Distinguishing Ritual from Theatre:

An Update and Expansion of Richard Schechner's Efficacy/Entertainment Braid

by

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Abstract

This paper begins by analyzing Richard Schechner's distinguishing features of ritual and theatrical performances, specifically regarding audience participation, audience belief, and intention of the performance to determine if these are truly accurate predictors of ritual and theatre. Specifically, the question of "belief" is raised. The ways in which audiences suspend disbelief in different types of performances is questioned and alternative ways of approaching (dis)belief in performance theory are proposed. Schechner's efficacy/entertainment theory is updated using affect theory and performative utterances, thereby bringing emotional immediacy and authenticity into Schechner's model. Building from the emotional significance of different performance types, this thesis posits that the lasting effects of ritual and theatre differ due to the disparity between the respective emotional affects of ritual and theatre performances. The research suggests that in some cases, ritual performance has the power to indoctrinate audiences that theatrical performance usually does not. The Eight Model Plays of Cultural Revolution China and City Christian Church Toronto's baptism and Sunday service rituals serve as case studies through which this expanded theory of performance is tested.

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Introduction

Traditionally it has been understood that while ritual performances are theatrical, they are not "theatre", and while the performing arts have their fair share of rituals, dramatic performances are not themselves "rituals". While performance theory has long held that the fundamental division between performing arts and ritual is one of efficacy, the differences between ritual and dramatic performances are nebulous and subtle. They are also highly individual: there are those who experience moments of transcendence and life changing clarity during a particularly moving play, and people who find themselves unaffected by religious rituals. This investigation borrows the efficacy/entertainment braid from Richard Schechner's *Performance Theory* and seeks to add new considerations to his argument that "efficacy and entertainment are not so much opposed to each other; rather they form the poles of a continuum… no performance is pure efficacy or pure entertainment" (Schechner 130). Discourse from the fields of affect theory, performance theory, and performative utterances may offer insights into the elements that separate performing arts from ritual beyond efficacy and entertainment, and help inform the ways these two performance types impact audiences.

Before attempting to analyze the points of similarity and difference between performing arts and rituals it is imperative to first think about the basic structure of these performances. On the surface, performing arts and ritual performances are almost indistinguishable from each other. To begin with, both tend to include a storyline. In the case of a theatrical performance, the plot is often told in its entirety on stage, while in a ritual performance the story is often part of a larger whole, but both performances create or feed into a narrative. There are performers in a designated space, performing a symbolic or representative action for an audience. They both often include production elements such costumes or special clothing, music, and lights. Rituals

and drama both include movement and dance, often with symbolic or interpretive elements. These structural similarities suggest that a comparison between these two forms of performance would highlight where performing arts and ritual differ, and allow for inquiry into how these disparities lead to different outcomes.

The original concept for this investigation was simply to analyze one element of Schechner's division between theatre and ritual: the question of belief. "When the theatrical frame is imposed strongly it permits the enactment of 'aesthetic dramas,' shows whose actions… are extreme but recognizable by everyone, including the performers, as a 'playing with' rather than a 'real doing of'" (Schechner 191) writes Schechner. I was interested in what happens when the performers and the audience believe that the performance they are participating in has real world implications. How does the performance structure and outcome change when those enacting the performance treat it as more than just make believe, when they treat it as a "real doing of"? At first glance, I understood the answer to be simple. It appeared that theatre asks the audience to engage in the "willing suspension of disbelief", a term coined by Samuel Taylor Coleridge to explain the mechanism by which readers invest in the characters and emotions of narratives despite elements that make the story unbelievable. He declared that even tales of supernatural characters could inspire audiences "to transfer from our inward nature a human interest… sufficient to procure for these shadows of imagination that willing suspension of disbelief… which constitutes poetic faith" (Coleridge 1817) if the story was relatable enough that audiences could recognize themselves in the narrative.

Ritual, on the other hand, seemed to stem from a different base perspective. I posited that the practice of willingly suspending disbelief could not apply when discussing ritual because the participants genuinely believe the performance. The audience does not enter the performance

space from a place of skepticism: even though the elements of the stories they are being told are fantastical and the performances are symbolic rather than literal, the audience already believes the narrative they are being presented with, they have already bought into the reality in which and about which the ritual is performed. There are three major flaws with my belief/skepticism divide. The first is the question of conversion. My theory did not account for audience members who arrive skeptical or uninformed regarding the mythos surrounding the ritual, and leave feeling enlightened and changed even to the point of dedicating themselves to a new faith. Clearly, these audience members do not enter a ritual already believing the narrative, and yet there are countless accounts of outsiders being moved and changed by rituals[1]. Secondly, it is hard to imagine that any Catholic, no matter how devout, truly believes that they are ingesting the blood and body of Christ when they participate in the Holy Eucharist. Instead, it is more reasonable to assume that congregants recognize it as a symbol of Christ, and they forget for a moment the logical inconsistencies of the ritual to emotionally and spiritually immerse themselves in the experience. This approach to ritual performance appears to be an extension of the willing suspension of disbelief. Enough logic remains that adherents are not repulsed by the indirect cannibalism of the performance, yet the emotional reaction to the experience remains intact. Finally, I assumed that I knew the hearts and minds of a group of people so disparate in their backgrounds, beliefs, motivations, and dedications that it would be impossible to generalize about the way they approach an experience. There is no way to know how fervently a group of ritual attendees believe the doctrine with which they are associated, and no way to understand

[1] See https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/toronto/hipsters-of-the-holy-how-a-toronto-church-became-a-hit-with-youngbelievers/article37655616/; https://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2017/04/28/why-are-millenials-flocking-to-torontos-c3-church.html

how ritual is (or is not) linked to their religious experience. It is not only possible but likely that many adherents struggle with (dis)belief and faith, and actively practice the willing suspension of disbelief as a way to overcome skepticism and participate in religious community events.

If it is not the presence or absence of a willing suspension of disbelief that separates ritual and theatre, what distinction, if any, can be perceived and why does it matter? Schechner's efficacy/entertainment divide suggests that ritual is meant to *do* something that continues past the end of the performance, that ritual is concerned with "results" while theatre is primarily for "fun"[2]. This thesis seeks to further elucidate what these "results" might be and to suggest the ways in which ritual might be predisposed to bringing about said results. I have selected two test cases with which to illustrate my arguments: the Eight Model Plays of Cultural Revolution China and the evangelical Protestant megachurch trend as exemplified by Christian City Church, commonly known as C3, in Toronto, Ontario. The Eight Model Plays have been chosen as an appropriate case study for this investigation because of the unique circumstances surrounding their development and performance, as they were specifically created to be part of the propaganda machine developed by Chairman Mao and his supporters. It is theatre that was designed to *do* something, to be efficacious. I believe that it is interesting to consider whether performance art developed to bring about specific results is as effective at being efficacious as ritual is believed to be and if not, why?

[2] See Schechner 2002 page 130 figure 4.4

Caveats and Considerations

It is considered standard practice to present a literature review prior to integrating new considerations into existing theory. In the case of this thesis, one might reasonably expect a detailed analysis of Richard Schechner's existing work on the differences between theatre and ritual performances before attempting to add to or alter his existing theory. In developing my argumentation, however, I have found it more helpful to outline Schechner's theories as I reference them. It is my hope that in doing so, the reader has the relevant portions of the literature fresh in their mind and close at hand, thereby eliminating the need to return to the comprehensive literature review to be reminded of the discussion with which I am working. Furthermore, as I have broken this thesis into Schechner's work regarding theatrical performance and his work with ritual performance into two separate entities, the supporting scholars and theories used in this thesis are introduced as they become relevant, rather than attempting a general overview of all literature used at the outset of this discussion.

It is not lost on me that I am working outside my own cultural background in both my choice of Chinese drama and Christian Pentecostalism, and outside of my linguistic expertise regarding the Eight Model Plays as well. I believe, however, that the language used in Maoist Peking opera is straightforward enough and there is enough English language literature written on the Eight Model Plays that analysis can be undertaken in English without compromising the fundamental understanding of these performances. Furthermore, the Eight Model Plays were written and performed in a country with seven main languages and hundreds of mutually unintelligible dialects (http://www.chinalanguage.com/). Given this atmosphere, the plays were designed to tell stories visually through movement, dance, and colour, and the dialogue and lyrics were not the central means of communicating plot and meaning. In fact, two of the "plays"

are ballets and one is a symphony, with no spoken language at all. The remaining five are Peking operas, and as with most opera, the story telling is largely performed through music and gesture. The plays were turned into movies at the height of the Cultural Revolution and are in many cases direct stage-to-film adaptations. These films serve as reasonable facsimiles of the operas themselves, and have allowed me to get a sense of the construction, message, and tone of the plays. In the case of C3 Toronto, trips to Sunday services and video and audio recordings of sermons and rituals have allowed me to witness the structure and presentation of ritual at C3. Testimonial videos of congregants and church leaders describing their experiences with C3 provide a window through which I can claim some small insight into the way the church and its rituals effect the community members. Additionally, C3 Toronto is an evangelical church, which suggests that it intends to be both welcoming and comprehensible to outsiders.

It would be just to ask why I have undertaken a project about the ways in which individuals are effected by an experience without talking to individuals who have undergone that experience. Naturally, one way to approach the questions posed in this investigation would be to interview people who lived through the Cultural Revolution and those who attend evangelical churches to learn how these performances have influenced their hearts and minds. I have chosen to use discourse analysis to analyze the link between performance and indoctrination rather than engage in ethnographic research or conducting participant interviews for several reasons. Most critically, I believe that interviewing people who currently participate a faith-based practice and people who have lived through a traumatic dictatorship to be unethical. In the case of C3, asking participants to reflect on experiences of ritual may inadvertently alter both the way in which they talk about the experience and the way they interact with ritual going forward. Turning to the survivors of China's Cultural Revolution, asking participants to reflect on a time of stress, fear,

and danger to obtain an understanding of the way they perceived theatre while living in Mao's China seems insensitive and unnecessary. There are many biographies and interviews publicly available from which to base my understanding of the Eight Model Plays. Furthermore, the analysis from these interviews would not only be subjective but reductionist, looking for common words, phrases, and descriptions amongst the participant interviews to encompass experiences that are as disparate and individual as the people participating in them, leading to inaccurate data. I believe that assumptions and reasonable inferences may be drawn from the way these performances are described and remembered by others and the way people, including myself, react to these performances. This thesis lays the ground work for further investigation into performance and cognition – a literature review and analysis that could be expanded upon through immersive, long term ethnography and cognitive science experiments - but time and resources allow only for this preliminary research.

Mao's China and the Eight Model Plays

The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution began in May of 1966. Chairman Mao Zedong, who had been forced to step down as President of the People's Republic of China after the economically disastrous Great Leap Forward, called on China's youth to help purge the growing capitalist factions of Chinese government and society and reassert the Communist ideology that had been established in China in 1958. The Communist call-to-arms led to the creation of the Red Guard, a paramilitary force comprised of high school and university students with the stated goal of "[making] China red [Communist] from inside out" (Chong 105), and in August more than one million Red Guards gathered in Tiananmen Square to rally for the reinstatement of Chairman Mao as leader of China and a recommitment to Communist ideals. Upon his return to power, Mao's party called for the destruction of the Four Olds: old customs, old culture, old habits, and old ideas. The devastation that followed this statement included the ransacking of historical and religious sites such as the tomb of Confucius and an overhaul of China's traditional arts leading to the creation of new dramatic works that exemplified and glorified China's new political and cultural climate.

Traditionally, theatre in China was performed for the court and nobility, and story lines were often lifted from Chinese mythology and history and focused on gods, kings, and heroes. During the Cultural Revolution the Communist party banned all art that did not endorse the Maoist agenda, and Jiang Qing, Mao Zedong's wife, commissioned and oversaw the creation of new "model plays", all of which espoused Communist ideals. It is important to note that although the Mao era plays were collectively referred as the Eight Model Plays (Yang Ban Xi), there were neither eight of them nor were they plays. By the end of the Cultural Revolution, eighteen different productions had been created made up of operas, ballets, and symphonies. The

original Eight Model Plays were comprised of five Peking operas, two ballets, and a symphony and were written about common people who fought for the revolution as Mao believed that "art must serve the interests of the workers, peasants, and soldiers and must conform to proletarian ideology" (Lu 115). A simple reading of the scripts or viewing of the films and performance recordings makes the goal and message of the Eight Model Plays clear. Quotes about the glory of the revolution and the bravery and tenacity of the revolutionaries from Chairman Mao himself open many of the plays. *The Legend of the Red Lantern*, for example, begins with the words: "Thousands of revolutionary pioneers died for the revolutionary cause. To achieve the final success of the revolutionary cause, let us follow their foot paths and continue the revolutionary cause" (Chen).

It is not only in reading the scripts that it is evident that Mao's model Plays were commissioned and performed to spread the Communist message to the populous, however– he made his cultural objectives clear in a 1942 talk on literature and art at the Yenan Forum.

> We should take over the rich legacy and the good traditions in literature and art that have been handed down from past ages in China and foreign countries, but the aim must still be to serve the masses of the people. Nor do we refuse to utilize the literary and artistic forms of the past, but in our hands these old forms, remoulded and infused with new content, also become something revolutionary in the service of the people. (Mao 1942)

In addition to focusing on the "common man", the Eight Model Plays also feature story lines in which characters often suffered or died gloriously for the revolution. Historical events that marked moments of triumph for the Communists were fictionalized and adapted into plots: *Taking Tiger Mountain by Strategy* is based on the true story of Yang Zirong, a Communist soldier who infiltrated a gang of bandits and helped his troop eradicate them. *The Legend of the Red Lantern* follows the story of undercover agents of the revolution disguised as railway workers in Hulin during the Japanese occupation. The ballet *The Red Detachment of Women* tells

the story of a special all-female regiment of the Red Army and their efforts to free slave girls being held by wealthy Chinese land owners. Messages of the importance of public participation in the ongoing struggle against capitalist ideals and foreign invasion and intervention are interwoven with stories of multi-generational support for the revolution. In many of the plays, a leader or hero of the revolution dies and the mantle is taken up by a younger relative or protégé. The continuity of the revolution and the responsibility incumbent upon each citizen to pass the torch from generation to generation and carry on the tradition of the Cultural Revolution is deeply imbedded in the Eight Model Plays.

It is noteworthy that the Eight Model Plays are not simply vehicles for Maoist propaganda – they are also works of art. Jiang Qing "was canny enough to harness what she saw as the greater emotive power of Western music and combine it with traditional Chinese instruments… She recruited the most talented composers and artists to ensure the music and dancing were superb" (Chen 2012). When the Communist party banned all non-Communist theatre, they replaced the traditional operas with entertaining, engaging, high quality productions of their own. In fact, the Eight Model Plays have enjoyed a resurgence since the 1990's, and are now performed in China in the interest of remembering the past and out of a sense of nostalgia. "It's like if you grew up listening to the Beatles… whether you liked them or hated them, the music is still a part of your childhood. So for many people who grew up in China in the 60s and 70s, it's part of their youth. And the music has stood the test of time" (Chen 2012). It is this interesting intersection of artistic merit and political purpose that make the Eight Model Plays an interesting case study for this investigation.

C3 Toronto

Toronto's Christian City Church (C3) is one of more than 470 C3 churches in 64 countries worldwide[3]. The global organization was founded by Phil and Christine Pringle in Australia in 1980, and the Toronto chapter was founded by Sam and Jess Picken in 2012. The Toronto congregation has grown from 8 to 800 attendees over the last five years, and the demographic is overwhelmingly made up of people in their 20s and 30s[4]. The stated mission of C3 Toronto is "we exist to connect people to God", and founder and Pastor Sam Picken is clear about how he intends to bring religiosity to the Millennial demographic.

> I think it seems like (Jesus is) un-relatable because we picture him in his surroundings, in his context from back in the day, but if he was alive today, I would think that he would have an Instagram account, I think he would wear similar clothes to what we wear, I think he would hang out at Trinity-Bellwoods and he'd probably drink coffee from many of the cafes that we go to today… What we try and do at C3 is talk about the Bible and talk about Jesus and make the (services) relatable and real.
> (Picken to Hong 2017)

C3 is a modern take on a traditional church. It uses live rock bands and video projections in their Sunday services. They encourage congregants to form connect groups with other members of the church that bring together people with common interests that are decidedly secular: sports, video games, and french fries, for example. Pastors wear street clothes and speak conversationally, in the vernacular, talking about social media and craft breweries as they preach the Bible.

C3 Global is an evangelical, Pentecostal church movement. David Bebbington identified four characteristics of evangelism[5]: conversionism – "the spiritually lost condition of all people and the essential need for the new birth by faith in Jesus Christ", Biblicism – "The Bible is the

[3] https://c3churchglobal.com/about-c3-church-global/
[4] https://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2017/04/28/why-are-millenials-flocking-to-torontos-c3-church.html
[5] Bebbington 1989

living word of God. It is infallible, authoritative and everlasting and is the foundation of all Christian doctrine", crucicentrism – "we believe in His virgin birth, in His sinless life, in His miracles, in His victorious and atoning death, in His bodily resurrection, in His ascension to the right hand of the Father, His constant intercession and in His imminent return", and activism – "our vision is to plant C3 Churches in cities all around the world. Our True North is the salvation of lost people. That is our primary purpose. We will continue to plant churches all over the world so God can be found and lives transformed for eternity" (c3churchglobal.com). Chief among C3's stated goals in the spread of Christianity, and the desire to bring young people back to the church as the religiosity of the younger generations continues to decline. "Phil is passionate about building faith-filled, anointed churches that are motivated to reach the lost, and make disciples" (https://c3churchglobal.com/about-c3-church-global/).

C3 Toronto does not have a traditional church building, instead they rent out the amphitheatre of two local high schools on Sundays for services. They have grown so large that they have split their congregation into two campuses and hold four services every Sunday, three at their West Campus and one on their East. They hold prayer meetings every Thursday evening and host a variety of events throughout the month. They try to foster a community spirit and emphasize the importance of integrating the church and the Bible into everyday life. The church is interested in staying modern, current, and relevant. It serves free tea and coffee outside the amphitheatre doors from its "C3 Café". It encourages photos and social media presence and has its own hashtag. It has abandoned the traditional hymns for rock and roll music with a Christian message. It has a production team that coordinates lights, sound systems, and videos. Although C3 Global's website lists among its core beliefs that marriage is between a man and a woman and that sexual intercourse is only for the purposes of procreation and should be saved for

marriage, C3 Toronto "avoids the language of judgment and sanction… the church [is disinclined] to tell people how to live their lives" (Andrew-Gee 2018).

Everything C3 Toronto does seeks to connect their church community to God and to each other, and to make Christianity and the Bible relevant in an increasingly secular world. The videos of congregants being baptized are particularly telling: a large pool is set up outside the steps of the church with the house band playing, surrounded by members of the C3 community. The people being baptized wear black shirts with the slogan "#ALLin" emblazoned on the front – a declaration that they have committed themselves entirely to C3, and after being submerged they are embraced, first by the pastor and then by other church members, being welcomed in by their new "family". The ritual is a modern take on a traditional baptism, performed in the heart of an urban centre and appealing to the social media generation. "Getting baptized is the next step a Christian makes after beginning a relationship with Jesus. Baptisms are the outward symbol of the internal decision we make to live fully immersed in our faith. At C3 we live #ALLin for Christ" (https://www.c3toronto.com/connect/events/). C3 has made headline news over the last two years because they have successfully recruited an increasingly secular Millennial demographic. Testimonials available on their website suggest that the church has both brought former Christians back to the church with their methods and convinced people who have never been religious to join their movement. This evidence of successful indoctrination combined with their updated performances and obvious theatricality makes C3 an excellent demonstration of the points outlined in this discussion.

Theatre: Performance as Entertainment

The performing arts have been a crucial part of community building throughout human history. At the turn of the 20th century, Jane Harrison developed the ritual theory which suggests that Greek theatre originated from ritual performances thereby linking the performing arts to religion and ritual. "For Harrison, *all* art 'in some sense springs out of Religion, and… between them is a connecting link, a bridge, and that bridge is ritual'" (Carpentier 11). Links have been drawn between the rhythmic chanting of Greek dithyrambs and the chorus used in Greek tragedies and the ecstatic, leaping and dancing worshippers of Zeus ("Kouretes") with choreographed dance performances. In his book *Performance Theory*, Richard Schechner uses the similarities between Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* and the rituals associated with Australian shamanic quests to highlight the relationship between theatre and ritual: "King Oedipus is a shaman. His sacrifice cures Thebes, and his search, assisted by the townsfolk, is a paradigm of shamanic quests" (Schechner 35). The link between the performing arts, drama in particular, and ancient or primitive rituals perhaps suggests that the performing arts speak to something innately human in all of us, and that their continuing popularity is not only because they entertain us but also that ritual and art "[stem] from a common psychological and spiritual human impulse" (Carpentier 11).

> Orthodox theories say that ritual precedes theater, just as efficacy and monism ("primitive oneness") precede entertainment… These things, or some of them, may be true; but they are not the whole truth. Entertainment, the passing of time in play and fun… is interwoven with and inseparable from any efficacious aspects of the earliest art. (Schechner 147)

Among the distinguishing features that Schechner lists as elements of the theatrical, three of the comparisons bear further investigation: "results/fun", "audience participates/audience watches",

and "audience believes/audience appreciates"[6]. In discussing the performing arts there are always two perspectives to consider, that of the performers and the audience. While this investigation primarily focuses on the ways performing arts influence audiences, it is impossible to discuss one without involving the other. Actors feed off the energy and focus of their audiences – the silent exchange of emotional currency between audience and performers is one of the chief ways in which theatre creates a sense of immediacy: the audience is faced with the real-time emotions of the actors while the actors constantly respond to the emotional tenor of the room. It is interesting, therefore, that Schechner does not take the emotional effect of theatre on the audience and the actors into account in his theory. Therefore, two other considerations should also be added to his dyad: the affective response of the audience to the performance, and the power of performative utterances.

[6] See Schechner 2002 page 130 figure 4.4

Performance Theory

"A performance is called theater or ritual because of where it is performed, by whom, and under what circumstances" (Schechner 129). The first divide that Schechner lists between theatre and ritual is results/fun, or *why* the performance is undertaken. There are a number of performances, however, that would struggle to find a place on Richard Schechner's proposed dyad between "results" and "fun". For-profit theatre has a vested interest in ensuring that audiences enjoy the performances they select and present. They need people to recommend the show to others and to return to the theatre to continue paying their bills and creating new performances. This commercial aspect of professional theatre would suggest that their primary focus is on "fun", entertaining audiences so they enjoy their experience and spend more money on future performances. But in many cases, theatre performances serve as political propaganda, public service announcements, and educational opportunities. Can we consider these "results-oriented" performances? It's hard to say. Agitprop theatre, children's theatre, protest theatre: they use theatre as a medium to transmit their message, but the message is only effective if the performance is also entertaining, as the audience has chosen to attend a theatrical performance, not a political rally or a university lecture. The audience *wants* to be entertained. Schechner also fails to address whether the goals and desires of the audience, the performers, or both should be taken into consideration when considering *why* a performance is presented and how it relates to the theatre/ritual divide.

The actors who were cast in the Eight Model Plays, for example: were they interested in furthering the Maoist agenda, or were they simply trying to entertain their audience? It's an individual question, one that is impossible to answer broadly. But it does suggest that certain performances can be theatrical for some participants and not for others – even theatrical for some

performers and more ritualistic for those who believe strongly in the performance's message. Schechner does note that:

> "A Broadway musical is entertainment if one concentrates on what happens onstage and in the house. But if one expands the point of view to include rehearsals, backstage life before, during, and after the show, the function of the roles in the lives of each performer, the money invested by the backers, the arrival of the audience, the reason spectators are attending, how they paid for their tickets… then even the Broadway musical is more than entertainment, it's also ritual, economics, and a microcosm of social structure" (Schechner 129).

He does not, however, expand on the idea that the goal and intention of each individual both attending and presenting a performance makes it more ritualistic or theatrical based on their own perspectives and expectations, therefore rendering his results/fun distinction perhaps too broad to be in any way useful in distinguishing one from the other.

This moves the discussion to the question of audience involvement in performances: how the performance is structured. The way a performance interacts with its audience is one of Richard Schechner's features of theatre and ritual: in theatre, the audience observes, whereas in ritual the audience participates. The issue with this division is that Schechner himself lists many examples of efficacious performances, performances that he would place closer to ritual than to theatre on the efficacy/entertainment spectrum, that are not in the least participatory.

> This new naturalistic theater opposed the commercialism… and allied itself to scientific positivism. The resurgent efficacious spirit also spawned an avant-garde whose mission it was to reconstruct theatrical styles and techniques while puncturing the pretensions of the bourgeoisie. (Schechner 132)

He explicitly notes that these efficacious performances returned to standard theatre conventions, including the separation of audience from performers. A quick review of some of the most notable realistic works (*Miss Julie*, *The Cherry Orchard*, *A Doll's House*) will confirm that these plays, which Schechner insists fall on the efficacious side of the spectrum, include no

participatory elements for the audience.

Conversely, there's no evidence given to suggest that plays that do involve the audience yield more efficacious results despite his assertions. Schechner's experimental theatre group, "The Performance Group", created performances that broke the conventions of standard theatre and forced the audience to involve themselves in the plays. Schechner describes The Performance Group's production of *Mother Courage and Her Children* by Bertolt Brecht:

> The ideas behind TPG's production of *Courage* are common in ritual performances: to control, arrange, or manipulate the whole world of the performance, not just present the drama at its center. In this way a theatrical event in SoHo, New York City, was nudged a little way from the entertainment end of the continuum toward efficacy. Without diminishing its theatricality, The Performance Group worked to enhance *Courage's* ritual aspects. (Schechner 147)

There is an implication that in changing the way an audience interacts with a performance, you change the way the performance acts upon the audience, that involving the audience directly inherently makes the performance more efficacious. There is no indication, however, that the audience experienced TPG's *Mother Courage* as anything other than an entertaining piece of theatre. In emulating very specific aspects of ritual performances, The Performance Group presented its audience with a dramatic performance that subverted some of their expectations and asked the spectators to be differently present than conventional theatre, but it did not satisfy any of the other elements of ritual that Schechner charts. It is not clear why he believes that this change in and of itself makes the performance more efficacious than other theatrical performances.

Finally, it is time to turn attention to Schechner's conjecture that a fundamental difference between theatre and ritual, between entertainment and efficacy, is the belief, or lack

thereof, in the performance by the audience. The first question that needs to be addressed is what, exactly, Schechner means when he refers to "belief". If the argument Schechner intends to make is simply that in more efficacious performances the audience truly believes that the action on stage is real, while in an entertaining performance the audience knows that the action is staged, this seems demonstrably false in a wide variety of examples. It is hard to imagine that any modern Catholic, no matter how devout, truly believes that the wine has become blood during the Holy Eucharist ritual. By contrast, Augusto Boal's experiments with invisible theatre practices were specifically designed to stage realistic theatrical performances in the midst of unsuspecting spectators in busy locations going about their days. And yet, the Holy Eucharist is recognized as a ritual and the fact that the audience believes that the public breakup they are witnessing is real doesn't make invisible theatre more ritualistic: it is still a theatrical experiment. If instead "belief" is a question of believing the world the performance creates is real, this is again a complex and incomplete consideration. Victor Turner discussed the importance of rituals of inversion in his discussion of liminality and communitas. He argued that carnival-esque rituals allowed members of community to temporarily enter a space in which they can behave in ways contrary to their social status within the tribe to reinforce normative tribal structures.

> The liminal phases of tribal society invert… the structural form of society; reversal underlines that chaos is the alternative to cosmos, so they had better stick to cosmos, that is, the traditional order of culture-though they can for a brief while have a heck of a good time being chaotic, in some saturnalian or lupercalian revelry, some charivari, or institutionalized orgy. (Turner 20)

The participants in these rituals do not *believe* that they have, even for one night, actually changed roles in society: the fool does not think he is suddenly the king just because he plays one during the Feast of Fools. The ritual performance is not about belief at all but rather about promoting societal cohesion and reinforcing structure. The Eight Model Plays are an interesting

counterexample. The productions are unbelievable, fantastical, melodramatic, but many of the plots are adapted from real world events and the messages of the superiority of the Communist party and Mao's agenda are certainly meant to be taken as fact, to be believed without question.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge's "willing suspension of disbelief" is perhaps what Schechner is referring to when he notes that in a theatrical performance the audience appreciates, while in a ritual performance the audience believes – that is, theatre audiences engage in a willing suspension of disbelief to appreciate the performance, while ritual audiences do not have disbelief that needs to be suspended. Schechner wrote "when the theatrical frame is imposed strongly it permits the enactment of 'aesthetic dramas,' shows whose actions… are extreme but recognizable by everyone, including the performers, as a 'playing with' rather than a 'real doing of'" (Schechner 191), and yet audiences emotionally invest in these extreme, obviously fictional actions as though they are real because they choose to do so. This is an important element of the willing suspension of disbelief: it requires active participation on the part of the audience. The willing suspension of disbelief is not a state created by a particularly moving or realistic story, nor is it something done *to* an audience. This should be clear upon analyzing the word chosen by Coleridge to express the phenomenon ("willing"): it is something done *with* the audience. In an article in the New York Times discussing Hillary Clinton's use of the phrase, professor of literature Richard Sha clarifies its meaning: "one is not merely seduced by the supernatural, but one must willingly suspend one's skepticism. This… implies that the reader is in control and is not merely a passive recipient of the supernatural content" (Sha in https://www.nytimes.com/2007/10/07/magazine/07wwln-safire-t.html). This concept would appear to apply regardless of the type of performance an audience is witnessing. Ritual is often fantastical and calls upon a supernatural force to intervene or bear witness to an event. If the

willing suspension of disbelief is defined as an audience intentionally deciding to suppress judgments of credibility and veracity to participate fully in an experience, ritual performances would appear to ask their adherents to do exactly that.

The problem with Richard Schechner's divisions is not that they are incorrect. They are generalizations, and generalizations are always subject to exceptions and examples that don't fit the trend. It seems, however, that certain elements on his chart are more indicative of a ritual/theatre divide than others. Elements such as addressing the performance to an absent Other rather than a present audience, or an actor being in a trance rather than aware of their actions, for example are much more individually indicative of ritual performances rather than theatrical ones while his other categories seem to be demonstrably false as often as they are generally true. Even when viewed as elements related to a spectrum, the influence that each of Schechner's divisions have on the placement of performances on that spectrum are unbalanced. Many of the categories move performances slightly towards efficacy or entertainment as they change, while others appear to almost singlehandedly determine whether a performance is ritual or theatre. It seems that including the way in which these distinctions change the ways in which audiences are emotionally affected by a performance may help clarify the role these categories have in determining ritual and theatre.

Affect Theory

Theatre audiences are a walking contradiction. On the one hand, they experience a dramatic performance knowing all the while that what they are seeing is staged. On the other hand, they often attend theatrical performances because they want to *feel* something. "56.5 per cent of respondents said that their 'major motivation' for attending a cultural event was the 'emotionally rewarding' experience it offered" (Hurley 2). It is the task of a dramatic performance, then, to help inspire an emotional reaction in an audience that knows that nothing they are witnessing is real. This is accomplished in part by co-creating the willing suspension of disbelief discussed above to allow audiences to choose to emotionally invest in the narrative. The curated emotional experience of the theatre starts before the performance even begins. Conventions governing theatrical space such as separation of audience and actors, dimming the house lights and bringing up stage lights, and the curtain rising are rituals that signal to audience members that they are entering a differently real space. In this space, the stakes are low but the emotions run high - with a caveat. Theatre audiences are expected to temper their emotional responses to the actions on stage so as not to be disruptive to other audience members or performers. This expectation leads to a disconnect between the audience's affective responses and expressed emotions.

"The feeling body is theatre's focus: theatre requires a perceiving person in order to *be*. The feeling body is, then, both a basis and a means of theatre" (Hurley 36). Good theatre elicits emotions in the audience. These emotions effect the way the audience reacts to and thinks about the performance. Affect theory posits that all emotion stems from a biological response to stimulus: that humans are driven by subconscious or pseudo-conscious responses to actions and experiences that spark an innate emotional reaction before we actively process the feeling.

Psychologist Silvan Tomkins, who coincidentally began his academic career as a student of theatre, was one of the pioneers of affect theory. He identified nine distinct affective engines, that is, nine biologically based emotions: enjoyment-joy, interest-excitement, surprise-startle, shame-humiliation, distress-anguish, disgust, fear-terror, anger-rage, and dissmell[7] (his invented word for the biological emotion associated with smelling something unpleasant). He described these engines "as emotions that rise to the level of the personal… woven into the textures of the experience, hovering around, rather than beneath, the line of conscious awareness" (Schaefer 28). His pairings represent the mild and intense expressions of each engine. Simply, we are, or we can be, aware of affect and its effect on our physiology, but we cannot control the way our body reacts to an affective experience because our bodies are hardwired to respond in certain ways before we consciously choose to express ourselves. "Affect makes itself known through autonomic reactions, such as sexual arousal or sweating; thus affects are sets of muscular and/or glandular responses" (Hurley 13).

It is noteworthy that the *Natyasastra*, a Sanskrit text regarding the performing arts and completed between 200 BCE and 200 CE, identifies eight basic emotions that performers must learn to emulate: love/happiness; mirth/impudence; sadness; anger; energy/heroics; fear; disgust; surprise[8]. It seems that even without the language of psychological theory and data of scientific discoveries, nearly identical basic human emotions were noted and their physical manifestations were studied for use in theatrical contexts. The *Natyasastra* dictates specific facial expressions and body language that actors should use to convey these universal emotions. 2000 years later, psychologist Paul Ekman worked with actors from the American Conservatory Theatre, asking

[7] https://www.iirp.edu/defining-restorative/nine-affects
[8] The Natyasastra: English Translation 2014.

them to move their faces in very specific ways without being told what emotion they were trying to construct. “Ekman’s experiments show that the six ‘target emotions’ of surprise, disgust, sadness, anger, fear, and happiness elicit ‘emotion specific activity in the [autonomic nervous system]… that is, mechanical acting [works] better than getting the actor to feel” (Schechner 269). The historical use of embodied emotions on stage and the current data both suggests that actors are experiencing true biological responses – affective responses – to their own acting on stage.

The difference between feeling in the real world and feeling in a theatrical performance is not one of affect, then, but of expressed emotion. If affect is the biological response to an emotional input it would be impossible to claim that theatre doesn’t inspire an affective response, as everything a person perceives creates affect. When an audience member’s heart begins to beat faster, breathing shallows, when a blush creeps up a cheek during a performance, these are affective responses – the body naturally responding to its emotional environment. It is the conscious emotional reaction to these affective responses that distinguish one from the other. There are social and cultural limitations placed on the ways in which audiences can react to emotions experienced in a theatre. Audience members know that they can express emotion in a non-obtrusive, subtle way: quiet tears, a gasp or a sigh are acceptable, but screaming, sobbing, shouting out, jumping up are disruptive to the performance and not tolerated in conventional theatrical performances. This forced disconnection between the affective reaction and the conscious response to this reaction leads to less efficacious performances because the audience is forced to maintain an awareness of where they are and how they are to behave, creating a less immersive experience.

There are ways to circumvent the disconnection between affect and expressed emotion in theatrical performances. The truer to "real life" the performance is, for example, the more likely it is that the performance will lead to a genuine emotional reaction from the audience. Erin Hurley uses the example of the circus to illustrate this idea. In 2007, a performer on the high wire lost his footing during Cirque de Soleil's *KOOZA.* With no net underneath him and a twelve metre drop to the floor, "the assembled spectators gasp and hold their breath; [their] hearts race, [their] pupils dilate, and goose pimples rise around the circus tent" (Hurley 12). When the stakes are high in the real world, rather than in the world of the performance, the reaction of the audience is unmediated. There is a far greater correlation between the immediate affective response of the body and the outward expression of emotion.

The manipulation of affect and emotion in theatrical performance perhaps what Richard Schechner and The Performance Group were trying to accomplish through their theatre experiments. The subversion of audience expectations of theatre etiquette and structure combined with the unpredictability of the progression of the performance were designed to make theatrical performances feel more true to life. Encouraging the audience to move around during performances, enter the performance space, and interact with the set and characters seem to be an attempt to make the performance *feel more real*, and in doing so make the feelings more real as well. If Schechner's assertion that encouraging greater audience participation leads to a more efficacious performance is correct, it is due to the way audiences emotionally react to participatory performances rather than the participation itself. In other words, making a performance that more closely ties the affective and emotional responses together would still lead to a greater degree of efficacy even if the performance is not more participatory than

conventional theatre, but performances that are participatory but unemotional would not be more efficacious than their more typical counterparts.

Performative Utterances

Schechner notes the divide between results and fun without questioning *why* some performances are interpreted by the audience as yielding results while others are not. Rather than being a question of the intention of a performance, perhaps attention should be paid to the way language in performances is used to effect change, either in the differently real world of the theatrical or the real world influenced by ritual. The weight of words and the way an audience understands language to operate in performance contexts changes the efficacy of a performance. In the 1960's, philosopher J. L. Austin delivered a series of lectures discussing his theory of performative utterances. The lectures have been compiled and published under the title *How to Do Things with Words*, a fitting name for Austin's argument that words are not always limited to describing and articulating the world and events we experience every day – some words directly change the world when they are spoken.

> As performances that generate actions, performative statements become meaningful in relation to when, where, why, how, by whom, and to whom they are uttered… Understanding performatives requires understanding their circumstances, including implicit and explicit social conventions, particularities of the material environment, and roles of individual participants.
> (Lee 2015)

There are many types of performative utterances identified by Austin. The most obvious examples are explicit performative utterances: words and sentences that bring about change simply by saying them out loud. The wedding ritual is one of J. L. Austin's examples of an explicit performative utterance: he lists "I do (take this woman to be my lawfully wedded wife)" as an example of an explicit performative utterance. The words change two individuals into one couple in the eyes of the community, the law, and in many cases a higher power. Directives, promises, and threats are also examples of performative utterances.

It is fascinating to apply this idea of performative utterances to the realm of dramatic performance. At first glance, it is "tempting… to consider stage performance as inimical to linguistic performativity, the theatre as all saying and no doing" (Lee 09/13/2015) because the words in a theatre performance have no bearing on the world outside of the play. The actors are not expected to live with the choices and declarations made by their characters; at the end of the show, the characters cease to exist, and utterances made on the stage no longer hold sway. It is important to note that while the actions on stage do not directly impact the "real world", performative utterances spoken on stage directly and meaningfully impact the world in which the play is set. "We do not consider actors beholden to the statements they make, [but] we do consider *characters* so beholden – if in the first act an actor utters a marriage proposal, promise, or insult, we fully expect this to influence the subsequent story" (Lee 2015). Romeo famously states "thus with a kiss, I die" in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. Usually saying "I die" is not a performative utterance – you don't die because you declare yourself to have died – but in the context of this world, a world made up entirely of words, Romeo's declaration is performative: he is dead because he says he is dead, and the audience expects that in the world of the play, Romeo is dead from this point forward and the other characters will behave accordingly.

J. L. Austin writes that "performative utterance will… be in a peculiar way hollow or void if said by an actor on the stage, or if introduced in a poem, or spoken in a soliloquy… Language in such circumstances is in special ways – intelligibly – used not seriously" (Austin). Audiences know this. Audiences entering a theatrical space expect that the language holds no sway outside the world created by the performance, and as such effects no real world change. Returning again to the Schechnerian concept of "fun" and "results" as opposite poles of a spectrum, the way that language is employed in a theatrical performance ensures that there can

be no results after the performance has ended. It is important to note that this is not the only consideration to take into account when thinking about results: this emphasis on language explains the efficacy of the words directly spoken within the performance, but does not explain or take into account the lessons the audience takes away from a performance's overall theme or message. Simply, the marriage vows uttered on stage between two characters have no results in the real world, but the way the performance makes the audience question their own values and interact with the world around them after the play ends certainly can be thought of as "results". The addition of Austin's concept of performative utterances to Schechner's dyad merely adds another layer of complexity to the question of efficacious performances, and may help explain how and why performances do what they do.

Ritual: Performances with an Effect

"Ritual" is too broad a term to be in any way descriptive or distinct. Definitions of ritual vary wildly between dictionaries, disciplines, and theorists, and many argue that what is ritual is a matter of individual perception and meaning-making, and is therefore impossible to generalize. With these caveats in mind, it is necessary to attempt a definition of ritual before analyzing Schechner's assertions regarding the characteristics of rituals and considering addendums and additions to those features. Sir Edmund Leach defined ritual as "stereotyped behavior which is potent in itself in terms of the cultural conventions of the actors, though not potent in a rational-technical sense" (Turner 79). The problem here is the assertion that ritual is not potent in a "rational-technical sense", the assumption being that belief in ritual and its power is not rational, that ritual affects no real-world change. The argument that ritual does not influence the real-world cannot be proven: several studies suggest that exorcisms make a noticeable, lasting difference in the presentation of people thought to be formerly possessed, for example[9]. There is also evidence that personal rituals changes brain activity to increase focus and concentration in athletes. Scientific American reports that "recent research suggests that rituals may be more rational than they appear…. Rituals can have a causal impact on people's thoughts, feelings, and behaviours" (Gino 2013). By contrast, Schechner writes that ritual is "not simply a doing but a showing of a doing. Furthermore, this showing is both actual… and symbolic (Schechner 105). The "doing" is an important inclusion: that there is a real action that occurs in addition to the power or meaning the audience associates with that action, but the definition is incomplete. In their book *Bringing Ritual to Mind*, Thomas Lawson and Robert McCauley distinguish between

[9] See: https://www.vanityfair.com/hollywood/2016/10/father-amorth-the-vatican-exorcist

religious *activity* and religious *ritual*. While this may seem as arbitrary a divide as any other explanation of ritual, their argumentation is compelling.

> All religious rituals (as opposed to religious action more broadly construed) are actions in which an agent does something to a patient… invariably, religious rituals, unlike mere religious acts, bring about changes in the religious world (temporary in some cases, permanent in others) by virtue of the fact that they involve transactions with [culturally postulated superhuman] agents. (McCauley and Lawson 14-15)

Again, there is an emphasis here on change in the religious world, but the inclusion of ritual as an act done to someone by someone is important. An attempt to reconcile these three theories of ritual, therefore, leads to a functional definition of "ritual" for the purposes of this investigation: ritual can be thought of as a symbolic action that effects actual change from the viewpoint of the participants in the ritual due to the potency and power with which an agent is imbued based on cultural convention. This definition appears to echoes Schechner's assertion that "results" are one of the defining characteristics of ritual performance, but questions of who finds the performance efficacious and in what ways the results manifest still need to be addressed. Additionally, affect theory and performative utterances are once again interesting considerations to add to Schechner's spectrum.

Performance Theory

Richard Schechner's work with ritual performances is largely concerned with theatrical performances that contain efficacious elements. His interest lies in theatre that is entrenched in systems that make theatre effective because of the relationship between theatre and the larger socio-historical context in which the theatre is being performed. "When efficacy dominates, performances are universalistic, allegorical, ritualized, tied to a stable established order; this kind of theater persists for a relatively long time" (Schechner 119). Ritualistic theatre is inextricably and undeniably linked to the authority and power of the time in which it's created: ancient Greek theatre as an extension of rituals and festivals honouring the gods, passion and cycle plays produced by the church to teach Christian morals to illiterate congregants, French neo-Classical theatre sponsored and controlled by the church and nobility, to name a few. It is interesting, therefore, to compare his list of characteristics of ritual performances to religious rituals rather than ritualistic performances *because* at the furthest end of his spectrum he lists efficacious performances as "ritual" rather than "ritualistic": he believes that performances at their most efficacious *are* rituals.

Schechner's assertion that audience participation is a characteristic of ritual fails to take into account the role an audience plays in different types of performances. In the case of some rituals, the only people present are the performer of the ritual and the receiver of the ritual and there is no audience. The relationship between performance and audience is a critical and overlooked difference between ritual and theatre: there is no theatre performance without an audience. Theatre is not done in isolation, it is not created or performed without the intention of

it being seen by someone. Ritual, on the other hand, can and does exist with just the performers present. Confession, the whirling of the Sufis, Buddhist meditation, Catholic exorcisms are all examples of rituals that do not traditionally have an audience. Even rituals that traditionally have audiences often do not *need* them: the audience acts as witnesses and represents the community, but without their presence the ritual would still be performed. While there have been some theatrical experiments that have eliminated the audience, almost all theatre performances are staged with an audience in mind, and in fact it is conceivable that if a cast arrived at a venue to find that no tickets had been sold and there would be no audience, they would not perform at all.

In the cases where a ritual performance does include an audience, the audiences are not always more participatory than a theatrical audience. In a typical wedding, the audience is no more involved in the performance than they would be if they were watching a play: they sit quietly, express emotion without interrupting the performance, and clap and cheer when the performance is complete. Even in more community-inclusive rituals, scholars have noted that there is a distinct audience/participant divide. Bruce Kapferer has spent his career analyzing Sinhalese demon exorcisms. He notes that there are three indistinct but noticeable attendees of exorcisms: the person possessed by the demon, the dancers performing the exorcism, and the community is present as an audience. "All those who gather at a rite can be regarded as participants in it. They are, however, participants in a great variety of different senses" (Kapferer 186). The audience watches the patient and the dancers while talking amongst themselves. At the beginning of the ritual, the spectators talk about mundane, every day life. As the evening wears on, however, they begin to focus their discussion on the demonic possession and exorcism in progress. It is believed that demons possess victims because there is a weakness in the community the demon recognizes and exploits: the type of demon that has infected the host

indicates where the weakness lies, and the community witnesses the exorcism as an exercise in reflexivity, as a way to talk about changes the community needs to undergo to be healthy again. Such a situations describes a different kind of audience interaction, but it does not indicate a *more participatory* relationship. In fact, the description of the audience as ignoring the performance and talking to each other might suggest that they are less involved in the performance than a typical theatre audience.

It is hard to analyze any of Schechner's categories in isolation, and it is possible that his argument that a ritual audience is more participatory than a theatrical one is wrapped up in his assertion that ritual audiences believe while theatre audiences appreciate a performance: that the act of believing the performance changes the way an audience interacts with the performance. In Northrop Frye's essay *Substance and Evidence* he attempts to explain the basis for and function of faith and belief both generally and specifically in religious contexts. He writes that "Wiliam James spoke of a 'will to believe,' and he said of it that we try to believe as much as we can" (Frye 322). It is this distinction that Schechner seems to be playing with when he suggests that audiences believe ritual and appreciate theatre: theatrical performances may invite a *willing suspension of disbelief* while ritual audiences enter performances with a *will to believe*. Frye argues that this desire to believe in the incredulous is universal and not confined to the religious sphere:

> We all come to points in our lives when we feel that we need to believe in something beyond the world of our senses and reason, not necessarily something religious, but something with serious values in it, like democracy or social revolution or liberty. (Frye 322)

Frye recognizes that faith does not come easily to all people all the time – thus his interest in James's "will to believe" – people must want to buy in to the system of belief that they are interacting with, and must make a conscious choice to embrace credulity and believe the illogical

or the unprovable.

> Tennyson speaks, in a famous passage, of believing where we cannot prove. But it is more characteristic of the spiritual life to prove where we cannot believe, to bring something creative out of our lives that everybody, including ourselves, thinks is probably nonsense. (Frye 365)

If the difference, then, is not one of *whether* the audience believes but rather *how* they believe, how are ritual performances structured to help audiences overcome doubt and surrender to faith? The authenticity of ritual performance is at play here. Schechner notes that ritual audiences believe the performance, but he does not recognize that there are aspects of ritual performances that require no "belief" at all. Ritual performances constantly blend symbolic action with reality. The performers on stage aren't actors, they are real people doing their real job. Theoretically, at least, the use of real people rather than actors would indicate that the emotions of the performers are also genuine because they are not *acting*. It also means that some action must be reacted to genuinely: unlike in a theatrical performance, during which the audience can assume that everything they witness has no impact on the real world, a ritual audience must be ready to interfere or react to certain actions. As an extreme example, witnessing a heart attack mid-ritual will elicit action on the part of the audience that would not occur if the heart attack was onstage during a theatrical performance. The audience recognizes that the heart attack in a theatrical setting is simulated, while it is extremely unlikely that a ritual performer would pretend to be having a heart attack so if a heart attack happens, the audience must *do* something. Is it possible that knowing that some of what they are witnessing is real helps the audience believe in the veracity of the whole performance? This mix of real and symbolic action is further muddled by the spectacle of ritual, the performativity of it, the characteristic encouragement from the performers to react genuinely to the performance, to sing and dance, call out, to reach up. All of

these elements appear to be part of a multilateral method for making ritual performance more believable, more “real”.

Affect Theory

Genuine emotional responses appear to play a major role in the way ritual is received by audiences. Emotional connection is encouraged through a variety of performative elements, including encouraging active participation in performances and blending reality with performance, performer and agent, affect with emotion. While a theatrical performance requires a disconnection between affective and emotional responses to ensure audiences remain undisruptive and behave within the expectations of social convention, many rituals have a much wider margin of acceptable reactions. In his essay *Weeping in Jewish Sources*, Herbert Basser describes a Saturday morning in synagogue during which a woman in her eighties interrupted the service by running up the aisle and forcing open the gates to the Torah Ark while sobbing and yelling. This is a heinous breach of Talmudic law and yet, Basser describes this event as "the most primal and essential act of faith possible in an institutional setting" (Basser in *Holy Tears* 178). While this type of reaction is perhaps not actively encouraged during ritual performances, in the minds of some, including Basser, it is permissible, even welcomed and celebrated as a genuine, unmitigated response to an emotional experience. Such acceptance allows for a closer relationship between affect and emotional demonstration, and perhaps means that audiences experiencing a ritual performance can lower their emotional guard and feel more immediately and authentically than audiences taking in a theatrical performance.

The relationship of performance to the transgression of conventions is worth exploring. Sitting in the audience during a matinee performance of *Hamlet*, I found myself sharing the experience with several school groups clearly attending at the insistence of their high school English teachers. The students talked and laughed throughout the first two acts, and the rest of the audience tried to ignore them. As Act III commenced, the actor playing Hamlet took a breath

and looked directly at the students in the front row and said, “Be quiet, please.” He then proceeded to deliver his famous soliloquy. Breaking the fourth wall seemed to stun the students into silence but it also broke the illusion for me completely. Ignoring the transgressions of the audience talking during a performance was hard enough, but a performer acknowledging the interruption and stepping out of character ruined the rest of the play – he was no longer Hamlet, he was an actor delivering lines. The performance could not withstand the breaking of theatrical convention. A less personal example was made public in 2015 during a production of *The King and I* on Broadway. During the scene in which The King threatens to whip Tuptim for her relationship with Lun Tha, an autistic child in the audience began to shout and thrash. People seated around the child and his mother began to complain, insisting that she remove her son from the theatre so they could watch the play in peace. The other audience members were not moved by the child’s obviously genuine reaction to an emotional scene but rather were annoyed by the interruption, the rude awakening from the willing suspension of disbelief they had cultivated for themselves to enjoy the play.

Compare that reaction to transgression with the reaction of the woman in the synagogue who interrupts the service to pray and cry. Or, to take a more modern and well known example, consider Colin Kaepernick kneeling in protest during the national anthem. The statements made in both cases – the private, intense expression of grief and the public, intentional expression of disgust and anger – are made more potent because they are performed against the backdrop of a ritual performance. The ritual of the national anthem is, at first glance, not a “ritual” as this thesis has defined ritual thus far. However, if the agent acting upon the patient is the state itself, or the ideal of patriotism, and the audience is, at least briefly, transformed from being a crowd of individuals into a unified community, then the anthem most certainly falls under the category of

"ritual". The transgression highlights the importance of the statement being made, but it also inherently speaks to the power of the ritual itself: the message holds no weight if the ritual itself has no power. The ritual performance not only survives the transgressive behaviour but thrives as people who participate in the ritual as a matter of habit or duty are reminded of the reasons why the ritual is performed and the meaning it carries. Ritual performances cannot be ruined by transgressive behaviour because they already contain the space for audience members and performers alike to "go off script", to give in to the emotion of the moment. Genuine affective responses are expected in ritual performances, and while some affective reactions are more disruptive than usual, they can still be integrated as part of the performance itself and used to remind all audience members of the power and meaning of the performance.

In *Religious Affects*, Donovan Schaefer posits that all ritual is a product of affect. Building from Tomkins' theory that humans can be aware of affect, it follows that affect is something that can be manipulated given the right circumstances. Ritual, therefore, can be theorized to have, in some cases at least, been developed to inspire specific affects at a particular time and place. First we determine how we want a person or community to feel, or how a community feels when faced with a specific situation, then we design a ritual that inspires or expresses that affective reaction. Schaefer notes that "affective economies produce formations of power that then get called religious" (Schaefer 182). The ritual is simply the physical embodiment of that affective engine, developed to be more effective and meaningful to the community over time. McCauley and Lawson take this concept even further: "religious rituals… containing increased sensory pageantry stimulate participants' emotions in order not only to augment their recall for these events but also to motivate them religiously" (McCauley and Lawson 114). Broadly speaking, Schaefer believes that ritual is created out of a desire to make a

person or a community feel something specific. McCauley and Lawson suggest that the development of highly performative rituals rife with, as they phrase it, "pageantry" make the rituals more memorable and more likely to be transmitted to others. "The cognitive alarm hypothesis holds that extreme emotions signal to human beings that the current objects of their attention are particularly significant" (McCauley and Lawson 122). This may be because extreme emotion is more akin to affect than to conscious emotional output: the more powerful and immediate the affect, the harder it is to temper the emotional response. These responses are closely related to our instinctive, base, primal reactionary brain processes than our evolved, considered, socially conscious brain processes.

Schaefer uses Jane Goodall's recounting of her experiences with the chimpanzees of the Gombe forests as an illustration of this concept. In *Reason for Hope,* Goodall writes that on many occasions the chimpanzees would arrive at a glorious waterfall and start to dance: splashing, throwing things into the waterfall, and stomping their feet. She theorized that these displays might be the early stages of a developing religious ritual. Donovan Schaefer argues that these displays point to affect as the fundamental building blocks of ritual. "An affective reaction to the waterfall – an emotional transport, 'over and above' a rationally organized response or an evolutionarily implanted cost-benefit calculation – compels an embodied response" (Schaefer 3). The awe that the chimpanzees feel when they see a mighty waterfall overcomes them, and they dance because they cannot help themselves. The reaction of the researchers to this display is the more interesting factor, however. Jane Goodall's colleague Frans de Waal describes the amazement and excitement of discovering the chimpanzee ritual: "even veteran chimpanzee researchers describe these dances as startling… witnessing the chimpanzee rain dance for the first time, I had trouble believing what I saw" (Schaefer 2). The awe expressed by the

chimpanzees upon seeing the waterfall spreads to the researchers watching the chimpanzees enact their ritual. The "audience" is also overcome with affect (shock, amazement, joy), and the intensity of the emotional experience renders the performance memorable, meaningful, and worthy of transmission. Returning to Schechner's dyad, this suggests that the question of efficacy versus entertainment, of distinguishing ritual from theatre, is not one of audience participation or belief, nor even one of whether the participants are acting or in a trance, but rather of the authenticity of the emotions of the performer and the way those emotions are transmitted and received by the audience. *If* participatory performances are more efficacious, it is because they lead to a closer relationship between affective response and emotional reaction, not because performances that encourage audience participation are inherently more effective.

Performative Utterances

As opposed to the "differently real" world of theatre, ritual creates a "shared and conventional world of human sociality" (Seligman et al 17), a subjunctive "world as it could be", and adherents react to ritual performance as though the world behaves the way the ritual says it does. Many scholars of ritual have focused on the question of what rituals *do*: the change effected on a society and/or an individual through ritual. Often, these investigations focus on ritual actions as the driving force and main component of ritual transformation and assume that ritual language is all metaphorical and descriptive. Performative utterances, however, are a key component of the efficacy of these rituals. "The history of religions is replete with such examples of spoken words establishing a state of affairs; with ritual language founding new social conditions" (Lawson & McCauley 51). In contrast to the "differently real" world created by theatrical performative utterances, ritual performative utterances both help create and maintain the subjunctive "as if" world of ritual *and* often carry weight and meaning for the participants in the real world. "By emphasizing ritual as subjunctive, we are underlining the degree to which ritual creates a shared, illusory world" (Seligman 26). Even the ritual language that does not do something tangible, such as marry two people, feeds into the constructed *as if* world: a baptism holds no value if the *as if* world that believes in the existence of God and the ability to repent and be forgiven of sin does not exist first. While theatrical performative utterances create a temporary collective fiction, ritual performative utterances contribute to the creation of a permanent collective version of reality, and the explicit performative utterances used in that *as if* reality carry weight and meaning for as long as the reality is believed.

The difference between utterances spoken in a theatrical performance and those spoken in a ritual performance is the sphere of influence those words affect. While, at the end of a

theatrical performance, the actors are no longer changed by performative utterances made during the performance, participants in a ritual performance are often permanently changed by the words that are spoken. Upon leaving the ritual, a married couple does not cease to be married because they are recognised as having been changed permanently by the performance. Interestingly, it is not unusual for people who are not members of the religious community to also recognize a permanent change through ritual, for example, one does not have to be Catholic to consider a couple married by a Catholic priest to be married. This idea is closely related to Schechner's assertion that a key difference between theatre and ritual is "results". It is interesting to consider the idea of "results" from two different perspectives: who the results effect, and the longevity of the results. The words spoken in a ritual performance alter the state of the person or people being acted upon by the culturally postulated superhuman agent(s) (CPS-agent) who, by virtue of their societally recognized power, lend such authority to their words that transformation occurs.

The audience is subtly transformed as well, however. In the case of an audience made up primarily of insiders, of people who subscribe to the same community standards that the ritual is enacted within, the audience recognizes the change as a change in the way the community sees and reacts to the person being acted upon. The words directly create change for the acted upon but indirectly change the audience's perceptions of the acted upon. In the case of an audience that does not identify as a member of the ritual community, the change also exists in many cases, but essentially has the opposite effect. The transformation created by the words of a CPS-agent doesn't simply change someone from nothing into something, but rather moves the individual from one state of being to another, from single to married or from secular to religious, for example. For members of the audience who do not belong to the state of being that the initiate

has entered into, the person being transformed is changed in a way that sets them apart from the uninitiated witnesses.

Analyzing the Eight Model Plays with Updated Performance Theory

The Eight Model Plays were specifically devised to educate and influence an illiterate population about the glory and perfection of China's new political regime and the infallibility of its great leader Chairman Mao. They represent the Communist Party's greatest attempt to aestheticize and ritualize the revolution. "We should place the emphasis on creating artistic images of advanced revolutionaries so as to educate and inspire the people and lead them forward" (Qing 1964). This unique development makes them a perfect case on which to test the proposed expansion to Schechner's performance theory because they are efficacious theatre performances by definition and design. The intention of the Eight Model Plays was to help convince the common people that the revolution was good for them, that they were better off joining the Communists than working against them, but first and foremost the team that wrote them, led by Madame Mao, was concerned with entertaining the masses. Watching a film adaptation of the Eight Model Plays makes these goals painstakingly clear, and offers insight into the emotional and intellectual influence – or lack thereof – of the work. Madame Mao was aware that she could not leave the populace with nothing to watch, but was concerned that the pre-revolution plays did not serve the interests of Mao's new regime.

> We can say that the modern drama stage is also occupied by ancient Chinese and foreign figures. Theatres are places in which to educate the people, but at present the stage is dominated by emperors, princes, generals, ministers, scholars, and beauties by feudal and bourgeois stuff. This state of affairs cannot serve to protect but will undermine our economic base.
> (Qing 1964)

It is better to keep them occupied and amused with spectacle and theatricality, particularly if that spectacle showcases peasants and workers like them thriving under the new regime.

The first division between entertainment and efficacy is Schechner's fun/results dichotomy. The Eight Model Plays, as already discussed, straddle this line as they are meant to

entertain and serve as propaganda. But is there a difference between effect and results, and how are “results” measured? It appears that in Schechner’s opinion, results are long term transformations created through ritual performance: changes in status, in role, in responsibility, in the ways in which those acted upon are seen by themselves and their community. These results can only be undone by enacting different ritual performances. “Things sometimes happen that necessitate the undoing of the super-permanent consequences of… rituals” (McCauley and Lawson 133), but this is not a light undertaking. By comparison, any results of a theatrical performance are short lived and superficial. Audiences leave a musical humming a catchy tune, they go home after a performance of *The Tempest* considering the complications and pitfalls of colonialism, perhaps, but they are not irrevocably changed in the eyes of society. Even a transcendent, life-changing dramatic performance, one that stays with the audience long after the curtain falls, one that makes them reconsider their position or point of view, does not carry the same weight as a transformative ritual if only because the audience can return to their pre-performance state of mind or being without fuss or further performance. Taken from this perspective, the Eight Model Plays can only be considered entertainment: they do not embody the power or influence needed to knowingly, permanently effect change. The problem here arises with categorizing the Eight Model Plays as “fun” when it is already established that they are much more than that. Even without a direct transformative component it is safe to assume that they have an effect on audiences, particularly given that they were the only content shown on stage or screen for ten years. Novelist Anchee Min remembers the ubiquity of the Eight Model Plays in Cultural Revolution China: "They were on the radio, the only movies in the theatre, on the street megaphone. For 10 years I listened to the operas when I ate, walked and slept. I sang the operas wherever I went" (Chen 2015). Her clear memories of the way the plays crept into

every aspect of her life may indicate that while the Eight Model Plays were not transformative in the way that a ritual can be considered transformative, they were a cog in a machine of indoctrination and propaganda.

The participatory nature of the Eight Model Plays is also more complex than it seems at first glance. While the staged productions themselves were not participatory, filmed versions of the plays were projected in town squares across the country. The screening nights became a community affair, an excuse to gather and interact with each other and the performances in a less formal setting. People who grew up in Cultural Revolution China "describe the excitement they all felt when the films were projected at communal screenings on giant sheets in the countryside" (Macnab 2005). The music was also taught in schools and students grew up not just knowing the songs but singing them in class, memorizing their message. Is it *participatory* theatre? Perhaps not, but it certainly isn't the detached audience of conventional Western theatre that often does not know anything about the play before sitting down in the theatre. In this case, however, the question might be whether the overfamiliarity fostered in part by these participatory elements had the opposite effect than Schechner's spectrum suggests. The kind of participation present in the Eight Model Plays does nothing to enhance the affective element of the performances. In fact, while familiarity might not have bred contempt of the Eight Model Plays, it seems likely that it would have led to indifference. The audience knows every story, every lyric, every movement that the actors are going to make before they happen, and this predictability takes away any chance of an authentic, unexpected, overwhelming emotional response.

The structure and melodrama of the Eight Model Plays may change the affective potential of the performances. The highly stylized nature of opera generally and Peking opera in particular may also change the audience's relationship to the emotion of the performance. Dr.

Holland, a Harvard professor interested in the relationship between culture and brain chemistry, wrote several articles for Psychology Today about the ways in which opera affects the brain. He has suggested that the emotional reactions an audience experiences from an opera are derived from the musical component of the production rather than the story.

> Listening to music creates expectations that need to be answered, and as the music progresses, it answers those expectations, creating new ones, that then are answered… Robinson and Berridge offer useful terms for this kind of expectation and satisfaction: wanting and liking. We can think of music as a succession of [these] cycles… Opera, then… may or may not transport us. Probably the music can, the individual aria or orchestral passage, but not the story. [The story's] slow pattern of wanting-liking, wanting-liking is constantly being short-circuited by the rapid wanting-liking of the music.
> (Holland 2009)

The brain, then, is struggling to reconcile two different modes of creating emotion, being pulled by both the music and story at once and therefore never able to fully invest in the emotion of either. In addition, if some of the emotion an audience experiences in a performance is a product of empathy - the audience witnesses the actor having an emotional response to a situation and has an empathetic emotional reaction in response - it is conceivable that the constraints put on the way actors can express emotion during an operatic performance reduces the empathetic response in the audience. That is, the actors are expected to sing and dance throughout the performance, and the emotional moments must fit in the time allotted by the music and choreography. The music, the plot, and the acting combine to help the audience *feel* the performance, but it is likely not a product of contagious emotion from actor to audience because, quite simply, the actor is unlikely to be truly embodying any emotion on stage while simultaneously operatically performing.

The operatic nature of the Eight Model Plays may alter the process of the willing suspension of disbelief as well. "Audiences applaud after a great aria, completely disrupting the

story side of the experience. Watching opera is more like watching an athletic event than a narrative. Opera as a whole is a classic example of Berthold Brecht's alienation effect" (Holland 2009). The reference to Brecht in this context is more fitting than perhaps even Dr. Holland knew when he wrote *Does Opera Make Brain Sense*. Bertolt Brecht developed the alienation effect in direct response to what he saw as the emotional manipulation inherent in performances that tried to inspire a willing suspension of disbelief in audiences. Brecht's alienation effect was an attempt to force the audience to scrutinize their sentimental response to theatre using their intellect. While it is likely not the intention of operatic performances to alienate audiences, Brecht's principles of alienation can be applied to Mao's Eight Model Plays: surprising or interrupting the audience with music and song and using over-the-top sets, costumes, and acting gestures all call attention to the performativity of the production. Returning to Dr. Holland's insights into opera and alienation, clapping during the performance also potentially contributes to alienation. The audience cannot immerse themselves into the story and abdicate all action and responsibility because a reaction is expected from them. This brings the discussion full circle: the expectation of participation in the case of operatic performance makes the performance less efficacious because it is less affective, reinforcing the assertion that participatory performances are not necessarily more effective.

Performance Theory Applied to C3 Rituals

Christian City Church Toronto has changed the way familiar Christian rituals are traditionally performed to make them relatable and appealing to the modern urbanite. It is clear that the pastors and leaders of both C3 Global and its Toronto offshoot are passionate about preserving the message and history of the Christian faith, but they recognize that the church must evolve and adapt to the times if it is to not just survive but thrive in the age of science and technology. C3 has found ways to maintain the principles of Christianity and connect to a new generation. In a CBC article from 2016, congregant Yessi Arifin told Laura de Silva that she had been taken to church when she was younger but failed to find meaning in it. “I went to a traditional church as a kid. I was always bored. I never wanted to wake up for it, and I never connected” (DaSilva 2016). The same article also quotes church historian Brian Clarke, a scholar interested in the ways in which Pentecostal churches attract and retain members. “Theology doesn’t change, but they know how to communicate their messages on issues that people are experiencing in their everyday lives” (DaSilva 2016).

The baptism ritual at C3 serves as perfect example of this blending of traditional stories with modern story-telling. Instead of hymns, the house band is playing Christian themed rock music, instead of robes the minister is wearing skinny jeans and a printed tee-shirt with “#ALLin” on the front, instead of a quiet, sober affair, the audience is surrounding the baptismal pool waiting to embrace and celebrate the ritual with the newest members of their congregation. And yet, the words of the baptism are unchanged: “I baptise you in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost”, and the submersion in water is a key feature in the ritual. Analyzing this ritual lends insight into the power of performances that effect change.

Rituals are efficacious - they yield results. So says Richard Schechner in his attempt to distinguish ritual from theatre. Certainly in considering the baptism ritual, Schechner appears to have a valid argument: the candidate arrives at the ritual an outsider and a sinner, and leaves the ritual newly cleansed and acknowledged as a fully-fledged member of the church and the Christian community: a change the community feels as well. There is a third element to this transformation that also bears noticing, that of the transformation in destiny, in the way in which God interacts with the individual after death. The mythology surrounding the Christian baptism makes it clear that in being baptised the individual has saved their immortal soul and will be granted access to Heaven, and while this transformation is impossible to confirm, it certainly represents an integral part of the baptism ritual performance itself and is in fact one of the central reasons the ritual is performed. This is also clearly an example of the power of performative utterances in ritual performances: for the purposes of this community, the words spoken by the pastor ensure the initiate's salvation. It is not clear what effect simply dunking the candidate in water has, but in analyzing the ritual it would appear that while the water cleanses the person of sin, the words consecrate the new member, that it is the declaration by a CPS agent that completes the ritual. Without the language of the ritual, the candidate would remain in limbo, cleansed but not yet a member of the community. Once spoken, the words do not have to be repeated and the effect remains unless the baptised individual renounces their status and purposefully returns to their pre-baptised state.

It is harder to reconcile Schechner's arguments regarding the efficacy of rituals when considering the weekly services performed by C3 Toronto. Every Sunday more than eight hundred congregants attend one of five different worships split between two venues. Followers come together to sing, to listen to sermons, to pray together, and to connect to and reaffirm their

faith. It is not dissimilar from thousands of Christian Sunday morning services performed all over the world. Returning for a moment to the definition of ritual offered earlier, it must first be established that these services are, in fact, a ritual and not simply religious action as defined by McCauley and Lawson. Sunday service is a symbolic action: attending church symbolizes the audience's commitment to their faith; potency and power is granted to the pastors and through the conventions of the church itself (their initiation rituals and the community's recognition of the church leaders as figures of authority); lastly, the question of change from the viewpoint of the participants must be addressed. There are subtle changes apparent throughout church services: the individual attendees becoming a community through song and action, the shift in focus from secular to religious considerations, and so forth, but these are not changes enacted by the agent.

The change created by church services, then, is not one created by attending a singular service. It is not a single moment during the ritual that can be easily described in a thesis or by a member of the community, but rather is the change implied in the act of regularly attending church services. It is a long term, ongoing transformation, a lifestyle shift that is encouraged by the culturally constructed agent and enforced by the expectations of the faith that marks the shift from outsider to insider. In their book *Ritual and Its Consequences*, Seligman, Weller, Puett, and Simon argue that ritual represents a "shared and conventional world of human sociality" (Seligman et al 17). Ritual creates a subjunctive world, a world *as it could be*, and all participants in the ritual behave as though the world is as the ritual says it can be, even as they realize that this is not the world *as it actually is*. Attending church services represents an individual's ongoing commitment to maintaining and participating in that subjunctive worldview. The "transformation" is not contained to the two hours that the congregation meets every Sunday,

then, but rather the congregants spend those hours in church because the rituals of that they have undergone previously have already transformed them into people who go to church. It appears that while Schechner's assertion that rituals are efficacious is true, it is not the direct relationship as he seems to suggest. The individual performance does not always effect transformation, but the act of participating in rituals represent an ongoing change in state or belief.

A cursory consideration of any baptism ritual will refute Schechner's assertion that ritual audiences are more participatory than theatrical ones. Baptisms require only the person being baptised and the person performing the baptism to fulfill their purpose and don't require an audience at all. When audiences are present for baptismal performances they have no official role in the ceremony and do not speak or participate in any meaningful way. The C3 baptisms are unique in that the audience is not sitting in pews watching the ceremony quietly. Instead, the witnesses surround the pool and the individuals being baptised, waiting to embrace their newest members and celebrate with them when they emerge from the water. This alteration from the standard, non-participatory baptism is a part of C3's modernization: C3 Toronto is well aware that a major draw for many of its new members is the community and sense of belonging rather than eternal salvation and God's love, and it emphasizes the community aspect of the church in everything it does. In conversation with Laura de Silva, Pastor Sam Picken admits "I think the people of Toronto, myself included, we're seeking meaning. We're seeking acceptance. We're seeking community" (DaSilva 2016). The audience at a C3 baptism represents that community, and in making it a more participatory force in the ritual, C3 has emphasized one of the most compelling aspects of joining the church community. But the baptism would go on without the audience, and the power of the audience participation lies in the way inclusion in the community makes people *feel* rather than the participation itself.

Consider the C3 baptism ritual through Donovan Schaefer's argument that rituals are developed to inspire a particular affective response. The founders of C3 Global, Phil and Chris Pringle, "set out to start a church that would be contemporary, relevant, and anointed… motivated to reach the lost and make disciples" (https://c3churchglobal.com/). C3 was not a church movement designed to recruit and inspire people who already believed in the Christian message. The mission statement makes it clear that the church deliberately created an atmosphere that would draw in new believers by being sensitive to the needs and fears of the new generations. It follows, then, that Pastors Phil and Chris, in thinking about ways to make C3 relevant and engaging, envisioned rituals that inspired enjoyment-joy and interest-excitement (to return to Tomkins' affective engines) or intense feeling of communitas and belonging (to borrow again from Turner's considerations of ritual). The notable aspect of the C3 baptism ritual is the emphasis on creating an atmosphere in which the witnesses - the audience – can feel that way as well. The participatory nature of C3 baptisms heightens the affective response for both the participants and the spectators because, unlike Schechner's theatrical experiments which increased participation for the sake of creating participatory theatre, the ritual performance uses participation as a way to increase the emotional impact of the performance. It is important that the embraces and celebratory high fives and handshakes offered when a new member is baptised are not required, rehearsed, or enforced behaviours. They are the genuine reaction to an emotional response and an opportunity for the community to express their excitement and pleasure at the initiation of a new member. Other reactions sometimes evident on the videos of C3 baptisms include cheering, crying, jumping up and down, and praying: all of these reactions are also accepted and encouraged as genuine emotional responses to the affect associated with the performance, though it would be transgressive in the more emotionally controlled

environment of a modern Western theatre production. It is this freedom for both performers and audience members to express and emote with fear of interrupting the ritual that makes ritual so much more affective than theatre.

The affective nature of ritual performance is curated specifically to encourage emotional investment over analytical consideration. Schechner argues that in a ritual the audience *believes* the performance. The pageantry of C3's baptism ritual suggests that the church is aware that some members of the audience do not necessarily believe in the power of the ritual. The spectacle is part of a multi-faceted methodology to circumvent the rational questions that can inspire doubt in a ritual audience. Involving the audience in the ritual is a large part of this strategy: by surrounding congregants with community members that are outwardly demonstrating faith and investment in the ritual, members less inclined to believe may succumb to the actions and viewpoints of those around them.

> When people are part of a group, they often experience deindividuation, or a loss of self-awareness… groups can generate a sense of emotional excitement, which can lead to the provocation of behaviours that a person would not typically engage in if alone. (Avant 2011)

The other performative elements: matching tee-shirts declaring commitment to the church and its teachings, the songs everyone knows and sings along to, the video testimonies of believers playing on screens during downtimes all feed into an atmosphere of belief, an assertion that the majority of the community believes and has faith in the veracity of the performance, encouraging others to ignore their doubt as well. Contrary to Schechner's view that the audience in a ritual performance believes, the truth is that the performance is designed to encourage the audience to believe.

Comparing the Outcomes of Dramatic and Ritual Performances

In the smash stand-up comedy hit *Nanette*, Hannah Gadsby explains why she's considering giving up her career as a comedian.

> Stories, unlike jokes, need three parts. A beginning, a middle, and an end. Jokes only need two parts. A beginning and a middle... Punch lines need trauma because punch lines need tension, and tension feeds trauma. (Gadsby 2018)

This concept is reflected in the fundamental difference between theatrical and ritual performances. Plays have endings. Traditionally, stories (whether told orally, in writing, in performance, and so forth) have rising action, a climax, and a denouement – a resolution. The feeling of completion, of matters having come to a close, is heightened by the post-performance conventions. The lights come up. The actors line up on stage to take a bow as themselves rather than their characters, breaking the fourth wall. Most importantly, when a dramatic performance is over the audience disperses and ceases to be a community. There is a finality not only to the story but also to the experience. Ritual performances, on the other hand, do not "end" the way dramatic performances do. While the specific performance – the baptism, for example – may come to an end, there is a sense of continuation after the fact that influences the way the ritual performance is perceived. In fact, it is the purpose of ritual performances that something follows them: baptism rituals imply an affirmation of commitment, an intention to attend further rituals with the same community. This is the second aspect that sets ritual performance "endings" apart from dramatic ones: the community with which one shares the experience does not disperse at the conclusion of the performance. Subsequent ritual performances will bring together the same group again to participate in other performances.

It is possible to think of membership in a community that enacts ritual performances as one long performance. To return to Seligman et al, "participants practicing ritual act as if the

world produced in ritual were in fact a real one" (Seligman et al 25). The act of attending a ritual is itself a performance symbolizing the audience's willingness to continue to participate in the world created by a ritual performance. The world the ritual creates doesn't cease to exist because a single performance is over: as long as the participants still believe in the power and meaning of the "as if" world, as long as they continue to attend future rituals, the world remains and the performance lingers. This concept is easier to illustrate through the lens of fundamentalist religious observations. For those who hold fundamental views, all activity is a ritual performance. Rules that dictate the way believers eat, work, interact with others, consume or abstain from substances, and so forth make even the most basic human actions sacred. The world created by ritual is sustained through continual observance of the structures dictated by that ritually created world. C3, while not a fundamentalist church, encourages congregants to meet outside designated church hours with likeminded members through their use of Connect Groups: "where community turns from a buzzword into belonging" (c3toronto.com/connect-groups/). These groups help C3 participants keep their faith in the forefront of their mind even when they are not in church and serve as a midweek reaffirmation of the subjunctive world. They are not rituals, but they are also not *not* rituals – the groups would not exist if the members did not share the ritually generated world in the first place. The participants actively choose to belong to a community that constantly blends the secular with the sacred, that allows them to simultaneously live in the earthly realm that we are born into while constantly recognizing their membership in the ritual sustained world of the church. In short, the fact that rituals do not have a definitive end leaves the audience feeling that the performance is unfinished and the world of the performance is still in play. This is the tension that Gadsby refers to, the feeling of never quite coming to a satisfactory conclusion.

How does this structural difference lead to different outcomes? It would appear that much of the effect of performance can be considered through the lens of affect and emotion. In *Poetics*, Aristotle discussed the elements needed to inspire catharsis, a purgation of emotion through watching tragic drama:

> Through pity and fear effecting the proper purgation [catharsis]… Such an effect is best produced when the events come on us by surprise; and the effect is heightened when, at the same time, they follow as cause and effect.
> (Butcher 1895)

The purpose, then, of creating a heightened emotional state in a dramatic performance is to release the emotion at the end, to allow it to dissipate and with it purge – or to more accurately quote Aristotle cleanse or purify – similar emotions built up from daily living. Aristotle believed that theatre is designed to resolve emotion, to allow the audience to leave feeling lighter and settled. Dramatic performances over the last two millennia have tended to follow this formula – while there are plays that leave the story unresolved, they are the exception rather than the rule. From an affective perspective this would indicate that the body is no longer biologically reacting to the emotional input, that it has processed the affect and returned to a state of equilibrium.

> Ask yourself how you feel at the end of a tragedy. You have witnessed horrible things and felt painful feelings, but the mark of tragedy is that it brings you out the other side. Aristotle's use of the word *catharsis*… a beautiful metaphor for the peculiar tragic pleasure, the feeling of being washed or cleansed.
> (Sachs 2018)

It is important to note that although Aristotle used the word *catharsis* to describe a very specific reaction to a particular tragic formula, the word in contemporary usage has expanded from his original definition to encompass "the process of releasing, and thereby providing relief from, strong or repressed emotions" (Google dictionary), particularly through art. This modern definition allows for both the possibility of emotions other than pity and fear being released

through drama, and dramatic mediums other than Greek tragedy to be vehicles of catharsis. William Shakespeare's *The Tempest* is a classic example of dispelling emotion at the end of a performance. In fact, Shakespeare himself alludes to the release of tension in Prospero's final monologue: "As you from crimes would pardon'd be,/Let your indulgence set me free" (Shakespeare epilogue). The act of clapping signals both the end of the performance and the end of the spell the play has cast over the audience. The fact that the emotional response is mitigated or alleviated by the end of a dramatic performance changes the way an audience interacts with the performance going forward as well. When emotion is resolved, rational thought dominates. Modern research regarding the link between rationality and emotion has discarded the long-held belief that emotion is antithetical to rationality and instead has focused on data that suggests that ration decisions follow emotional states.

> There is also a sense in which emotions are factors in practical reasoning, understood broadly as reasoning that issues in action. At the very least emotions can function as 'enabling' causes of rational decision-making (despite the many cases in which they are disabling) insofar as they direct attention toward certain objects of thought and away from others.
> (Greenspan 206)

This would suggest that the absorption and consideration of a message, lesson, or moral gleaned from a dramatic performance benefits from the emotional upheaval that triggers memory and empathy as well as the cathartic release of the overwhelming emotions that make rational thought challenging: the combination is the perfect fertilizer in which to intentionally, logically nurture new ideas to determine their merit and applicability to the audiences' own lives.

There is no such purge or purification of emotions during or after a ritual performance. To return, for a moment, to Hannah Gadsby's observation, there is tension created through developing a story and that tension is not released because there is no traditional "ending".

Returning to Schechner's assertion that rituals are effective – that they create permanent change in status – there is no return to the status quo when a ritual is over. The world is not the same as it was when the ritual began, and so the relief an audience feels at the end of a dramatic performance is not evident when a ritual concludes. The ongoing, unfinished nature of ritual performance and *as if* worlds suggests that ritual upholds at least one of the three principle characteristics of indoctrination set out by Barrow and Woods in their book *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education*: "If only doctrines can be indoctrinated, and if to be indoctrinated they have to be regarded as unquestionably true, then indoctrination must be a process of inculcating belief by non-rational methods" (Barrow & Woods 76). Leaving aside, for a moment, the first two elements listed in their definition of indoctrination, the concept of non-rational transmission echoes both Hannah Gadsby's observations about trauma and the previously discussed struggle to think rationally in the midst of extreme emotion.

Non-rational methods of transmitting ideas include threat, intimidation, judgement, and praise. Most of the listed methods imply a traumatic element: if a message can be delivered in a way that heightens the trauma of the transmission, it is possible that the message is more likely to be absorbed without conscious, rational thought.

> I froze an incredibly formative experience at its trauma point and I sealed it off into jokes. And that story became a routine, and through repetition that joke version fused with my actual memory of what happened. (Gadsby 2018)

This description of Gadsby reprogramming her own mind and memory closely resembles the structure of ritual performances: unfinished stories repeated until they become synonymous with the truth. Here is an echo of the first part of Barrow and Woods' criteria for indoctrination: belief in something that is unproven or not demonstrably true. While in Gadsby's case she has the power to return to her memory of the event and re-establish the facts, the mythology around

which the rituals are created offers no such clarity: it is impossible to *know* if the story being recounted is true or not, but the ritual performance behaves *as though* it is unquestionably true (a return to Seligman's *as if* world) in an attempt to encourage the audience to also accept the performance as true. "The most obvious hallmark of an indoctrinated person is that he has a particular viewpoint and he will not seriously open his mind to the possibility that that viewpoint might be mistaken" (Barrow & Woods 73). Here again the structure of a ritual performance is important in the way the message is received: the use of real people rather than actors to present the performance, the emotional authenticity and immediacy of the performance, and its permanency all combine to encourage the audience to invest in the veracity of the performance. In particular, the assertion of ritual performances that the community will reconvene to enact further performances helps to depress questioning because there is no time for sober second thought – preparations must begin for the next performance.

> The final element of Barrow and Woods's concept of indoctrination is intentionality. The mere fact that unshakable belief has already been put forward as a criterion suggests that intention must come into the picture, for it seems very strange to talk about bringing about… such belief without at the same time necessarily making reference to the intentions of the person engaged in bringing about the belief.
> (Barrow & Woods 76)

It is in the interest of the person or organization performing the ritual to have the audience "buy in" to the performance. The structure and outcome of ritual is not accidental. Returning for a moment to Donovan Schaefer's argument that rituals are born out of affect, that they are devised around inspiring a particular emotional state, there is an implied intentionality in that design. The aim of indoctrination is likewise evident in the changes effected by rituals. Rituals claim to effect permanent change that is only achieved if the participants in the ritual continue to believe in the ritual itself and the tradition in which the ritual is steeped. The mere fact that ritual performances appear to have this ongoing effectiveness suggests that rituals intend to indoctrinate.

Future Investigations

The limitations of this examination were briefly touched upon at the outset of this paper: namely, that this represents the literature and theory from the fields of affect theory, performance theory, performative utterances, and ritual studies and uses personal accounts and reasonable assumptions to draw tentative conclusions about the nature of ritual and dramatic performances. It also limits the case studies to two very specific examples and extrapolates based on the patterns that emerge from those particular cases. A close study of rituals from many traditions and denominations and plays and performance pieces representing a wide variety of the dramatic arts would allow for a more thorough understanding of the ways in which performances affect audiences. Developing a procedure to interview audience members, participants, and creators of performances that neither undermines the power of the performance nor presupposes that there is meaning in the performance would also give greater insight into the ways in which ritual and dramatic performances differ and would further advance the spectrum between ritual and performance that both Schechner and I see as integral to understanding the efficacy/entertainment braid.

Cognitive science has been applied to the religious studies field recently with fascinating results. There is evidence to suggest that the human brain is hardwired to find meaning in ritual performances. Thomas Lawson and Robert McCauley have argued that understanding and partaking in ritual does not require the human brain to do anything that it doesn't already do every day to understand the world. They discuss the idea of action in terms of "agency", that is, an "agent" acts upon a "patient" using an "instrument" which creates "change". As this is essentially true for all human action both ritual and ordinary, the brain does not need to be trained to appreciate the significance of ritual and be influenced by it. Furthermore, human

beings naturally seek explanations and make order out of the world around them, even when there is no scientific or demonstrable answer to the questions they are asking. Understanding the chemical processes in the brain that influence the way human beings process and integrate ideas that require belief rather than empirical evidence would add a neuroscientific element to the division between theatre and ritual – how one is processed as fiction and the other as plausible or differently meaningful. Additionally, the discovery of mirror neurons as the centre for empathy and vicarious experiences in the brain can be applied to the way different performances make their audiences feel.

This thesis focuses almost entirely on the effect of performances on the audience. The same questions could be asked from the point of view of the actors performing rituals and theatre. Specifically, the potency of performances when undertaken many times over would be an interesting investigation in light of implication in this work that high impact/low frequency rituals are immediately emotionally influential but regularly attended, less performative rituals are an integral part of maintaining a connection to the subjunctive world of the ritual. This may imply that actors who perform the same role over long periods of time also enter a subjunctive world that blends the real world with that of the play in a profound and perspective-altering fashion. Furthermore, the interaction of ritual performers (agents) and the rituals they enact is an area of inquiry that requires deeper consideration. While baptisms and other highly performative, pageantry-based rituals are often once-in-a-lifetime or rarely performed on individuals, the agents performing the rituals experience them many times over. How this ongoing exposure to high impact rituals changes the relationship of the performer to the ritual would be an interesting investigation to undertake, and may offer insights into the ways in which brains process and become (de)sensitized to performances over time.

Finally, the current socio-political climate has led scholars to begin work on the ways in which indoctrination can lead to radicalization. While Western media outlets seem to concern themselves primarily with Islamic radical organizations such as ISIS and the Taliban, it has become increasingly apparent that the religious right has its own small but increasingly bold radical factions. Gangs and cults are also examples of organizations with a profound understanding of the ways in which rituals can be manipulated to influence and control a population. It would be interesting to investigate the ways in which performances are used in these radicalization processes. Specifically, analyzing the affective tools used by agents of radicalization and the ways in which highly affective performances change the cognitive functions of their audiences would help expand our understanding of the ways performance changes the brain. It would also offer a new way to explore deradicalization: by more fully understanding the process by which it occurs, we can better create methods to undo it. I believe that there may be value in exploring the ways in which one might be able to de-ritualize a performance and use drama therapy to remove the immediate affective reaction of an effective performance, allowing the radicalized individual to experience Brecht's alienation and reintegrate intellect into an emotional response. If affect is the key to effective performances, it may also hold answers for breaking the performances' spells.

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