

MAKING AN APPEARANCE

The Hazard of Being a Person and our Stake in the Theatre

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Introduction

This paper is conceived as a meditation on face and mask. I want us to ask ourselves: which is the more reliable, which is the more interesting, face or mask? And I want this questioning to lead us into metaphysical reflection on what being a person is like.

It has two sources: one is in the thesis I wrote for my diploma at the Jung Institute in 1964-6. I took as my theme *Persona and Actor*, and studied Jung's concept of the persona in terms of classical and Shakespearean theatre. I was struck by one possible etymology of the word "persona" in a pre-Latin Etruscan word "*phersu*", meaning death mask. The idea of death as the identity behind the mask has grown on me in the years since I wrote my thesis, and is one source or spring to my meditation this morning.

The other is sexual attraction. Like many others, I am endlessly intrigued by the part played by the face, and the infinite forms of its masking in sexual attraction. How does that relate to the stillness of death?

The raw material on which I shall be drawing for my examples is from the annual weekend on Jung and Hermeneutics which we hold each April at Hawkwood College in the Cotswolds. For the last ten years this has included enactment of various stories and plays. Here my interest in *Persona* has been exercised, extended, made more critical. What I am planning to do this morning is to take two themes from our Hawkwood work, the relation between movement and text and what happens when we represent objects as well as persons, and use them to open up metaphysical reflection on "likeness". That will, I hope, prepare the way for what I have to say about making an appearance.

Movement and Text

In our Hawkwood enactment we work with texts such as Shakespeare's plays, but we work on the whole without words. The result is that our movement is energized by text, but also uncoupled from text.

This combination, or is it contradiction?, is my starting point. It has given us a field of experience and experiment that stretches from theatre to play. Reflecting on our work at Hawkwood has led us to study how actors engage with text in the creation of character,

space and also a kinaesthetic empathy between actor and audience. It has led me too into hermeneutic study of how text survives performance. Critics sometimes speak of a “definitive” performance. There is no such thing. The text survives every performance. It remains in its own world inviting fresh performances.

But in uncoupling movement from text our Hawkwood weekends have led me also into the world of dance, of kinaesthetic activity for its own sake, and of sound as expressive in ways which words are not. This is the world of infancy and childhood play. It is also the world of adult ritual. Movement uncoupled from words is fluid yet aspires to and is limited by a kind of nonverbal text. It is muscular and nervous, yet also skeletal, jointed. How the nervous muscularity is related to the skeletal jointedness has become of increasing concern as my body has aged from 52 to 62.

Sound as expressive in ways which words are not takes us into music or song. Also into breathing, with its rhythm of in and out, which can draw us out into dance or inwards into yogic meditation. And for some of us who live with stammer, breathing raises questions about its own arrest. What happens when the rhythm is arrested? How does that stop relate to the possibility of speech?

Between movement and text many variations are possible. In exploring these variations I have come to talk of “the three fallacies”: three approaches, three perspectives, all of which are necessary, any of which becomes a fallacy if taken in isolation from the other two.

First, we have the intentional fallacy. This is when we rely too heavily on the author's intention for our interpretation of a text. What the author intended the text to mean is indeed relevant to our interpretation. But texts also have a life which is independent of their author's intention. We need to be attentive to that independence.

Second, we have the affective fallacy. This is when we rely too much on the audience's reaction to a play. How an audience experiences a text in performance is certainly relevant to its meaning. But audience and critic are seated together, and between text in performance and the reading of a text our affective reaction has to be open to reflection and doubt.

Thirdly, there is the performative fallacy. This is when we allow too much importance to the kinaesthetic excitement of the actor. As we move into performance on stage our bodies can be carried by their own conviction of the meaning of the text. But this conviction has to be persuasive if we are to hold an audience, and to be persuasive performance has to allow that audience has its own access, independent of us, to the meaning of our text.

Representing Objects as Well as Persons

At Hawkwood we play at being persons. We also play at being trees, rocks, buildings, rivers, boats, animals.

This combination has a pervasive and lasting effect on how we experience personality in relation to environment, character in relation to scene. Our experience of the scene in which characters find and define or express themselves becomes animated. The distinction between thing and person is relativized. Things become attentive. They participate the action. When a ship is lost in a storm at sea oarsmen, oar and hull participate the same wrecking.

On one level, initially, this just adds to the fun or to the foolishness. It is all part of the charade. But over the years such participation of person in thing and thing in person has had a lasting effect on how I experience personality in relation to environment.

I would describe this effect in terms of the (old) Gestalt psychology of perception. There is a classic study by E.H. Gombrich called *Art and Illusion*, with the subtitle: *A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation*. Our work at Hawkwood (and elsewhere) has served to dramatize many of Gombrich's descriptions and arguments.

For instance, he returns again and again to the distinction between figure and ground. Perception depends on an energized distinction between scene, setting, context - the "ground" (which can be both background and foreground), and discretenesses, separatenesses, which stand out, make their appearance felt from within, but also against, that ground. These separate, discrete, figurations are not perceived, they are not perceivable, in isolation. They appear only within, and against, a ground. And by virtue of the same reciprocity the ground owes its interest to the figures which, as it were, take advantage of it.

Gombrich's book studies the various ways in which the distinction between figure and ground can be energized. That is what *Art and Illusion* is about. Our work at Hawkwood has encouraged me to apply the same kind of distinction not only to the psychology of perception but more comprehensively to our experience of being a person.

The starting point is when we allow ourselves to play with the distinction between subject and object. Psychoanalytical study of infancy and childhood teaches us, if we needed teaching, how familiar such play is to us all. But when grown ups allow themselves to be drawn into play of this kind, play in which object is careful for subject just as subject is careful for object, how is it energized and what energies does it make available?

First Example: From A Midsummer Night's Dream

This was the play on which we worked this year. I found myself in the group which was enacting "the play within the play" - the most lamentable comedy and most cruel death of



Pyramus and Thisbe - which the Athenian mechanicals present before the ducal court in the final Act of the play, actors who are presented to their audience as

*Hard-handed men that work in Athens here,
Which never laboured in their minds till now,
And now have toil'd their unbreath'd memories
With this same play, against your nuptial.*

Until I came to work on A Midsummer Night's Dream I had always thought of this play within the play as added on at the end, comic relief - often very funny indeed - of a different order to the comedy of the main play. Studying the text in preparation for enactment I came to see it very differently. As a commentary on art and illusion it is part of the fabric of the main play and tells us, or shows us, about the energies necessary to sustain the distinction between subject and object, word and thing.

In Pyramus and Thisbe the actors have to represent two non-human objects or agencies: the moonlight (which is itself a persuasive influence within the “ground” of the main play), and a wall. Here is how Shakespeare's Athenian mechanicals approach their task in rehearsal.

QUINCE [who is the director]. But there is two hard things: that is, to bring the moonlight into a chamber; for you know, Pyramus and Thisbe meet by moonlight.

SNUG Doth the moon shine that night we play our play?

BOTTOM A calendar, a calendar! Look in the almanac; find out moonshine, find out moonshine!

QUINCE Yes, it doth shine that night.

BOTTOM Why, then may you leave a casement of the great chamber window, where we play, open; and the moon may shine in at the casement.

QUINCE Ay; or else one must come in with a bush of thorns and a lantern, and say he comes to disfigure or to present the person of Moonshine. Then there is another thing: we must have a wall in the great chamber; for Pyramus and Thisbe, says the story, did talk through the chink of a wall.

SNOUT

You can never bring in a wall. What say you, Bottom?



BOTTOM Some man or other must present Wall; and let him have some plaster, or some loam, or some roughcast about him, to signify wall; and let him hold his fingers thus, and through that cranny shall Pyramus and Thisbe whisper.

QUINCE If that may be, then all is well. Come sit down, every mother's son, and rehearse your parts.

“If that may be, then all is well”. I have come to feel over the last few months an extraordinary, or very ordinary, metaphysical profundity in that comic exchange between the mechanicals in rehearsal.

When we came to do it we did not have the help of words. Movement, the movement of individuals and the confused choreography of the group, was energized by our memory of the text, but it was also uncoupled from the text. The problem of how to resolve “the two hard things” was thrown back into our bodies. There could be no “explanations”.

My job, with two others, was to present Wall. I think we did it rather well. I want to try and describe to you two things that happened, one in rehearsal, one in performance.

In rehearsal we discovered that the wall had also to become the tomb - Ninus's or Ninny's - tomb, at which the lovers later meet. In Shakespeare's text, when the Wall has played its part by providing both barrier and chink between the lovers, it exits.

*Thus have I, Wall, my part discharged so;
And, being done, thus Wall away doth go.*

But in our rehearsal, as we stumbled clumsily among ourselves to produce both scene and character, ground and figure, we realized that the text made no provision for presenting the tomb. As Wall, when we had to get ourselves off stage, we fell down, collapsed. (Perhaps there were memories of Humpty Dumpty in our minds). Our part discharged felt a bit like being dead.

The group as a whole began to experience a lot of diffuse grief as we went into the burlesque of the lovers' deaths. Some of us were certainly thinking of Romeo and Juliet, which we knew Shakespeare had written within a year or two of our play. From my position as fallen wall on the floor the need to represent the tomb became apparent. The figures of the lost lovers needed placing. I gathered up the rest of the wall and arranged them as two carved stone figures on a tomb, showing them to be such by kneeling in prayer at their feet and head.

A happening such as this is typical of enactment without words when we play at being things as well as persons. It is easy to pass it off as a more or less agreeable charade. Yet there is much more to it than that. One part of a scene-setting has called to another.

Sympathy is reaching out to include ground as well as figure. Our sense of place is personified. And this is not magical. It is theatrical. But it is not only that place is personified. There is a reciprocal effect on our sense of what constitutes character. We may have realized before that there can be no character without context, without what Shakespeare calls a “local habitation”. Enactment of this kind helps us realize in what ways the locus or habitat of character lies within our responsibility. It isn't simply that there is no character without context. What we call character or personality is context-making. It responds to, and is indebted to, an attentiveness, an expectancy, which awaits us out there in our environment.

My second experience with the Dream was in performance, when the five groups into which we divide on these occasions perform their respective scenes in front of each other.

In presenting the play within the play we were performing before two audiences. There was the general audience of everyone participating in the weekend, and there was the audience on stage as it were, made up of Theseus and Hippolyta, their court, and the four young lovers whose affairs of the heart provide the plot for the main play. This differentiation of two levels of audience, one very much more participatory than the other, gave performing a quality I had not experienced before. It was as if the reciprocal, inside/outside dynamic of performance got hold of me, demonstrating itself to me in my acting. “Making an appearance” and “being attended to” were two beats of the same energy.

What happened was something like this. I knew from my study of the text, and of various critical commentaries on the text, that the exchanges within the court audience during our performance were making various points about illusion and reality and the nature of acting, which were evoked by our performance yet served to negate that performance. I was also aware that, seen within the context of the whole play, these exchanges served to raise a kind of ironic doubting of the reality of the four young lovers now playing at being audience. Textual knowledge of this kind was energizing my acting.

But, not using words, our performance and that of the audience on stage was uncoupled from text. The result was peculiar. The nuances, the politeness, the disagreements, of the textual audience were not to be heard. Yet we were acting to the audience as fellow actors, expecting responses and waiting for cues in a way that I had never experienced before. The result was to build up a peculiar kind of tension between the seriousness, the earnestness, which I was bringing to my performance and what I experienced as the stupid mockery of my audience. I might appear to be playing the fool but I knew more about the difficulty of being real than they did. I had got inside Wall in a way that was beyond their comprehension.

The effect was to make the performance, for me as actor (I do not know how it appeared to either of my two audiences), into a kind of political manifesto. When we discussed it



the next day in our group the name of Artaud was invoked, but I prefer to think of Marx. It is many years since I read Capital, but I found myself thinking of that theological-political treatise as the tension built up in me between the high seriousness of my performance and the stupidity of my audience. It was as if through the labour of acting I had penetrated through to, and accepted, the obligations of the real world, while they, safe in their distance as audience, were alienated from it, to be pitied perhaps but certainly not to be bothered with unless they should repent or come to see the error of their ways. Yet, I needed them. They were part of my performance. The act wouldn't be the same, it wouldn't even stand up, without them.

Second Example: From Measure for Measure

I hope I can assume that you share my interest in how the human face contributes to sexual attraction. Working with Shakespeare's Measure for Measure in 1985 left me with an experience of the human face as hidden which altered my understanding of sexual attraction. Or, to put it perhaps more exactly, made me begin thinking about sexuality, and the face and its masking, in new ways.

The section of this play for which my group was responsible included a scene which is planned in advance, and referred to in retrospect, in Shakespeare's text, but not presented on the stage in its occurrence. An advantage of our uncoupling from the text is that scenes like these become available for enactment. I refer to the scene in which Mariana goes to bed with Angelo in the nighttime darkness of his garden, pretending to be Isabella. It is the familiar, amusing and essentially unlikely (amusing because it is so unlikely) motif of many romantic stories, that it is possible for desire to confuse the person and the body of the desired under cover of darkness. In our performance of the scene I played the part of Mariana, opposite and under a memorably handsome and female Angelo.

To describe my response to this play-acting I must remind you of the central features of the plot.

The Duke of Vienna has handed over his authority to his deputy Angelo, on the pretence of going on a long journey. In fact, he remains in hiding and in disguise in the city to observe events. Angelo is intent on strict enforcement of the city laws against sexual license, and to this end sentences young Claudio to death for having got his betrothed pregnant before they were married. Isabella, the sister of Claudio, is about to enter a holy order as a nun, but agrees to leave her nunnery (she has not yet taken her vows) to plead with Angelo for her brother's life. She does so, and the strict and apparently asexual Angelo is fiercely and consumingly attracted to her. In the second of two interviews he tells her he will reprieve her brother if she goes to bed with him. Horrified, Isabella refuses. When she explains Angelo's offer to her brother, Claudio pleads with her to accede to Angelo's wish, to sacrifice her virginity to save his life. As brother and sister fall apart in mutual recrimination, the Duke emerges, in disguise, to begin to straighten things



out. The plan he proposes is that Mariana, who was once betrothed to Angelo, then rejected by him when she appeared to have lost her dowry, but who nevertheless continues to love him and want him as her husband, should substitute herself for Isabella in the darkness of the night, so that Angelo makes love (if that's the right word) to her, thinking that she is Claudio's sister, the nun-to-be for whom he has conceived so sharp a desire. This plan is agreed to by both Isabella and Mariana, and it was the subsequent sexual encounter between Mariana and Angelo which I was called on to enact.

We were therefore energized by a text of sexual desire: desire as free and fruitful outside the law, desire as worthy of sacrifice, desire as something to be tightly and if necessarily cruelly circumscribed, desire as able to penetrate and turn round even its most dedicated enemy. And, in the scene which was ours, desire that could be playfully, ludicrously, perhaps maliciously but also forgivingly, confused as to its object.

What did we make of it? In terms of production the two important decisions were to cast a woman as Angelo and a man as Mariana, and to represent the darkness by having Angelo blindfold. The effect was to make the scene both comic and deadly serious. The obviousness of the gender reversal made manifest sexual ambiguity of a kind we associate with the circus or the burlesque theatre. The blindfolded groping, the intensity of the hidden gaze, brought something terrible into the performance, responding to its setting within the wider plot of the play in which sexual desire and death are crossed in sado-masochistic imagery; for instance, when the Isabella whose part Mariana has taken can reject Angelo's proposal with

*... were I under the terms of death
Th' impression of keen whips I'd wear as rubies,
And strip myself to death as to a bed
That long I have been sick for, ere I'd yield
My body up to shame.*

The memory of that performance has stayed with me for three years now, as comfort and as incitement. As long as I can remember, sexual desire has involved for me more or less insistent intimations of gender reversal. And the extraordinary effect of that blinded gaze as I led my lover on, served to introduce memories of acting the Oedipus story, thus drawing into relief the many hints of incestual desire in Shakespeare's text. To have acted all that, to have shown it to an audience, had made me more bold in owning to experiences for which previously I had no name. Perhaps it is possible to be confused as to the object of desire without necessarily being as peculiar as I used to fear. More: perhaps such confusion is closer to the true nature of sexual desire than society finds it possible to imagine.

On Being Like

With these examples in mind, I want now to return to my earlier questions and propose an answer. I asked: what happens to our experience of being a person when we allow ourselves to play with the distinction between subject and object, and how do “the three fallacies” help in exploring variations between movement and text? The answer I want to propose, which will draw on the examples I have given you, arises out of a dilation, or amplification, of the word “likeness”. The thesis I am putting forward is that in being a person likeness is given into our keeping. Being a person makes us responsible for likeness. Theatre acknowledges and celebrates that responsibility.

I realise that I am treading on ground that has been much worked in the last few decades. Much that I have to say on likeness overlaps with what Jung says about symbol, and again with what has been written on metaphor (for instance in Murray Cox's excellent new book on Mutative Metaphors in Psychotherapy).

But I prefer to talk of likeness rather than of symbol or metaphor because it lodges both the familiarity and the urgency of what is at stake more surely in everyday language. And from its position in everyday language I think likeness reminds us more immediately of a problem to which “archetypal psychology” needs to pay more attention. I refer to the metaphysical problem, of the One and the Many. How is it that the world is both One and Many?

1. My interest in dilating or amplifying the word “likeness” began to constellate many years ago when I read an essay by the classical scholar Bruno Snell called “From Myth to Logic: the role of the Comparison”. (It is printed as one chapter in his book *The Discovery of the Mind*: Blackwell, 1953)

In this essay he is considering Homer's use of simile. He addresses himself in particular to a passage in the *Iliad* where Hector, wanting to breach the ranks of the Greeks, presses his attack where he saw the largest crowd and the best arms.

But he was unable to disrupt the line ... for they endured like a tower ... just as a rock in the sea endures despite wind and waves.

He comments on this simile of the square of soldiers enduring like a rock in a stormy sea as follows. I will read you what he says in full, both as opening up our understanding of “likeness” and also as commentary on my question about what we get into at Hawkwood when we represent trees and stones and rivers as well as persons.

The source of each of these comparisons is a figuratively used verb: “to drive on”, “to rush forth”, “to roll against”, “to refuse to be broken”. (It would be a mistake to suppose that these similes answer only to the notorious *tertium comparationis*). Their implications may extend far beyond the nucleus of the explicit comparison; as a matter of fact the art of the

Homeric simile often consists in its wealth of correlations, in the beauty and the aptness of its less obvious and more remote implications. But this does not contradict the fundamental rule that the story - in this case a human action - requires the comparison to achieve full expression.

If the rock contributes to the understanding of a human attitude, i.e. if a dead object elucidates animate behaviour, the reason is that the inanimate object is itself viewed anthropomorphically; the immobility of the boulder in the surf is interpreted as endurance, as a human being endures in the midst of a threatening situation. It appears, therefore, that one object is capable of casting fresh light upon another in the form of a simile, only because we read into the object the very qualities which it in turn illustrates. This peculiar situation, namely that human behaviour is made clear only through reference to something else which is in turn explained by analogy with human behaviour, pertains to all Homeric similes. More than that, it pertains to all genuine metaphors, and in fact to every single case of human comprehension. Thus it is not quite correct to say that the rock is viewed anthropomorphically, unless we add that our understanding of the rock is anthropomorphic for the same reason that we are able to look at ourselves petromorphically, and that the act of regarding the rock in human terms furnishes us with a means of apprehending and defining our own behaviour. In other words, and this is all-important in any explanation of the simile, man must listen to an echo of himself before he may hear or know himself.

Snell is reminding us of a time when the human mind took an extraordinary leap. That leap is what we get into when we allow ourselves to play with the distinction between subject and object. Rocks are like humans because humans are like rocks. There is a principle of reciprocal comparison at work which takes us behind and beyond our distinction between I and it:

our understanding of the rock is anthropomorphic for the same reason that we are able to look at ourselves petromorphically... the act of regarding the rock in human terms furnishes us with a means of apprehending or defining our own behaviour.

This is all-important in any understanding of likeness: "man must listen to an echo of himself before he may hear or know himself".

In the play within the play in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, when the Wall exits from the stage, the audience comment:

THESEUS *Now is the mural down between the two neighbours.*

DEMETRIUS *No remedy, my Lord, when walls are so wilful to hear without warning.*

HIPPOLYTA *This is the silliest stuff that ever I heard.*



- THESEUS *The best in this kind are but shadows; and the worst are no worse, if imagination amend them.*
- HIPPOLYTA *It must be your imagination, then, and not theirs.*
- THESEUS *If we imagine no worse of them than they of themselves, they may pass for excellent men.*

Play the wall yourself, and you will know what lies behind the sophistication of such teasing: the power of likeness, a power of which we are all seized, a power that puts us at hazard behind and beyond our distinction of subject and object.

2. Many years after reading Snell's essay I was reminded of his phrase about "listening for an echo of ourselves" by another formidable and scholarly study of the evolution of mind. This was in Suzanne Langer's three-volume *Mind, an essay on Human Feeling*, a great work in which she sets out to trace the evolution of feeling, imagination, language, thought, within the whole context of inorganic and organic, inanimate and animate worlds. Chapter 17 is titled "Symbols and the Evolution of Mind". In it she links the recognition of likeness in waking life with the imagery of dreams, and the emergence of speech with the eliciting of an echoic answer in dance and song.

I find her argument rich and exciting. It took my interest in likeness out of the world of literature and aesthetic and into the worlds of evolutionary theory and animal behaviour. But let me give you one extract, in which she refers to echoic answer, the idea which I first got from Bruno Snell - out of which I want to draw my sense of our hazardous, personal, stake in the theatre.

One could undoubtedly make more guesses at the first sources of language, and still have no measure to apply to their relative probabilities. The only extreme improbability seems to me to be that language arose from some kind of previous communication by improvements that had survival value. Animal contact is not communication; animals may perform joint acts, even pick up an act one from another at some juncture, as bees seem to pick up the food-getting act in a round, without asking or telling anything. Suggestibility and a general community of feeling are enough. It is human mentality that does not remain in the animal pattern. The great individuation made by subjective activity, the symbolic finishing of excessive nervous impulses within the nervous system itself, breaks the system of instinctive responses and begets the first processes of ideation, which eventuate in wild expressions, dance, magic, then the wishing of curses and blessings on other creatures and investing implements such as arrows, fishhooks or weapons with potency and luck by solemn rites, and hallowing the places for dancing or feasting with sacrificial bloodshed. Speech was born, I believe, in such high reaches of proto-human activity, and gathered form when one individual knew by the symbolic

utterance of another what that other was thinking about. For with such concentrated expression came real envisagement, the beginning of reflection, thought.

With that achievement, everything really was given. The intuition of meaning was no longer an elusive sense of import, giving emotional value to non-practical vocalizations and gestures, but became comprehension of the idea in the head of the titterer. Such insight probably elicited an echoic answer; the accompanying act was understood, since the articulated phrase itself could be repeated faster than the overt gestures and manipulations; they were called up in imagination by the formula, instead of performed; and that is mentioning, naming.

Our Hawkwood method of acting takes us into that. Energized by text, but uncoupled from the spoken word, we learn to explore kinaesthetically that break in instinctive response that begets "likeness". Likeness becomes as it were reflexive. It is quite a common experience really, if only we would pay it some attention. The kind of echoic response I got in playing the wall was the feeling play-back even as I acted of "so this is what being like something is like". That is the reflexivity, the reciprocity, the echo, out of which language arises. But the very familiarity of words can conceal it from us. Perhaps we need to uncouple ourselves more often from the spoken word if we are to recover that original *ekstasis* in which "instinctive response" is broken so that suddenly, in its place, there is echo of a different kind altogether, an echo in which we are seized of likeness.

3. Nowhere that I know of is this moment of original ek-stasis caught so well as in a famous passage in William Golding's work *The Inheritors*. Many of you are probably familiar with it. The book tells the story of a group of protohuman beings as they return to their summer food gathering lands and are disturbed by the presence of another group with powers strangely different from theirs, a group of beings whom we call homo sapiens.

The story is told through the experience of one member of the protohumans group - Lok. Here is Golding's evocation of the transitory moment in which Lok discovers, and then loses, "likeness".

The noise of the people diminished a little until he could hear no more than the voice of the old man when it rose in command or fury. Down here where the forest changed to marsh and the sky opened over bushes, straggling willow and water, there was no other sign of their passage. The woodpigeons talked, preoccupied with their mating; nothing was changed, not even the great bough where a red-haired child had swung and laughed. All things profited and thrived in a warm windlessness. Lok got to his feet and wandered along by the marshes towards the mere where Fa had disappeared. To be Mal was proud and heavy. The new head knew that certain things were gone and done with like a wave of the sea. It knew that the misery must be embraced painfully as a man might hug thorns to him and it sought to comprehend the new people from whom all changes came.



Lok discovered "Like". He had used likeness all his life without being aware of it. Fungi on a tree were ears, the word was the same but acquired a distinction by circumstances that could never apply to the sensitive things on the side of his head. Now, in a convulsion of the understanding Lok found himself using likeness as a tool as surely as ever he had used a stone to hack at sticks or meat. Likeness could grasp the white-faced hunters with a hand, could put them into the world where they were thinkable and not a random and unrelated irruption.

He was picturing the hunters who went out with bent sticks in skill and malice.

'The people are like a famished wolf in the hollow of a tree'.

He thought of the fat woman defending the new one from the old man, thought of her laughter, of men working at a single load and grinning at each other.

'The people are like honey trickling from a crevice in the rock'.

He thought of Tanakil playing, her clever fingers, her laughter, and her stick.

"The people are like honey in the round stones, the new honey that smells of dead things and fire".

They had emptied the gap of its people with little more than a turn of their hands.

'They are like the river and the fall, they are a people of the fall; nothing stands against them'.

He thought of their patience, of the broad man Tuam creating a stage out of coloured earth.

'They are like Oa'.

There came a confusion in his head, a darkness; and then he was Lok again, wandering aimlessly by the marshes and the hunger that food would not satisfy was back.

To get the full effect of that extraordinary moment you need to read the whole book. But I hope that short extract gives you the excitement, the memory of familiar ek-stasis which I am trying to evoke in this amplification of the word "likeness". That is the moment to which Bruno Snell refers when he says "our understanding of the rock is anthropomorphic for the same reason that we are able to look at ourselves petromorphically..."

That is the moment which Suzanne Langer is describing when she writes of "the great individuation made by subjective activity" when "the symbolic finishing of excessive nervous impulses within the nervous system itself breaks the system of instinctive responses and begets the processes of ideation".

That is the moment to which I want to refer my experience of acting, so as to develop my thesis that in being a person, in assuming a persona, I am acknowledging and celebrating responsibility for likeness.

Making an Appearance

Which brings me finally to my title. I want us to consider how “making an appearance” both acknowledges and celebrates our responsibility for likeness, and how this acknowledgement and celebration requires that in facing each other not only we, but also the world in which we find ourselves, should play with masks.

“Making an appearance” is often spoken in a pejorative sense. We assume a kind of falling apart of appearance and reality. Appearances are deceptive. They are something to get behind so as to find the real. It is the same assumption that takes, without question, the face as more real than the mask.

But there is a different philosophical tradition in which appearances are allowed to speak for themselves. (It was concisely, beautifully and powerfully evoked thirty years ago in a book by Owen Barfield called *Saving the Appearances*.) Appearance is how the world comes to meet us, and we come to meet each other. It is the presence of what is real - presentation, representation. What separates it from the real is that we forget that both appearance and reality are made. One reason why theatre is good for us is that when we make an appearance we are reminded that appearances have to be kept up because reality has to be kept up too. To represent a wall or a tree or a rock as a person is to be reminded how making enters into both appearance and reality. Another such reminder is the face of the dead.

Making an appearance and making reality. It is the same kind of effort, yet there is a distinction to be made which is of the same order as the distinction between life and death, face and mask. And that is where our word “likeness” can carry such weight, such gravity, together with such lightness, such levity.

The likeness which Lok discovered is not just a matter of aesthetic comparison. It has a metaphysical, or I would prefer to say ontological, reach to it. It makes possible the recognition of the “suchness” of things, and of how that suchness allows for other suchnesses. It grounds the “howness” of things in the “thatness” of things, and the “thatness” of things in the “howness” of things. It is this reciprocal grounding of howness and thatness which Golding describes when he writes that Lok, in a convulsion of the understanding, found himself using likeness as a tool. likeness seizes on our understanding and in so doing enables us to seize on appearance with a maker's hand. As Golding puts it: “Likeness could grasp the white-faced hunters with a hand, could put them into the world where they were thinkable and not a random and unrelated

irruption". Or as Snell puts it: "the dead object elucidates animal behaviour". Because of likeness, those early representatives of homo sapiens made their appearance.

To realize "likeness" on this ontological level we need to start from a strong sense of sameness and of difference, and of the gulf between them. Sameness allows of no difference. What is different can never be the same. I am not using the word "likeness" as equivalent to "the same ". Likeness combines similarity with difference without collapsing, or indeed bridging, the gulf between them. Fully to appreciate the gift of likeness we have to come face to face with the irreducibly and unforgivably "other".

Likeness of this ontological kind is shy, hazardous, rare, precious. It trembles, or it is always uncertain. And yet it is binding. It binds like some interstitial glue or cement, holding everything together in relation to everything else. To bring the trembling and the binding together we have to think of the old metaphysical problem of the One and the Many. How is the world both One and Many? Likeness is what makes multiplicity and variety singular, and saves singularity from the entropy, the boredom, of sameness.

This is the likeness for which we take responsibility in making an appearance. The form of that responsibility is given us in words like show, make manifest, epiphany, present. The "isness" of the world is a showing, a making manifest, an epiphany, a presenting. Being in the world is an invitation, an invitation which comes to meet us. In making an appearance we take part in the invitation by taking part in the coming to meet. I think that's what we do when we act. This is what I mean by putting ourselves at hazard behind and beyond the distinction of subject and object.

Let me illustrate with reference to my experience in acting the part of Mariana in that scene from Measure for Measure, and to my more general questioning of the place of the human face in sexual attraction.

In describing my response to the Mariana scene, I said earlier:

perhaps it is possible to be confused as to the object of desire without necessarily being as peculiar as I used to fear. More: perhaps such confusion is closer to the true nature of sexual desire than society finds it possible to imagine.

I want to relate that thought to what has been said about likeness and the making of appearance. Is sex, sexual differentiation, sexual desire, an example of the trembling and the binding of ontological likeness?

There is a lot in the Bible, from Genesis on, which says that it is. I think there's a lot that goes on in the theatre which says so too. Certainly sex makes great play with the gulf between sameness and difference. We say, or at least I hope we say, "vive la différence." But we also dream of booted feet stamping on male and female genitals "so that the

difference will be obliterated”, and wake in a state of high sexual arousal. Mariana waits in the dark, welcoming, for the unseen, unseeing, groping phallus. There is indeed a blindness to sexual desire. The object of desire remains always obscure. If we see the face we may know ourselves to be betrayed. Yet faces light up, and desire can recognize in the trembling of the irreducibly and unforgivably other the binding of like to like.

The Bible relates sexual desire to the Godhead's creation of man and woman in its own image. Thinking of my experience with Measure for Measure I would like to be able to use the phrase “making an appearance” both within that theological tradition and also as invoking the spirit of charade. Something was at stake in my acting of Mariana which was both far more serious than I had expected, and also absurd. I am trying to make sense of both together.

What I am suggesting is that in playing with gender reversal we are playing with ontological likeness. When we set out to confuse the object of sexual desire we are playing with that binding-trembling in which “likeness” is given into our keeping. It is dangerous, because sex-sexual differentiation and sexual desire-is an example of the “likeness” which makes it possible for the world to be both One and Many. But that danger also makes it recreational, re-creational, in every sense of the word.

To appreciate just how recreational such play can be, I return to what I said earlier about movement and text, and to the threefold perspective I gave you for analysing the energy between author, audience and actor. Think of sexual desire as movement, gender as text. Sex involves creation, affect, performance. But so also does “likeness”. The likeness which Lok discovers irrupts in the “Ah, so it is” of creation. The affect was like a seizure. And it gave to the performance of his mind new hands with which to grasp and move what was “other”. The way in which sex makes its appearance in Measure for Measure is like that. It presents us with what can happen when intention, affect and performance no longer agree what sex is like. Or, to use the words of the Bible, what sex is made in the image of.

Conclusion

In reading through what I have written, I realize there is one major omission to my argument which has to be acknowledged. That is about time. What I have been trying to say about likeness and making an appearance does not hang together intellectually or affectively unless it is combined with discussion of time. Likeness as given into our keeping goes together with time as given into our keeping.

That omission acknowledged, what have I said about face and mask?

I think the one idea I want to leave with you is that it is not only we who play with masks. The world does too. What I have been trying to say about making an appearance stands or falls with the idea of a world in which objects can be careful of subjects, in which likeness



is out there in my milieu, an invitation coming to meet us. To do justice to my experience of theatre, there has to be a sense in which the world out there is “put on” in the same way that a play is “put on”.

So my question as to the face and the mask: which is the more interesting? which is the more reliable? has to be answered by the world. In my essay on *The Winter's Tale* I say that death is an insistent reminder of how unbecoming creation is. I like the play of meaning in the words becoming and unbecoming. They help us conjugate time with likeness, likeness with time. Likeness isn't the tool Lok thought it was unless it can get into the world of becoming. Yet how much likeness is thoroughly unbecoming. If the world is to make its appearance we have to be able to imagine how much it is hiding even as we look it in the face. That's what the choice between face and mask is about. So in making that choice I think we do well to remind each other (as we did with the *Commedia del'Arte* yesterday evening), just how unbecoming the world can be. The hiding and the showing are both here, on the face, in its masking.