxication himself. Dionysus, god of wine and festival, turns our individual notion of theatrical experience – observer and observed – on its head. Although, as guests of this spectacle, we might feel highly uncomfortable in this situation, *Dionysus in 69* is the acme of theatrical hospitality. Not everybody enjoyed this theatrical hospitality, as Dan Isaac describes in his account of *Dionysus in 69*: “[W]hen I saw *Dionysus in 69*, one young woman began slugging a performer to stop him from continuing what she had allowed to begin.”⁴⁰ Regardless of the audience’s enjoyment, however, their physical bodies became part of the performance because of *Dionysus in 69*’s participatory nature.

Conclusion

Euripides’ *Bacchae*, Strindberg’s *Miss Julie* and The Performance Group’s *Dionysus in 69* came at very different points in theatrical history. Each play contains a chorus, though, and each chorus plays out a “party scene” in which the characters behave “under the influence.” The

chorus of Bacchantes in *The Bacchae* follows the orders of their god Dionysus, who directs them as a theatrical director would a cast of actors. Being the god of theatre and wine, Dionysus embodies transformation and intoxication. The peasants in *Miss Julie* also participate in revelry, their kegs of beer and bottles of liquor symbolizing their intoxication. Their dance sequence, furthermore, intoxicates us – the audience – as it brings us out of the naturalist world of the surrounding play. Finally, *Dionysus in 69* invites the audience to participate directly in the performance; the birth ritual, therefore, dissolves theatrical boundaries in order to extend the performance into the physical and mystical experience of the audience.

The theatrical moments discussed here, then, alter the audience's perception of the events on stage. Like drinking, these moments may cause an audience member to "lose himself," or, in other words, lose his feeling of separation. Returning to Marvin A. Block's study on drinking, alcohol is a depressant that temporarily impairs "judgment, memory, learning, self-criticism, [and] awareness of environment."⁴¹ Similarly, these party scenes – the Bacchantes', the peasants', and The Performance Groups' – impair the audience's awareness of its own, "real" environment. The choral tradition speaks out to the spectators, engaging them with dialogue directed towards them. The peasant dance, inviting us in with a spectacle that dazzles with music and movement. The birth-ritual of The Performance Group feels like a religious rite, commanding the attention of the spectators while also making them feel present to an important event. These moments stimulate Nietzsche's idea of "enchantment," and we are intoxicated by the medium.

Just as an audience might become enchanted and forget its own reality for a while, the characters also forget their place in their respective "real-worlds." In the party scene, once a

certain level of intoxication is reached, characters make decisions as their “intoxicated selves.” These decisions, though made under the influence, still have repercussions: although the consciousness of the character changes, the surrounding world stays the same. Things that remain constant in society, such as gender and sex roles, suddenly seem fluid for a character under the influence. Chapter two explores the conflict between intoxicated characters and society: how does intoxication affect character’s decisions? Furthermore, how does the sober world view the decisions made by those whose world is topsy-turvy?

Oh she made us drinks, to drink

We drunk 'em, got drunk

And now I know she thinks I'm cool

She gave me a wink, I winked back (Uh-huh)

And then I think that, (Uh-huh) we 'gonna have fun at my spot tonight...⁴²

–T-Pain, “Bartender”

III. INTOXICATION, SEX, AND GENDER

In *The Bacchae*, Dionysus stirs up the festivities, causing characters to loosen up and abandon their usual inhibitions. Under the intoxicating powers of the wine-god, the Bacchantes act wildly; watching their frenzy, furthermore, it is easy to forget that they are still human. Dionysus enables the women to transform into Bacchantes, and in this state they find a primal sexuality – a sexuality unrestricted by marriage or gender expectations. Besides his Bacchantes, Dionysus also persuades Pentheus to cross-dress and brings his gender identification to the forefront. This chapter deals specifically with alcohol and intoxication as *enablers* for sex and gender-bending. The intoxication-as-enabler device occurs in many dramatic genres besides Greek tragedy, such as the comedies of Shakespeare and Tennessee Williams’ realistic depiction of the American South. Sexuality, when enabled by intoxication, can flow freely from and between characters when they drink; after a few drinks, characters may feel more comfortable expressing themselves sexually. Intoxication may cause characters to stray from or even reject the rigid perception of sex and gender established in their society. Here, we see *in vino veritas* embodied again: under the truth-giving influence of intoxication, characters may transcend received gender roles for truer identities, and sex might become consensual instead of repressive.

Shakespeare, in his comedies, sometimes used drinking and intoxication to enable plot complications and humor. In *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, for example, the complication comes from Puck’s misuse of the love potion. Intoxication plays a pivotal role in *Midsummer*, as there would be few complications in the woods without Puck’s errant dosages of love potion. The lovers, intoxicated with potion, misalign their desires, twisting the plot and making Puck’s life difficult. Intoxication, in *Midsummer*, also contributes humor: the starry-eyed Demetrius

and Lysander speak their love in sappy romantic language, compromising their manliness and giving the audience the opportunity to laugh at them in their drugged state. Titania and Bottom's love affair, furthermore, exemplifies the carnivalesque as the Queen of the Fairies falls in love with the lowest of the low – an ass. As the characters go under the influence of the love-potion, the plot complicates and takes shape as a Shakespearean comedy. At the end of the play, as in most of Shakespeare's comedies, a party scene marks the triumph of the lovers, ending the action with celebration and the promise of marriage. As an audience we celebrate with them, since we have become drunk with the fantastical world of the play; to enjoy the play fully, we lay aside some of our notions of reality to subject ourselves to the intoxicating adventure of the characters.⁴³

The Southern society reflected in Tennessee Williams' *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* places great value on masculinity, heterosexuality, and the traditional home. Struggling to maintain her place in a home, Maggie tries to use alcohol to initiate sex with Brick, her emotionally distant, alcoholic husband. As one of her tactics to win his favor, Maggie condones Brick's drinking and encourages him to take advantage of her body. Brick, meanwhile, undergoes a personal struggle with his own sexuality, drowning his problems with alcohol. In *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, alcohol's presence magnifies both characters' sexuality: Brick comes face to face with his family's suspicion of his homosexuality; Maggie, thinking Brick wants sex because he is drunk, desperately thrusts herself at him. Brick, on the other hand, dismisses her and broods in his unhappiness. In these confrontations, Williams lets the audience observe the characters behind closed doors *and* under the influence. Both behave differently because alcohol is involved; Brick's intoxication, in turn, makes his actions more believable for an audience. We believe Brick's sly grins and strange comments about the "click" in his head because of his all-

consuming love for the bottle. His intoxication enables our ability to believe his strong character and decisions: the more believable the characters, the more likely the audience will get involved in the world of the play.⁴⁴

Intoxication, therefore, lubricates the sexual relationships between characters and allows the sexuality of individual characters (and even, in the case of *Dionysus in 69*, the audience) to flow freely. Extending Nietzsche's conceptualization of the Apollonian and Dionysian, Camille Paglia describes the liquidity of the Dionysian intoxication in *Sexual Personae*:

Greek Dionysus rules what Plutarch calls the *hygra physis*, wet or liquid nature...Dionysian liquidity is the invisible sea of organic life, flooding our cells and uniting us to plants and animals.⁴⁵

This fluid nature of Dionysus, god of wine and theatre, induces the expression of sexuality – heightening the drama, raising the stakes, and complicating reality. By focusing on the sexual essence of Dionysus, Paglia explains how the god of wine and theatre can liquefy our sexual desire, allowing it to flow freely. She also describes his energy as the “invisible sea of organic life,” demonstrating his fluid equivalency with wine and sexuality; like the physiological process of intoxication by wine, Dionysus works invisibly upon the “organic” human body, wreaking havoc amongst throngs of revelers. Euripides, in *The Bacchae*, integrates Dionysus' liquid nature into plot.

In *The Bacchae*, Pentheus loses grip of his masculinity, choosing to cross-dress because of Dionysus' slippery wit. The Bacchantes, also under Dionysus' intoxicating spell, become violently unfeminine in nature. In *Miss Julie*, alcohol helps make class structure fluid, enabling Jean and Julie to consummate their taboo desires without worrying about class status. *Dionysus*

in 69 exaggerates the social irreverence of *The Bacchae* and *Miss Julie*, by playing with the audience's conceptions of sex and the body by thrusting them into an intoxicated and orgiastic ritual, dissolving our notion of audience-actor relationship. In all cases, theatrical intoxication enables otherwise rigid situations to turn fluid, raising the dramatic stakes and freeing the characters – and sometimes even the audience – from the fetters of convention.

Pentheus' Cross-dressing in *The Bacchae*

From the beginning of *The Bacchae*, Pentheus projects himself as a symbol of masculinity: a strong protector, leader, and decider. When word circulates of the frenzied Bacchantes, Pentheus' strong masculinity becomes obvious; his anger and fear towards the hedonistic women inflame his violent nature. The women present a real threat to Pentheus' rule: they idolize Dionysus ritually in nature and their presence suggests an imminent upheaval of social norms. It is a highly ironic moment, then, when a disguised Dionysus convinces Pentheus to dress up as a woman in order to spy on the Bacchantes, who are growing in size and vigor. Dionysus' intoxicating wit and logic ensnare even the shrewd Pentheus:

DIONYSUS: First you must put on these linen robes.

PENTHEUS: What? I'm a man! Do you take me for a woman?

DIONYSUS : If they see you are a man, they will murder you.

PENTHEUS: Wise words. I never said you weren't clever.

DIONYSUS: Dionysus taught me all these things.⁴⁶

Pentheus, unknowingly, becomes intoxicated by the guiles of Dionysus. The rapid-exchange of their dialogue, known as *stichomythia*, falls into a rhythm reminiscent of sexual intercourse. Just like the rhythmic give-and-take of mutual sex, *stichomythia* requires characters to engage in logical intercourse through quick and instinctive dialogue. Without being aware of it, Pentheus engages with Dionysus in give-and-take logic – an exercise in which Dionysus dominates him. His argumentation would have appealed especially to Euripides’ contemporary audiences, as the Greeks were lovers of good strong logic. To ancient Greeks, the conventional exchange pattern of *stichomythia* denoted a “universal expression of keen minds.”⁴⁷ It seems, then, that Dionysus’ scheming is twofold: he wins over Pentheus *and* dazzles the audience with his intoxicating argumentation.

Yet the structured nature of Dionysus’ attack on Pentheus runs counter to the fluid nature of Dionysus himself. Paradoxically, Nietzsche attributes argumentation to the god Apollo, whose “dialogue is a mirror of the Greek mind,” using language with “determinacy and lucidity.”⁴⁸ Euripides, then, uses the rigid meter of Apollonian *stichomythia* within Dionysian tragedy as a disguise for the god’s liquid nature. Here, the audience witnesses a Dionysian manifestation, through tragedy, of an Apollonian quality, argumentation. By using the *stichomythia* structure to, in turn, persuade Pentheus to flip his gender, Dionysus uses an existing convention to make Pentheus do something that is, in his world, unconventional. The liquid god Dionysus makes rigid logic and *stichomythia* malleable in his own hands. By undermining this convention from within, he intoxicates the process of logic itself. Although Pentheus is oblivious to Dionysus’ disguise, the audience knows that Dionysus refers to himself when he says that “Dionysus taught me all these things.”⁴⁹ Even though his preceding logic was

inherently Apollonian, Dionysus takes the credit for his suasion, anyway; never afraid to assert his power, this god will use any means to achieve his objective.

Once Pentheus resolves to bend his gender, he affords the audience the visual spectacle of watching his transformation on stage. At first, we laugh at this scene; the sight of Pentheus in a dress makes for a comic visual. John Tiffany's 2007 version of *The Bacchae* for the Edinburgh International Festival makes an especially funny scene out of it, as Dionysus dresses the handsome Pentheus in fine gowns reminiscent of Gucci or Armani.⁵⁰ Its comedy appeals especially to modern audiences, who are less accustomed to men playing women – a highly familiar custom to ancient Greek audiences since only male actors played women on the Greek stage. For Euripides' contemporaries, this moment of customary cross-dressing called attention to the custom itself; similar to Euripides' manipulation of logical *stichomythia* to disguise Dionysus' irrational and wild nature, the playwright draws the audience in with a familiar custom. Using the custom of cross-dressing as a container, Euripides takes a normal ritual and makes it tragic: soon after Pentheus cross-dresses, the Bacchantes tear apart both his disguise and his body, limb from limb. Dionysus foreshadows Pentheus' fate by convincing him to “dismember” himself from his masculinity; thereafter, the ruthless Bacchantes dismember him in an act led by the wrathful god of intoxication. Drunk with Dionysian wine, it is his mother, Agave, who ends up with the head of Pentheus in her hands. Before Agave realizes what she has done, Euripides confronts the audience with the sobering reality that the woman who gave life to Pentheus also took it from him. Also, since Agave believes Pentheus to be a lion, Pentheus' act of cross-dressing is negated completely; this also makes his decision to gender-bend a tragically useless one. This moment resonated within the Greek consciousness, especially; while cross-

dressing, in ritual theatre, was applauded, Pentheus' cross-dressing, in the play, ends in death and dismemberment.

When focusing on the play's genre, the comic elements of *The Bacchae* turn quickly to tragedy when we realize Pentheus' tragic dismemberment. Here, we see a parallel between plot and audience reaction: just as Pentheus' decision to cross-dress works against him, our amused reaction to his imposed femininity works against us, the audience. Daniel Mendelsohn, in his scholarship on politics and gender in Euripides, describes the grinding of comedy against tragedy as:

...distaste caused by an injection of comic elements and structures into ostensibly tragic actions...the alternation between the diverse theatrical modes of comic and tragic that one finds in these plays turns out, as we have seen, to be as carefully orchestrated as are the modulations between masculine and feminine.⁵¹

Dionysus' intoxicating nature turns things topsy-turvy: Pentheus finds himself a woman, and the audience finds themselves laughing at a doomed man. Not only does Dionysian intoxication turn over the genre of the play, but also the experience of the audience. "Distaste" as Mendelsohn calls it, arises from the duality of Dionysus and his ability to transform himself from mischief-maker to murderer. As the god of theater, Dionysus makes a talented actor himself, tricking Pentheus into trusting his disguise. Paglia describes Dionysus' godly jurisdiction over "theater, masked balls, and free love – but also of anarchy, gang rape, and mass murder."⁵² Not only does he cause characters to do unconventional things by intoxicating them, but Dionysus uses Greek theatrical conventions to do so – such as stichomythia and cross-dressing. Finally, Dionysus' fluid reversibility elicits, as we will see, a "hangover" feeling on part of characters and audience.

Backgrounded Sex in *Miss Julie*

While Dionysus' irreverence defies conventionality in *The Bacchae*, the effects of alcohol and intoxication also disturb the status quo of naturalism. Sex and gender roles, in pure naturalism, are synonymous with the play's contextual society. As an exemplar of naturalism, *Miss Julie* reflects Swedish society at the end of the 19th century; therefore, the actions of characters conflict with the expected behavior from a proper woman and servant. In the Preface to *Miss Julie*, Strindberg denounced codified plots and stock character types as conventions which "ought to be challenged by naturalists...who know how richly complex a human soul is."⁵³ In pursuit of naturalism, Strindberg used familiar social "types" as molds for his characters to *contrast* with – Miss Julie, for example, contrasts with the proper and polite woman. Just as Euripides draws attention to Greek theatrical convention and sexual norms in *The Bacchae* by playing with them, Strindberg also draws attention to contemporary theatrical genre and social gender roles by allowing his characters to break free from the usual.

From the first scene, Jean and Julie establish their taboo chemistry; furthermore, when the beer and wine appear, the probability of their imminent affair increases. Stilted servant-master interaction flows into the flirtations of two young people under the influence of alcohol. As discussed in Chapter One, Jean and Julie's consummation is eclipsed by *Miss Julie's* party scene – the peasant dance. While the peasants themselves are intoxicated, so are the main characters that disappear into the bedroom. Visually, the frenzy of the peasant dance is emphasized; dramatically, however, we know the importance of what goes on behind closed doors.

While the interrelation between the seen and unseen plays out live onstage, painting *distills* the foreground/background qualities of drama for observation. Sixteenth century Flemish painter Pieter Bruegel captures movement in the painting *Peasant Dance* [(fig. 1)], drawing upon the universal festival experience to pique the viewer's interest. Extending beyond the visual spectacle of the depicted moment, the festivities comment further upon contemporary society.⁵⁴ As peasants, the revelers enjoy themselves accordingly: through music, song, drink, and dance. Additionally, the movement of couples dancing and drinking in the foreground alludes to the depravity hidden in the background. Just below the red banner, a woman leads a man inside a building – an intermediary between the seen and unseen, or public and private, domains. Inspired by the raunchy revelry in our immediate vision, we *imagine* the events inside the dark-windowed cottages. Similarly, during Jean and Julie's sex scene, we can only visualize their actions based on the spectacle which the peasant dance affords us. We see a scene which evokes sexual chaos rather than depicts it. Like Bruegel, Strindberg uses the foreground/background tactic to do something otherwise unacceptable: stage a sex scene.



(Fig 1): Bruegel, Pieter.

*Peasant Dance*⁵⁵

On the other hand, Bruegel's painting lacks the performative dimension of *Miss Julie's* peasants and Dionysus' chorus of Bacchantes. The image lacks the fluidity of movement and sound ushered by the peasants as they populate the stage and the excitement as Jean and Julie steal away. Bruegel's *Peasant Dance* is fixed in the past; *Miss Julie's* inhabits the present. The bottles of alcohol sitting before the peasants on Bruegel's wooden table remain forever filled to the same line, reminding us of their intoxication but without changing; the kegs brought in by *Miss Julie's* servants, in contrast, become emptier and emptier as the peasant's frenzy escalates. In the drama, we witness the events before, during, and after Jean and Julie's decision. In other words, not only do we get to experience the Bacchic climax of a festival like the one depicted in Bruegel's painting, but we experience Jean and Julie's escalating foreplay before and their hangovers in the scenes after.

How, then, does feeling present to the peasant dance enhance our experience as an audience? Similar to a religious rite, the dance evokes what happens behind closed doors without replicating it to scale. Beer sloshes in the kegs, limbs flail, music fills our ears – all these real life gestures create an immediate air of chaotic festivity. We exchange this festive atmosphere for an evocation of Jean and Julie's impassioned consummation. We make similar meaning-exchanges in religious rituals: E.T. Kirby points out that some ritual orgies, in anthropological studies, are exchanged for benevolent ends, such as marriage, rite of passage, or birth blessings.⁵⁶ Likewise, the bread and wine offered in the Eucharist points to the body and blood of Christ; willing participants exchange one for another. Being present at a ritual is a transformative experience because we see physical bodies – the peasants dancing – and transform that into a new idea – Jean and Julie's passionate act. The ritualistic nature of the dance communicates something basic to the audience, re-defining our relationship with reality

and theatricality. When an audience feels present to a performance – like a presentation of the Eucharist or *Miss Julie*'s peasant dance – the borders blur between reality and performance, making it an exciting engagement. *Miss Julie*'s peasant dance combines this excitement with symbolism in a moment that simultaneously conveys and involves.

Hypnotizing and intoxicating, the peasant dance should incite a shift in perception – regardless of the particular production's genre-influence. What we are present to is both a scene-depicting-intoxication – as the peasants become drunker – and a scene-which-intoxicates – awing us with its spectacular elements as well as its weighty significance on the plot. We look beyond the dance into the bedroom of Jean and Julie, knowing that their world will be topsy-turvy once they re-emerge. Through the intoxicating scene of the peasant dance, the production reaches a moment of performative ecstasy shared by actors and audience alike. For a moment – while Jean and Julie make the decision to cross the boundaries of socially accepted sexuality – the audience's theatrical experience flows from observation into participation.

Ritual Sex and Nudity in *Dionysus in 69*

In many ways, the work of The Performance Group occupies the opposite end of the performance spectrum from naturalism. No proscenium or box set contains the action; in fact, the actors in *Dionysus in 69* pace through the audience and confront them directly. *Miss Julie*'s intoxicating peasant dance scene provides a glimpse of this confrontational experience, a moment during which Jean and Julie also reject contemporary rules of sexuality. Paglia's Dionysian fluidity flows throughout *Dionysus in 69* like it flows through the peasant dance,

inspired by intoxication as well as the free-spiritedness of the late 1960s; in this experience, the actors flood the audience, penetrating conventional boundaries between performer and spectator. Furthermore, by using nudity in the performance experience, The Performance Group breaks down social barriers by baring the human body. This display of rule-breaking informs the audience of the radical environment they are in, flooding the performance space with a feeling of “anything is possible.”

Richard Schechner, in his book on the Performance Group’s *Dionysus in 69*, describes the process of welcoming the audience into the garage theatre as an initiation rite: the spectators may enter one at a time, and can “sit just about anywhere....The action goes on around and among the audience.”⁵⁷ Seated like this, they confront their fellow audience members as well as the performers “on stage.” When the performers become entirely naked during the birth-ritual, the experience permeates the audience in a way proscenium theatre could never achieve. The presentation of the human body, bared of its socially-expected layers of clothing, caused contemporary responses which have continued on to performance scholarship today. Jerzy Grotowski, a great influence on Schechner and The Performance Group, once spoke about the intimacy of nudity in performance in an interview with Mark Fumaroli:

In our epoch, when religious values are almost totally exhausted, human intimacy is perhaps the single value which has any chance of surviving, perhaps because it is of earthly rather than heavenly origin. Man in his intimacy: such is the last of our temples.⁵⁸

Contributing to the earthly sacredness of nudity, Grotowski’s interview sheds some light on what, if anything, about nudity in performance is intoxicating. Bared of clothing, the human bodies in *Dionysus in 69* represent to an audience an “earthly intimacy.” The simultaneity of

nudity and ritual is at once human and divine, like Dionysus himself. Heavily influenced by Artaud's observations of the Balinese theatre, Schechner combines ritual and theatre to cause a transformation in the minds of the audience. Within Balinese theatre, Antonin Artaud explored the ritual exchange of gesture for meaning:

It is certain that this aspect of pure theater, this physics of absolute gesture which is the idea itself and which transforms the mind's conceptions into events perceptible through the labyrinths and fibrous interlacings of matter, gives us a new idea of what belongs by nature to the domain of forms and manifested matter.⁵⁹

Schechner incorporates what Artaud describes as "absolute gesture" in *Dionysus in 69*'s birth ritual by allowing physical bodies to convey abstract ideas. Ritual action, then, in The Performance Group's birth rite resonates on a different level with the audience; therefore, the experience intoxicates and transforms us like Dionysian wine, allowing us to drop our attachment to *status quo* ideals and connect to the ritually intimate humanity of the performers. The physical "matter" of the human bodies in *Dionysus in 69* illuminates something greater than performance: the shared humanity which underlies it all.

Some critics of *Dionysus in 69*, however, attributed the nudity to fads of the 60s and 70s. Besides The Performance Group, critics targeted The Living Theatre, which began the philosophy of "saying NO to the present society" through revolutionary theatre.⁶⁰ Both The Living Theatre and The Performance Group adopted existing plays to promulgate their revolutionary ideals; part of this directorial decision, as Robert Brustein claims, was the artists' attempt to manipulate classical literature to fit within the sexual revolution of the 60s. In his article on revolutionizing classical masterpieces, Brustein claims that, instead of exploring

human nature like Euripides did in the original *Bacchae*, The Performance Group invites “physical intimacy between actors and spectators, in the chummy fashion of the time.”⁶¹

Although Brustein belittles the actor-spectator relationship as the “chummy fashion” of flower-children, *Dionysus in 69* was revolutionary at the time. What is most “chummy” about the experience of *Dionysus in 69* is not the relationships the performers have with each other on stage; it is, in fact, the relationship that the performers create with the audience. The performers worked from within the structure of *The Bacchae*, intoxicating its form, and produced an end product which involved the audience directly.

The *Dionysus in 69* experience resonated within the collective consciousness of audiences during the late 1960s and early 70s, a time of experimentation with mind-altering intoxicants. By drawing the audience in to the experience, *Dionysus in 69* also intoxicates them, transforming their minds – much like alcohol would – and altering their perception of the theatrical experience. The intoxication of the experience was so personal for some audience members that it connected to their real lives. Sue Ellen Case takes a social stance on the newfound nudity and sexuality of the Performance Group:

The sense of the liberated, civic body, lumping and humping in great group gropes, as in the work of The Living Theater and *Dionysus in '69*, became a new form of social and theatrical imagery⁶²

The sexuality of the production, then, served more than a dramatic purpose – it extended into the social reality of the audience by symbolizing the changing times. Most influential on the nudity in *Dionysus in 69*, Jerzy Grotowski inspired Schechner to incorporate the naked body into the performance in 1968. Grotowski criticized the original costumes, which he felt were too reminiscent of a “striptease,” suggesting that “one might either perform naked as a sacred act or

let the nakedness come through everyday clothes.”⁶³ Grotowski encouraged Schechner to strive for ritual purity, and to eschew anything resembling risqué voyeurism. In the interview with Fumaroli, Grotowski discussed the dangers of objectifying the human body:

there is nothing more deplorable and disastrous than to see [the body] transformed into merchandise.... Where does pornography begin? It begins as soon as we are confronted with the external intimacy of a man deprived of his internal intimacy.⁶⁴

At Grotowski’s request, then, Schechner decided to use ritual nudity, avoiding the prurience and titillation of objectification. This endeavor returns to the Artaudian emphasis on ritual, and how sacred acts transform the minds of the audience; the birth ritual of Dionysus, therefore, was performed naked upon Schechner’s direction. Audience members were afforded the rare opportunity to observe nudity, through artistic ritual. Nudity in *Dionysus in 69*, like intoxication, draws the audience in as a participant instead of a judging observer. The nudity *itself* intoxicates; its ritual nature taps into the genuine universality of the naked human experience – not the separateness of voyeurism.

Nudity, in modern, bourgeois society, requires a release of inhibition – a release afforded by physical and theatrical intoxication. When applied to *Dionysus in 69*, Friedrich Nietzsche’s discourse on the opposing Apollonian and Dionysian natures describes the layered levels of experience in the naked birthing ritual. Paglia expands on Nietzsche’s juxtaposition of Apollo and Dionysus to apply to identification and objectification:

Dionysus is identification, Apollo objectification...Dionysus is energy, ecstasy, hysteria, promiscuity, emotionalism -heedless indiscriminateness of idea or

practice. Apollo is obsessiveness, voyeurism, idolatry, fascism – frigidity and aggression of the eye, petrification of objects⁶⁵

What this describes, then, is the twofold experience of the nudity in *Dionysus in 69's* birthing ritual. On one hand, the audience may be intoxicated by Apollonian voyeurism – staring at the naked flesh of the performers. Grotowski sought to guide The Performance Group away from encouraging this sort of voyeurism by completely disrobing instead of wearing minimal clothing. By baring it all, the vulnerable humanity of the performers comes to the forefront, instead of a perverse sexuality found in the scantily clad bodies in pornography. Instead, the hysteria and ecstasy of the performers' naked present-tense improvisations could cut straight through to an audience member's experience – translating to that person on a visceral, rather than intellectual, level. The visceral experience intoxicates the audience in a way only attributable to the medium of live theatre. We are present to actual bodies, unlike nudity on film or in painting, where a barrier of time and space separates us from the naked subject.

Returning to Euripides' original work, as the performers of *Dionysus in 69's* birth-ritual give dramatic life to Dionysus, their actions embody what the messenger in *The Bacchae* describes. The messenger character rushes onstage, giving a detailed account of the Bacchantes' ritualistic behavior:

They put on crowns of ivy, oak, wreaths of star-flowers.

One took her thyrsus, struck it on a rock, and there

gushed a spring of purest water, another stuck

her wand in the earth's lap, whence the God sent up

a spring of wine.⁶⁶

The messenger paints an image of unbridled ritual in the audience's mind in this speech, conjuring visuals of hair-let-down, oneness with nature, fertility, and nudity. The Bacchantes penetrate nature, plunging their "wands into the lap of earth," in ritualistically sexual behavior that inverts female sexual reception with that of male penetration. While these visualizations happen instantly in the minds of *The Bacchae*'s audience, the performers in *Dionysus in 69* give life to these acts through performance. Men play female roles, women play male roles; even Dionysus gets played by a female in some accounts of the performances.⁶⁷ Also, by stepping into the audience, the performers penetrate the nature of theatrical audience-performer separation. At once, the relationship between them is lubricated; what we thought was a rigid theatrical custom is fluid in the hands of The Performance Group.

Furthermore, the performers embody Dionysian intoxication by "letting their hair down" and becoming naked before the audience. This display fit into the consciousness during the titular year of 1969, when people questioned rigid notions of sexuality and the human body; this number, 69, also contributes another layer of sexuality and intoxication to the performance. The number, a term for a sexual position of mutual oral stimulation, implies the mutual intoxication on part of actors and audience. The goal of the performance mirrors that of the stimulatory goal of the sexual position: equal theatrical intoxication on part of actors and audience. In other words, the performers worked toward neither actors nor audience being more "drunk" with the experience than the other. If the audience is more "drunk," the experience would be pornographic; if the actors were "drunk," the experience would then become masturbatory. If both parties are equally intoxicated, then a theatrical experience of mutuality occurs. In The Performance Group's take on *Paradise Now*, which also used nudity, an actor uttered that "to have a play *about* something is some form of masturbation / looking down the wrong end of the

tunnel.”⁶⁸ Applying this same goal to *Dionysus in 69*, then, the artistic vision of the performance was not to be *about* nudity, but to use nudity to connect to the audience’s humanity. The Performance Group experience was intended to be a mutual journey for both actor and spectator, where both parties underwent freeing transformations not unlike those experienced by *Miss Julie*’s peasants or *The Bacchae*’s chorus. The Dionysian feeling of transformation is essential to all of these theatrical moments.

Conclusion

It is this theatrical “mutuality” that unifies the intoxication-as-enabler devices in *The Bacchae*, *Miss Julie*, and *Dionysus in 69*. In all three performances, the moment when rigid audience-spectator relationship turns fluid is when the performance style approaches a more visceral level: during the choral interludes of *The Bacchae*, the peasant dance in *Miss Julie*, and the birth ritual of *Dionysus in 69*. At these moments, intoxication supplants traditional sex and gender rules with the irreverence of Dionysian energy. But how long can this ecstatic freedom from societal rules last? The next chapter explores the hangover that follows the party scene and the sexual transgressions enabled by intoxication. The hangover scene sobers up both actors and audience, bringing characters and audience back to “reality” with the realization that rigid society cannot be made fluid permanently.

*Well I gotta get drunk and I sure do dread it
Cuz I know just what I'm gonna do
I'll start to spend my money callin' everybody honey
And I'll wind up singin' the blues
I'll spend my whole paycheck on some old wreck
And brother I can name you a few
Well I gotta get drunk and I sure do dread it
Cuz I know just what I'm gonna do⁶⁹*

– Willie Nelson, “I Gotta Get Drunk”

IV. THE HANGOVER

Agave's *Anagnorisis*

The term *anagnorisis*, in Greek Tragedy, is the dramatic recognition moment, when the hangover begins and the character beholds some form of truth. In the *Poetics*, Aristotle wrote that tragedy must have a recognition moment, or *anagnorisis*, in which a tragic character undergoes “a change from ignorance to knowledge, and so to either friendship or enmity, among people defined in relation to good fortune or misfortune.”⁷⁰ The phrase “in relation to” indicates the character’s newfound knowledge of their position in relation to the real world and the people in it. Temporarily extracted from society, a character may forget about the real-life consequences of their intoxicated actions. The closest word to Aristotle’s *anagnorisis*, in English, is recognition; in practice, the characters experience a secondary “cognition,” in a moment of self-awareness when they remember their existence in relation to the real world.

Agave, in Euripides’ *Bacchae*, experiences a killer hangover when her intoxication wears off. Drunk on the wine and spirit of Dionysus, she comes to at the end of the play. In her hands, she holds the severed head of her son, whom she herself murdered under the influence of Dionysian drunkenness. She does not know, yet, that she holds the head of Pentheus; rather, she believes it to be a lion’s head. Cadmus, who breaks the news to Agave, knows the pain of her realization will be great:

You poor, deluded woman. When you wake up
from this dream and realize what you have done,
you may wish you could live out all your days

in the cool shade of madness.⁷¹

When she does realize her actions, Agave reacts with great horror. The moment inspires pity on her behalf because she was intoxicated by Dionysus, lessening her responsibility for the crime: she did it, but she did not *mean* to do it. During this moment, we pity Agave because she did not intend to kill her son – those intentions belonged to the great and terrible Dionysus. Regardless, Pentheus is dead and Agave has his blood on her hands. Now she must deal with the consequences of her actions, whether she is wholly responsible for them or not. Her behavior imitates waking up from what today’s alcoholism industry calls a “blackout—” a symptom attributed to heavy drinkers:

experiencing a blackout can be terrifying... anyone who has experienced such a blackout has had a warning that he would be foolish to shrug off – a red signal that should bring his drinking to a halt, not just temporarily but for good.⁷²

According to Block’s study of the physiological effects of alcohol, at the point of a blackout the drinker has consumed too much for his or her body to handle. Rejecting her intoxication, Agave’s awakening plunges her into the recognition of her previous state. Now, it is not the presence, but the *absence* of alcohol that is dramatically important. Agave “blacked out” in her bacchante frenzy, acting under the influence of Dionysus and his wine. As Cadmus pours metaphorical cold water on Agave to sober her up, he informs her of her mistake. Agave regains her awareness, the blindfold lifts, and she returns to reality. This point in the play requires a great shift for the actress playing Agave, who moves from drunken irreverence to sober realization.

Paola Dionisotti, who plays Agave in John Tiffany's *Bacchae* for the National Theatre of Scotland, provides a visually haunting *anagnorisis*: bloody and disheveled, the woman hunches on the ground in her ruin.⁷³ Her once strong voice turns raspy and weak, her previously regal posture slumps to that of a beggar; Dionisotti physically conveys the hangover feeling that resides after intoxication. As an actress, she transforms before the audience, creating a before-and-after effect that exemplifies the remorseful aftertaste of a hangover. In Dionisotti's *anagnorisis*, she demonstrates that the god of wine and theatre has not been good to her. In fact, he tricked her and left her devastated in the wake of her son's death. The ecstasy of Dionysian intoxication abates, leaving Agave reeling in her post-intoxication hangover. Her shift occurs instantly – creating a thrilling transformation for audiences to experience. R.A. Browne explains the audience's fascination with this moment:

There is a certain spiritual experience which appears to have been shared by all men in all ages but which never fails to excite their bewilderment and awe. It is the flash of inspiration by which a man suddenly beholds his own true and better nature.⁷⁴

In Agave's case, her "true and better nature" is her sober self, which she returns to when Cadmus incites her *anagnorisis*. The "flash of inspiration" is when the Dionysian nature described by Paglia, "the *hygra physis*, wet or liquid nature" dries up, leaving Agave desiccated.⁷⁵ Her "dehydrated" state also embodies the physiological side-effect of "dry-mouth" which Block attributes to the hangover.⁷⁶ Finding her sobriety, Agave also *sees* her dry guilt: a discovery both horrifying and fascinating to watch. We watch in wonder as her present, hung-over self beholds the actions of her former, intoxicated self – with a great deal of regret.

We have seen that, as the party scene rages on, some characters make ill-reasoned decisions or act in ways that depart from social norms: Pentheus switches his gender, Jean and Julie decide to sleep together, and the performers in *Dionysus in 69* remove their clothing. Though these actions occur due to intoxicating circumstances – under the influence of Dionysus, beer and wine, festival, or ritual – this does not extract the actions from resonating in the “real world.” While the notion of *in vino veritas* applies when intoxication illuminates true identities, there is also such a thing as “*ex vino veritas*” – when the absence of intoxication allows characters to discover truths. Agave, as we have seen, discovers the truth of her son’s murder after she sobers up; Jean and Julie recognize their impassioned decision after the intoxicating peasant dance; an audience member may regain self-awareness after leaving a performance of *Dionysus in 69*. *Ex vino veritas* occurs when the carnivalesque topsy-turviness of the party scene has righted itself: characters and audience members re-orient themselves with the existing social structure – sometimes this re-orientation is crippling, as in Agave’s case.

Onstage, *anagnorisis* usually plays out as a “hinge” moment in the dramatic action; things are different after the recognition, for better or for worse. *Anagnorisis* is also an opportunity for dramatic irony: often, the audience knows already what the sobered character has yet to discover. As in the case of Pentheus’ mother, Agave, spectators may watch a character struggle through their hangover with an already-established knowledge of her destiny. Watching Agave squirm with remorse creates a discomfort on part of the audience, as well.

Just as Agave’s character arc mirrors the intoxication process, Euripides uses the same transformative process to develop Pentheus. Since Greek Tragedy conveys the party scene without staging it, the Messenger has a great responsibility to convey the ecstatic frenzy of the

Bacchante women. Pentheus relays the rumor of the Bacchantes, information he gathered from the Messenger:

I was away from Thebes when I heard the news:

News of strange and evil doings here. Women are leaving home
to follow Bacchus, they say, to honor him in sacred rites.

Our women run wild upon the wooded hills, dancing
to honor this new God, Bacchus, whoever he is.

They revel around the brimming bowl of wine...⁷⁷

Then, to Pentheus' dismay, he discovers that his *mother* participates in these Dionysian rites. Dionysus works his way slowly into the community, multiplying his followers by enlisting more Bacchantes with the power of his wine. Finally, Dionysus enlists Pentheus himself with the idea of spying on the Bacchantes. At this time, Euripides might make the audience feel comfortable *laughing*, because Pentheus parades around in women's dress in order to disguise himself. Like a wild party, the dramatic mood of *The Bacchae* becomes steadily drunker and the audience might forget that it is a tragedy upon the sight of Pentheus in a gown. In Tiffany's modern *Bacchae*, Pentheus' cross-dressing scene smacks of a modern day drag-show – evoking wild and unbridled sexuality. That is, until the news of Pentheus' horrific slaughter and Agave's *anagnorisis* sobers up the audience. Almost nauseating, the juxtaposition of Pentheus' hilarious cross-dressing and his violent death makes for an uncomfortable “hungover” feeling at the end of the play. This feeling of distaste demonstrates the structural hangover of Euripides *Bacchae*: the playwright intoxicates his audience with humor, only to leave them feeling hung-over with the tragic consequences of Pentheus' actions.⁷⁸

Agave's *anagnorisis* brings up questions surrounding alcohol and truth. In her case, the proverbial *in vino veritas*, seems insufficiently true. Agave discovers truth *after* the wine-drunk of Dionysus has worn off, so for her the absence of wine illuminates her truth. For Agave, it is *ex vino veritas* that allows her to see the grave reality of her violent action. Also, Pentheus disguises his gender under the influence of the wine-god, and his true identity revealed only after his mother sobers up. Through Agave, we identify Pentheus' in a dismembered state; we recognize the head which Agave clutches in her hands as what is left of her son, Pentheus. In *The Bacchae*, characters and audience realize the truth post-party scene – during the hangover, or *anagnorisis*, scene.

Jean and Julie's Morning After

Besides being a stock dramatic convention in Greek tragedy, *anagnorisis* also finds its way into dramatic realism. Eugene O'Neill introduces us to the alcoholic lifestyle in *The Iceman Cometh*, depicting men, whose "party scene" has long since ended, nursing their bottles of beer and liquor in a search for a pinch of meaning in their lives.⁷⁹ The play depicts, in a sense, a build up to a "hangover scene:" a moment in which the effect of a character's intoxication contrasts with the structure of the real world, thus encouraging rational evaluation of intoxicated decisions. Realism, as a mirror of society, shows us "how it is," while the characters continue their existence, unaware of this reality. In *The Iceman Cometh*, we recognize the character's lowliness more fully than the characters themselves; we are not intoxicated, they are. At the same time, however, realism's similarity to reality may intoxicate us – the audience – by mirroring our experience. In this sense, realism both sobers and intoxicates: at times providing

an example of humanity for us to observe; at others, making us forget ourselves when the realistic atmosphere on stage draws us in.

Shut up within Harry Hope's dark and gloomy barroom, the only notion we have of the real world outside comes from the reflections of the men themselves. Steeped in broken dreams and promises, they avoid the painfulness of a hangover by drinking steadily. Stephen A. Black, in his essay on tragedy in O'Neill, determines a tragic structure within Larry's experience:

Anagnorisis brings Larry, at the end, to the thing he has spent his life resisting, to feel life's infinite sadness and know that his intellectual searching has blinded him to fundamental facts that he thought he knew better than most: that existence implies mortality; and that human understanding, whatever else it may do, requires us to anticipate our own death.⁸⁰

In the bar, Larry finally *feels* the sadness which alcohol numbed him from feeling. Larry, in *The Iceman Cometh*, feels true emotion when he steps out of his intoxication and recognizes his own humanity. The play ends with Larry's painful realization – his dramatic hangover – of his own wasting away.

Years before *The Iceman Cometh*, when naturalism gained popularity in European theatres, Strindberg used recognition to shift the emotional landscape of his dramas. In *Miss Julie*, Jean and Julie re-emerge from the bedroom into the second “act” of the play, experiencing the residual “morning-after” emotions leftover from their decision to engage intimately. In this half of the play, the characters hash out their feelings of remorse and fear. Julie, whose demeanor has gone from feisty to remorseful with her re-emergence, finds herself trying to cover up her mistake. Jean, acting less gentlemanly than roguish, pours himself a glass of Julie's father's special wine:

JULIE: My father's burgundy!

JEAN: Should be good enough for his son-in-law.

JULIE: And I drank beer!

JEAN: That only shows your taste is worse than mine.⁸¹

In this scene, Jean, who had been reluctant to submit to Miss Julie's flirtations, now assumes ownership of her as her rightful husband. After the lighthearted peasants dance offstage, we witness a switch of power between master and servant, man and woman. This contrasting thematic atmosphere of merriment with social enslavement elicits the same distasteful feeling created when Pentheus' cross-dressing scene contrasts with Agave's recognition scene. To what end does this distaste accomplish? When the characters re-emerge from their private quarters, we recognize the shift in their demeanor. What started as drunken flirtation game now has real life consequences. Onstage Jean and Julie's intoxicated decision resonates within the "sober" real world. Although pleasurable and light-hearted while it lasted, now the couple must take responsibility for their drunken decision. To deal with this, Julie drinks with abandon, throwing down glass after glass of wine. Jean even tells her to slow down, telling her that she looks "cheap," but Julie heeds none of his advice in her desperation.⁸²

Una Chaudhuri, in her article on partial visibility in *Miss Julie*, depicts the drama as interplay between visible and hidden – sometimes the unseen penetrates the seen, giving us a glimpse into the privacy of the characters. According to Chaudhuri, Strindberg enforces this privacy so that the characters may "transgress two of the orders in which [their] society inscribes itself, the orders of sexuality and territoriality."⁸³ As the peasants eclipse Jean and Julie – giving them privacy – the characters transgress social norms. Once the peasants finish the dance, Jean

and Julie emerge before audience; at this time, both characters and audience *recognize* the risky transgressions made.

Julie's recognition of her recklessness comes when she asks herself: "Was I drunk? Have I been walking in my sleep? Midsummer Eve! A time of innocent fun!"⁸⁴ She looks back on her decision to sleep with Jean, realizing that it was made under the influence – of alcohol, festival, or natural forces – while not able to halt the growing snowball of consequences that will result. All of these immediate motivations complement the sociological, family-derived motivations that Julie might have from her absent mother, her inexperienced father, or her imposing fiancée. Strindberg, in pursuit of realism, gave Julie a wide variety of immediately intoxicating motivations:

the festive atmosphere of Midsummer's Night; her father's absence; her menstruation, her association with animals; the intoxicating effect of the dance; the midsummer twilight; the powerfully aphrodisiac influence of the flowers, finally the chance that drove these two people into a private room – plus of course the passion of a sexually inflamed man.⁸⁵

Julie now recognizes her past intoxication in a hangover-like state, which precedes her final decision. Thinking objectively about her decisions, Julie comes out of her intoxicated state and into the "real world." As an audience, we are stripped of our spectacular entertainments – afforded to us by the merry peasants – and subsequently asked to evaluate the situation. In the absence of the intoxicating spectacle, the play formally transforms back into a naturalistic drama, encouraging objectification of the character's decisions. Chaudhuri describes what happens when both characters bare their inner psyche after the dance, making the hidden seen:

...the naturalist agenda transfers the function of recognition from the protagonists to the spectator; here discovery and revelation are of a purely hermeneutic order, within the theatre but outside the drama.⁸⁶

As the hidden relationship becomes seen, the audience role transforms from participant to observer as the peasants dance away. At this point, *Miss Julie*'s naturalism confronts the audience with questions about gender and class structure. Chaudhuri explains that the character's recollection of their symbolic dreams give the audience an interpretive map with which to determine the fate of Jean and Julie. Sobering up from the flirtations of the first act and the dizzy splendor of the peasant dance, the audience is now confronted with social issues that resonate within the real world. Drunk with honeymooning lovers and dancing peasants, the mood turns somberly sober, with the heavy possibilities of Julie's escape or suicide looming.

The structure of *Miss Julie*, then, mirrors the intoxication process. As the characters engage in drinking, the mood is light and hospitable, and the audience enjoys the interactions of the taboo lovers. As the intoxication spirals out of control during the dance, the peasants reach a climactic peak of ecstasy, while the lovers in the background do the same. After the celebration peaks, however, the two main characters emerge with some new decisions to make. At this point, the reasoning capabilities are handed over to the audience, who now possesses the evidence to reason with the fate of the characters. In naturalism, the private world becomes public – shedding light on the private domestic sphere – and the audience may appraise an otherwise hidden situation.

In Epic Theatre, Bertolt Brecht's audience also appraises the events onstage; however, the hermeneutical role of Brecht's audience is the extreme opposite of naturalism. Instead of verisimilitude, Brecht encourages audience interpretation with "un-naturalness." The downfall

of realism, according to Brecht, is the fact that it over-intoxicates the audience with its regurgitation of a perceived reality. Brecht's Epic theatre sought to re-contextualize every day action within another estranging framework. In his "Short Organum of the Theatre," he describes this method as

mentally switching off the motive forces of our society or by substituting others for them: a process which leads real conduct to acquire an element of 'unnaturalness,' thus allowing the real motive forces to be shorn of their naturalness and become capable of manipulation.⁸⁷

In other words, Brecht wants to remove the familiar societal system from the dramatic action; here, theatre itself sobers up from itself and the world outside it. In *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, for example, we recognize Grusha's maternal love for her child, yet – within the context of the Chalk Circle – we feel estranged by the warped system of morality within Brecht's dramatic world. By not inviting us in, this estrangement leads the audience to recognize the apparatus of theatre itself. By observing Epic Theatre from afar, we experience theatrical *anagnorisis* in the absence of the intoxicating verisimilitude of naturalism. Mordecai Gorelik explains the Epic goal for audience reception:

Epic maintains that the spectator should not merely be relieved of his apprehensions but that he should be shown how to deal with his problems. Epic expects the playgoer not only to leave the theatre "feeling better" but to go away wise and more capable. Current dramatic criticism, which makes so much of Aristotle's theory of *catharsis*, has forgotten all about Aristotle's theory of *anagnorisis* – the movement of a drama from the unknown to the known⁸⁸

According to Gorelik, *anagnorisis*, or the sobering up of the audience, is one dramatic goal of Epic theatre. Instead of being only a spectator sport, the content of the play confronts the

audience with the responsibility of reason. For Brecht, the purpose of theatre is not to intoxicate but to inform and instruct. His chorus is one who “inform[s] the audience about facts they did not know.”⁸⁹ This role exemplifies the sobering potential of theatre. Although *Miss Julie* maintains a naturalist agenda, the audience is confronted with the moral questions that Julie and Jean must answer. For Strindberg’s contemporary audience, the essence of the domestic issues shown probably struck a chord in their social lives, drawing the action under their close inspection. As we experience the nadir resulting after the intoxicating peasant spectacle, we recognize Jean and Julie’s dramatic hangover as a call to evaluate the decisions made and *to be* made.

The Morning After of *Dionysus in 69*

The Performance Group, unlike Brecht’s Epic theatre, promotes theatrical intoxication by involving the audience directly with the action. While The Performance Group stays true to Agave’s *anagnorisis* moment within the development of *The Bacchae*’s plot, what follows is somewhat of a surprise. Due to the spontaneity of the Performance Group, several endings occurred during the run of *Dionysus in 69*, but Stefan Brecht – Bertolt Brecht’s son – reported one particular performance in the fall of 1968:

While the Thebans are scrubbing the blood off the mat, Dionysus, their new ruler, casts himself as a candidate for office in a jolly speech to the audience, presenting his platform and asking for votes....The Group forms a military formation and marches out into empty Wooster St. and around the corner, shouting.⁹⁰

There are several aspects of this ending that make it a “morning after,” dramatically. First, the Thebans clean up after the frenzied Bacchantes, like a fraternity would pick up the remnants of a keg party the next morning. This signifies a return to civility and sobriety. Schechner incorporated this aspect into the performance upon something that Jan Kott said to him after seeing *Dionysus in 69*. Kott, who authored a modern study of Greek tragedy entitled *The Eating of the Gods*, believed in the sacredness of ritual action in *The Bacchae*.⁹¹ Interpreting some of this ritual action in an early performance of *Dionysus in 69*, Kott remained in the theatre with Schechner after the performers marched out. As they discussed the show, actors and stage hands cleaned up the place. This act was no coincidence to Kott: “Here is the true end to your play,” he said, “Always the people come and clean away the blood.”⁹² By saying this, Kott hit on something fundamental about the sobering effect of The Performance Group’s theatre: once the play is over, the audience must “re-enter” the real world. Since the show involves so much audience participation, the play becomes an experience – and for that, the play intoxicates the audience. In his theory of Rasaesthetics, Richard Schechner uses ancient Indian Sanskrit texts to convey the audience-involvement phenomenon:

Abhinaya literally means to lead the performance to the spectators – and the first spectator is the performer herself. If the self-who-is-observing is moved by the self-who-is-performing the performance will be a success⁹³

Though Schechner conceptualized *Rasaesthetics* a decade after *Dionysus in 69* was performed, he incorporated these self-referential gestures and dialogue in prior performances, an incorporation which encourages the same behavior in the audience. As mentioned before, Bertolt Brecht incited a movement of intellectually engaging the audience. The Performance Group took this a step further as they physically engaged the audience in the action. When the

performers refer to their true “selves,” as the members of the Performance Group did – as human beings and not as characters – the audience gets acquainted with the actor and can step into the performance. Sometimes audience members would participate, as in the end of the performance, when the audience follows the actors onto the Wooster Street and, inversely, steps out of the performance and into reality once again.

As they follow the performers onto Wooster Street, outside the theatre, the process of the audience’s physical re-emergence into the outside world has a sobering effect. Undoubtedly, the audience members felt the shift into reality, witnessing the urban surrounding contrast with the theatricality of the performance space inside the garage theatre; this may be something the audience forgot about that while actually experiencing – and being intoxicated by – the performance. Willful and participating audience members undergo a sort of theatrical “blackout” while experiencing *Dionysus in 69*, “coming to” when they re-emerge with the actors onto the street. Unlike a real blackout, however, the audience members recall their experience in the theatre and carry it outside of the physical theatre. Also, unlike Agave, they might not feel remorse for the intoxication they just underwent. During this moment of emergence, the audience regains their awareness as they stagger out the doors of the theatre. As Agave discovered truth through *anagnorisis* in the original *Bacchae*, the audience of *Dionysus in 69* re-discovers their humanity when they re-emerge into the world.

Is, then, the saying *in vino veritas* untrue for *Dionysus in 69*? If the audience remembers their identity upon leaving the performance, it seems that the intoxication of the experience hinders truth. We must remember, however, Schechner’s concept of Rasaesthetics: the actors in *Dionysus in 69* refer to their actual selves during the performance. In Rasaesthetics, performance

is discovery of the true self. Often, the actors' real names are used in performance. References to their personal lives, furthermore, come out in the dialogue. This self-referential nature, according to Schechner, added to the present and hospitable nature of the performance.

Some members of The Performance Group, however, became disillusioned with the intoxication of the Group's method. David Savran describes this ideological disillusionment in *Breaking the Rules: The Wooster Group*, an account of Elizabeth LeCompte's offshoot company from The Performance Group. Joining The Performance Group in 1970 because of the rejection of commercial theatre and standard method acting she saw in *Dionysus in 69*, LeCompte wanted to take part in the anti-theatre movement. After years of apprenticeship under Schechner, however, LeCompte began to disagree with his performance style. She described Schechner as a "guru," who valued his leadership role over the group's artistic input.⁹⁴ The birth-ritual in *Dionysus in 69* exemplifies Schechner's style, which LeCompte felt was too ritualized and not spontaneous enough. In her own moment of artistic *anagnorisis*, LeCompte evaluated her past accomplishments with The Performance Group; realizing her transformation, she resolved to change her artistic goals with a new company, The Wooster Group.⁹⁵

LeCompte was at first intoxicated by Schechner's Performance Group theory; in the end, however, she reached the sober realization that something new was to come. LeCompte's reaction to The Performance Group completes the cyclical process of intoxicating new ideologies, which play out in practice on stage, finally overcome by new ideologies that originate from the recognition of the old. Instead of being *reactive*, however, LeCompte's artistic evolution reveals itself in the concept of The Wooster Group's performance *L.S.D. (...Just the High Points...)* The first performances of *L.S.D.*, taking place in 1983, wove together Arthur Miller's play, *The*

Crucible, with Timothy Leary's 1966 record album *LSD*.⁹⁶ It evolved into a hallucinatory play which used text from these media in combination with video footage and live dance. In performance, the play demonstrated historical ambivalence:

by undermining the dialectic of culture versus counterculture[, *L.S.D.*] refuses to produce a closely argued answer...in the knowledge that it would fall prey to the very patterns of thought and action it is examining. Instead of schematizing events and producing a systematic critique, the Wooster Group's hallucinatory chronicle admits the several points of view that history, even alternative history, represses.

This ambivalence derived from the previous involvement of many of the Wooster Group members with The Performance Group. For example, *L.S.D.* questions the 1960s drug culture, as one former Performance Group member, Ron Vawter, explains:

in *L.S.D.* we were addressing our origins in the Performance Group. Many of the things that were going on in the Millbrook house, the drugs, the breaking down of social inhibitions, all went into the kind of theatre we developed from...[O]ne of the reasons why we deal with the sixties in the piece, we keep waffling back and forth, is because we feel a great deal of ambivalence.—Were these people inspired? They did change ways of thinking and perceiving.—Were they destructive? They were obviously both. So there's repulsion and attraction, constantly....When an emancipation occurs, lots of things are liberated, some good, some bad.⁹⁷

L.S.D., therefore, represents a sobering up of The Performance Group's process. Even the acting style – casual and stripped of ritual – undermines the intoxicated style of Schechner's performance methods. In Part III of *L.S.D.*, we see a projection of footage from an actual LSD trip occurring at Millbrook House on a screen behind The Wooster Group actors, who re-enact

the same scenario on stage. Their re-creation of intoxication encourages Brecht-like observation on part of the audience regarding the sixties drug culture. By juxtaposing a video projection of intoxication with a real-time theatrical reenactment of intoxication, The Wooster Group uses the intoxication motif to sober up their audience to the sixties drug culture and, furthermore, this culture's effect on theatre. As The Wooster Group sobered up from the intoxicated philosophy of The Performance Group, their performance of *L.S.D.* represents a sobered response to *Dionysus in 69*. This development in performance philosophy displays the necessity of both theatrical intoxication and sobriety; sometimes, realizations made after the intoxication wears off – *ex vino veritas* – allow for further artistic growth.

*Man, being reasonable, must get drunk;
The best of life is but intoxication:
Glory, the grape, love, gold, in these are sunk
The hopes of all men and of every nation;
Without their sap, how branchless were the trunk
Of life's strange tree, so fruitful on occasion:
But to return,--Get very drunk; and when
You wake with headache, you shall see what then.*⁹⁸

– Lord Byron, *Don Juan*

V. AFTERWORD

Structurally, drama can emulate the arc of intoxication: it all starts with a party and a hospitable gesture of offering drink; casual drinking escalates into a festive party, and finally, realization sets in after the party is over. Similarly, many plays begin by welcoming the audience in and orienting them, this orientation leads to rising action and a climax, after which we are left to evaluate the consequences. Yet structure is only the most basic way that theatre and intoxication interact – more interestingly, both theatre and intoxication transform perception in ways that blur the line between fiction and reality.

By purchasing a ticket and sitting in a theatre, an audience member makes an agreement to participate in a theatrical experience. This “experience” requires surrendering to the dramatic imagination: in order to really experience theatre, we should agree to imaginatively engage with the events on stage. In this way, theatre intoxicates. Certain moments encourage more imaginative involvement with the audience than others. Interludes of choral confrontations inject the theatrical world into the audience. A dance or music spectacle might dazzle us with color and movement. Sometimes, as in *Dionysus in 69*, a performer might approach us directly to encourage involvement. During these moments, we may be intoxicated with the experience and forget our own corporeality. It is at this point, in theatre, which the Dionysian elements of theatre and intoxication converge.

This moment of intoxication, however, cannot last forever – *anagnorisis*, or realization, also occurs in the audience. Eventually, we re-discover ourselves and remember the fictitiousness of the performance. Like Agave, we realize that we have forgotten ourselves. In fact, an audience’s *anagnorisis* can result in an array of residual emotions. After *The Bacchae*,

we might experience some of the distaste produced by the conflict between comedy and tragedy or the bloody image of Agave with her son's head in her hands. Upon leaving a performance of *Miss Julie*, we might feel inclined to discuss our society's ideas about gender and class. As the performers in The Performance Group lead us out onto Wooster Street, we might feel the inspiration to pursue social liberation on our own. Regardless of what the audience *anagnorisis* instigates, it instigates *something*: here, a fictitious creation creates an actual realization. This permeation of theatre into reality, then, demonstrates how theatre can intoxicate and, thus, inspire.

Although we realize that the drunken characters on stage are only actors *playing* drunk, we still recognize the universal human feeling of intoxication – through fictitious gesture. As we have seen, our perception of theatrical events fluctuates between sobriety and intoxication; this interplay between mental stages of involvement with a production makes theatre exciting. If, for example, theatre required us to be always self-aware like Agave in her *anagnorisis*, theatre would exhaust audiences with heavy sobriety. On the other hand, if theatre were nothing but Bacchic frenzy, dancing peasants, and birth rituals, we would become numb to the spectacle of theatrical intoxication. Just as the characters on stage vacillate between sobriety and intoxication, the audience's engagement transforms as well. Similarly, as theatre develops over time, certain genres and philosophies intoxicate theatre artists until sobering discoveries are made. Without intoxication, sobering discovery would not be possible, and vice versa. Intoxication and sobriety, then, are more than related: they are essential to each other. Both states of consciousness, furthermore, share with theatre the essential role of perception: as lenses through which we see the world, intoxication and theatre put us under the influence of transformation.

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