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THE FRACTURED STAGE:

GERTRUDE STEIN'S INFLUENCE ON AMERICAN AVANT-GARDE DIRECTING

AS SEEN IN FOUR PRODUCTIONS OF DR. FAUSTUS LIGHTS THE LIGHTS

by

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Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION

AIM OF THIS STUDY

When it comes to syntactical "disrupture" and the deconstruction of the sentence, Gertrude Stein's influence can be felt in the theatre perhaps even more than in fiction and poetry. From the point of view of the avant-garde, if she was not necessarily "the mother of us all," she was certainly the mother of many, and her literary interests are reflected in the aesthetic interests of leading exponents of American avant-garde theatre.

I will be discussing four directors who have been influenced by Stein's writing, each of whom has produced one of her play-texts (or opera-texts, if you will), Dr. Faustus Lights the Lights. The directors are Judith Malina, whose 1951 production of Dr. Faustus Lights the Lights was at the Cherry Lane Theatre; Lawrence Kornfeld, whose 1979 production was at the Judson Poet's Theatre where he was previously resident director; Richard Foreman, whose 1981 production was commissioned for the Festival d'Automne in Paris and also played Berlin although it was never performed in the United States; and Robert Wilson, whose 1991 production premiered at the Hebbel Theatre in Germany, subsequently toured, and was seen at Lincoln Center in New York in 1992. By choosing to concentrate on a single work, produced

by directors whose directing experiments parallel Stein's writing, I hope to provide an historical perspective not previously offered in Stein studies and to help illustrate Stein's far-reaching influence on alternative American theatre. I have undertaken a study of these productions as a way of exploring the Faust myths Stein is debunking and the infinite possibilities that a text (Dr. Faustus Lights the Lights) so deceptively impenetrable can yield, and as a way of viewing the shifts in contemporary avant-garde experimentation on the stage. Following a single work by one writer -- particularly one as radical as Gertrude Stein -- and exploring diverse directing strategies in several productions of her work by seminal representatives of the American alternative theatre offers a rare opportunity to understand Stein's idiosyncratic creativity, to see her ideas paralleled on the American avant-garde stage, and also to understand the sometimes hermetic stage vocabulary of unique theatre practitioners.

Although numerous works exist which discuss Stein's writing, there is no work to date which attempts to deal with Stein in performance nor with the parallels between her experiments and those of contemporary directors, from the point of view of production. The only books specifically devoted to her work for theatre are Betsy Alayne Ryan's Gertrude Stein's Theatre of the

Absolute[1] and Jane Bowers' fine study, "They Watch Me as They Watch This": Gertrude Stein's Metadrama.[2] Ryan begins to make similar connections to the ones I do; however, she emphasizes Stein's writing and gives little attention to the directors I discuss or to their productions of Dr. Faustus Lights the Lights. Bowers also analyzes the works primarily as literature rather than in performance. I wish to look at Stein's writing for the theatre from the point of view of the director.

APPROACHES TO STEIN'S WORKS

As with alternative theatre practices, Stein's "alternative" writing style has been the subject of a wide spectrum of theorizations, ranging from a Jungian analysis of her work by Allegra Stewart[3] to Richard Bridgman's argument that Stein's writing style is merely an hermetic system codifying her lesbianism[4] to B. F. Skinner's argument that her writing resulted from experiments in automatic writing[5] to a defense of her writing as feminist.[6] Stein was certainly prescient in her anticipation of l'écriture feminine, which, as defined by Josette Féral, is the "absence of linear plot development, mobility and incompleteness of the text, diversity and simultaneity of voices, and an invented, syntactically fragmented language."[7] However, regarding

the view that Stein's writing is consciously "feminist," Jane Palatini Bowers writes:

> Stein's writing for the theater, considered from a generic perspective, can show us just how concerned Stein was to oppose, subvert, and disrupt the dominant, conventional forms of drama. But I hesitate to identify this concern as "feminist"...it seems more appropriate to describe Stein's project as experimentalist (or modernist) than as feminist.[8]

Bowers sees Stein's writing as emphasizing an interest in the creative process and in "new ways of making language and literature."[9] Strong arguments can be made in defense of numerous analytical approaches to Stein's work, but it is unlikely that Stein herself identified with a particular school of thinking even though she acknowledged her indebtedness to William James and also often said that what she was doing in writing was what Picasso was doing in painting; in fact her writing is frequently referred to as "literary cubism."

In her book, The Structure of Obscurity,[10] Randa Dubnick describes the correlation between Stein's cubism and that of her contemporaries in the visual arts. As Dubnick explains, cubism went through two major phases, identified as "analytic" and "synthetic." Analytic cubism allows for an objectification of creation, analyzing its component parts while simultaneously creating an aesthetic experience. Form and subject are analyzed simultaneously. Synthetic cubism was characterized by a linguistic

relationship between the forms, building an "onomotopaeic" vocabulary, equivalent to its counterpart in literature. Dubnick suggests that Stein's experiments followed both phases of cubism. She writes:

> [L]ike Stein's writing, cubism in its two major phases -- analytic and synthetic -- manifests two different types of obscurity...The similarity between Stein's writing and cubist painting seems based on common emphases on certain operations of signification over others.[11]

Ultimately, Stein's work derives from her originality; Stein herself primarily attributed her writing style to her sense of herself as a genius.[12] She, like other (mostly male) artists, as Bowers points out, was evolving an original mode of expression which challenged established artistic conventions.

GERTRUDE STEIN'S AESTHETIC

Although Gertrude Stein's literary experiments transcend genre, there is something inherently theatrical (and ironic) in the way that she engages with language in her plays -- theatrical insofar as she engages with a continuous present and ironic insofar as she is challenging the conventions of genre itself. Stein's cumulative body of work is about the raw material of art. By breaking down language into its component parts and calling attention to

its function, and by subverting and thereby calling attention to the nature of the intended genre in which she is writing, Stein is exposing the inner workings of both language and genre. Continuity in Stein is not built on linear narrative, but on the reinvention of the moment as it is happening. She writes: "The business of Art as I tried to explain...is to live in the actual present, that is the complete actual present, and to completely express that complete actual present."[13] This interest in phenomenology, which forces a way of reading and is also a way of looking, began when Stein was a student of William James and George Santayana at Radcliffe. Her interest in phenomenology as it relates to presence very much reflects the palpable experience of live theatre which unfolds in a continuous present. An interest in phenomenology will be seen to be of concern to the directors of each of the productions I discuss and, as Marvin Carlson points out, has been an area of increasing interest in alternative theatre practice generally in the last several decades. He writes that "the traditional semiotic orientation of theatre gave way in the new experimental work to a phenomenological orientation."[14] When I discuss "phenomenology" I will be referring, theatrically speaking, to processes and events which express themselves within a present moment. Stein's articulation of phenomenological processes

-- her "continuous present" -- began to gradually replace the past, present and future -- beginning, middle and end -- of traditional dramatic structure.

Stein's writing also anticipated contemporary artistic practices and is mirrored in the shifting cultural concerns which have come to reflect characteristics associated with "modern" and "postmodern" theatre. Ihab Hassan offers a useful working definition of "modern" and "postmodern" which I have adopted, when he defines the difference between the two, as summarized by Marvin Carlson, as a "distinction between the work-in-itself, finished, complete, and unchanging [modern] and the work-in-progress, incomplete, contingent and fluid [postmodern]."[15] I will also use "modernism" (in theatre) to refer to an approach that validates "meaning" and "subtext" and "postmodernism" to refer to an approach which is characterized by eclecticism, intertextuality, a cross-pollination of disciplines, self-irony, pastiche, and parody. Of Stein's modernism and postmodernism, Wendy Steiner, in her introduction to Stein's Lectures in America, writes:

> The contradictions between aesthetic closure and the audience's necessary intrusion into texts, between artistic history and readers' histories of art, between the dynamism of aesthetic repetition and the banality of mechanical reproduction: these oppositions and their constantly shifting hierarchies are the knowledge in Stein's unanswered questions. They tie her writing to American pragmatic epistemology and the concern with knowledge and inter-

> subjectivity in nineteenth-century American fiction. They also place her in international modernism and orient her forward toward postmodernism and post-structuralist thought[16]

Stein, who was born in 1874 and died in 1946, was indeed a product, both literally and figuratively, of the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries.

I have also found Fredric Jameson's discussion of postmodernism in terms of "current theories of schizophrenia" both provocative and pertinent to my study.[17] Jameson uses the term "schizophrenia" descriptively rather than diagnostically and states that his view is largely appropriated from ideas developed by Jacques Lacan. As Jameson describes it, in Lacan's view schizophrenia is essentially a language disorder characterized by a breakdown in the relationship between signifiers. (According to Katherine Arens, this breakdown happens when "ideas lack their referents."[18]) Because language has a past (history) and a future and the sentence moves through time, the schizophrenic, Lacan believes, due to the lack of "language articulation" also lacks identity, because he or she has no understanding of time, and therefore is "condemned" to a perpetual present. As Jameson writes:

> In other words, schizophrenic experience is an experience of isolated, disconnected, discontinuous material signifiers which fail to link up into a coherent sentence. The

> schizophrenic thus does not know personal identity in our sense, since our feeling of identity depends on our sense of the persistence of the 'I' and the 'me' over time.[19]

Jameson goes on to argue that "postmodernism replicates or reproduces -- reinforces -- the logic of consumer capitalism," and is reflected in the disappearance of a sense of history. I am less interested in his Marxist conclusions than in his analysis of postmodern practice and find in this analysis an important correlation to the kind of writing that Stein does and the concomitant stage productions which her aesthetic has generated, which are characterized by the fragmentation and isolation that Jameson describes, as well as by a lack of history. "The fractured stage" -- the title of my study and the name that I use for this type of stage production -- reflects what I see as a "fracture" in the contemporary psyche, which could well be called "schizophrenic."

STEIN AND THE ALTERNATIVE AMERICAN THEATRE

Gertrude Stein's ideas are vividly reflected on the American avant-garde stage. The similarities between Stein's experiments in literature and certain avant-garde directing techniques are particularly apparent in the way that her "disrupture" of language and her use of repetition (which provides

different perspectives of the same subject simultaneously) influenced the American theatrical avant-garde's use of stage space.

One parallel between Stein's writing and alternative directors' use of stage space is the interruption of narrative (thereby calling attention to both the construction of the work and to the autonomy of the parts). Another parallel is that the process is present in the product. The director's "voice" is an important element in the production just as Stein's authorial presence in her works is very prominent. Stein's concept of time comes closer to a concept of space, something which is inherently theatrical and seen in the productions of the directors I am discussing. Betsy Alayne Ryan writes, "Gertrude Stein simply asks that directors see her plays as she saw the world, all on one plane -- that they consider no one aspect more important than another."[20]

Stein's concept of theatre as "landscape" has been of particular interest to theatre people. She writes:

> I felt that if a play was exactly like a landscape then there would be no difficulty about the emotion of the person looking on at the play being behind or ahead of the play because the landscape does not have to make acquaintance. You may have to make acquaintance with it, but it does not with you, it is there and so the play being written the relation between you at any time is so exactly that that it is of no importance unless you look at it. Well I did look at it

> and the result is in all the plays that I have printed as Operas and Plays.[21]

The multi-perspectival focus that the view of a landscape invites is reflected in the simultaneity of actions which take place on stage, replacing a focus on a single narrative throughline.

Bowers proposes viewing Stein's landscapes as "langscapes." She writes:

> The plays...written between 1920 and 1933, Gertrude Stein called landscapes. I have adapted rather than adopted her term partly because there is no evidence that the desire to create verbal landscapes guided her in the writing of these plays.....[The plays] are [rather] about language and its relationship to the performance event....Although "landscape" does not adequately describe the plays, I did not wish to abandon the term entirely, for I find landscape a suggestive metaphor for Stein's plays. I therefore wanted to retain some trace of it.[22]

Bowers continues:

> Stein treats her words as though they are material objects related to each other spatially, that is, visually on the page and sonorously in the air. Her language assumes a materiality equal in presence to the materiality of the other elements of the performance event. Furthermore, the effect of these plays on our perception of their performance is similar to the effect of landscape on our perception of our environment.[23]

Bowers is suggesting that Stein's words are a sonorous equivalent to their visual counterpart in the theatre, autonomous stage pictures. Attention to

both sound and picture as self-contained, rather than serving narrative, is an aspect of stage production that has become increasingly prominent in the alternative American theatre.

Stein's presence in the alternative American theatre owes as much to her theories as it does to productions of her work, as Ryan points out. If productions of her plays have been rare (that is rapidly changing), her theories have been vividly reflected in staging practices.

DR. FAUSTUS LIGHTS THE LIGHTS: THE TEXT

Stein wrote Dr. Faustus Lights the Lights in 1938; it was the last of her "operas." Among the best known of her other operas are Four Saints in Three Acts, Saints and Singing and The Mother of Us All. Patrick J. Smith, in his book The Tenth Muse, writes that Stein's contribution to the operatic genre

> represents the final and complete liberation of the word from its prison as a meaning-symbol, so that it becomes, primarily, a sound or collection of sounds....Stein's use of words frees them from their associative context and forces them into conjunction with words of similar sounds. Likewise, sentences...do not follow each other with any logic. Stein's prose is free-form verse...because of repetition and absolute disregard for syntax -- except as Stein's own syntax -- each of her sentences seems to flow on with no end.[24]

Of Gertrude Stein's undertaking of the Faust legend for her opera, Ulla Dydo writes: "It is astonishing that Gertrude Stein, who explored not great themes and figures, but word, should have written a Faust."[25] Yet given Stein's life-long challenging of conventions, it is no surprise that the Faust theme should have engaged her imagination as it has the seminal directors who have undertaken her version of the story. In 1938, Stein read Dr. Faustus Lights the Lights to Eric Sevareid, who wrote: "'She chuckled as she read it and almost shouted with laughter when she spoke a particularly good line.'"[26]

Stein was familiar with Goethe and Marlowe's versions of Faust and one can see parodies of those in her own work, particularly in her send-up of the heroine. Although there is no precise information regarding Stein's familiarity with still other versions of the legend, one can assume, given her erudition, that she was acquainted with them.

In Dr. Faustus: From History to Legend, Frank Baron attributes the development of the Faust legend to the growing influence of Martin Luther, who identified Faust as a close associate of the devil and said that devils could appear as dogs.[27] (A dog figures prominently in Dr. Faustus Lights the Lights.) The Faustbuch, one of several Volksbüche, which contains the most widespread narratives about the identity and activities of the man said to be

Faust, was published in 1587 at the height of witch burnings. Baron writes that the "real" Faust was one Georg Helmstetter who first called himself Faust in 1487 while studying at Heidelberg University. It was Marlowe who first brought the story to prominence on the stage.

If a central theme in the myth of Faust is the search for knowledge, Stein demonstrates in Dr. Faustus Lights the Lights that knowledge, (and everything else, for that matter) is open to subversion. In both subject and style, she satirizes, among other things, epics with male heros, the damsel in distress, orthodox religion, the Romantic tradition, opera, and fairy tales. By shifting, as she does, from first to third person, only occasionally indicating whether the dialogue is to be narrated, spoken or enacted silently, Stein is allowing for distancing, objectification, commenting, self-reflexiveness, self-commenting, parody and time displacement (making it hard -- and probably irrelevant -- to decipher whether the action is taking place in the past, present or future). Emphasis is on "the continuous present."

The most glaring aspect of Dr. Faustus Lights the Lights (aside from the flashing electric lights, that is) is its female-driven center. Stein relegates Faustus to a minor role and re-positions the "heroine," Marguerite Ida and Helena Annabel (one character with four names), from the object of desire of

the questing male hero, to the subject position. Stein appropriates the traditional, archetypal Faust figure only to discard and replace him. It is Marguerite Ida and Helena Annabel who subsequently undergoes the intitiatory rites of passage that have usually been found in heroic narratives with their male-centered heroes. Dr. Faustus Lights the Lights is ultimately about Marguerite Ida and Helena Annabel's self-empowerment. Stein the iconoclast mirrors Faust the iconoclast; she merges her own sensibility with that of Faust in order to overtake him. As Bowers writes:

> [The] play draw[s] on [a] male-generated text (the Faust myth...) to tell [an] antipatriarchal stor[y]. [It is] Gertrude Stein's revision of [that] text to make [it] tell her story, to reenact her renunciation of procreation in favor of creation and her definition of herself as a peer of Picasso and Joyce, and co-creator with them of modernism.[28]

Dr. Faustus Lights the Lights is comprised of three acts and is twenty-nine pages long. The cast of characters includes Faustus, Marguerite Ida and Helena Annabel, Mephistopheles, A Country Woman with a Sickle and A Man from Over the Seas; it also includes a viper, a boy, a dog who says thank you a lot, a girl and a Chorus. It has singing and a ballet of electric lights. Regarding the electric lights and Stein's abundant use of light imagery, and pointing out still another parallel between Stein and her (male) contemporaries in the visual arts, Dydo writes that "The new work [Dr.

Faustus Lights the Lights] also gathers up the experience of light in painting that Cézanne had illuminated for her."[29] Dr. Faustus Lights the Lights begins with Faustus having already made his pact with the devil and therefore able to create electric light. In waltzes Marguerite Ida and Helena Annabel, who at the beginning of the work is a young naïf -- a bit like Little Red Riding Hood in Stein's fairy tale forest setting -- looking for grandma but instead finding a Big Bad Wolf in the form of a viper. At first, her only means of self-awareness and affirmation are situated in familiarity and in the creature comforts of the bourgeoisie. But she soon discovers that by defining herself within that world, she remains in the dark.

> I wish (says she conversationally) I wish if I had a wish that when I sat down it would not be here but there there where I could have a chair there where I would not have to look around fearfully everywhere there where a chair and a carpet underneath the chair would make me know that there is there.[30]

She continues:

> Would it do as well if my name was not Marguerite Ida and Helena Annabel would it do as well I would give up even that for a carpet and a chair...I am here I am not there and I am Marguerite Ida and Helena Annabel and it is not well that I could tell what there is to tell.[31]

Marguerite Ida and Helena Annabel's self-definition rests upon her continuous interaction with the familiar objects which comprise her world.

(One is reminded of a famous adage of Stein's: "I know I am I because my little dog recognizes me."[32])

But it is not Marguerite Ida and Helena Annabel's fate to remain sheltered; as she wanders, lost in the woods, she is bitten by a viper, and, afraid, seeks Faustus to cure her. A Woman With a Sickle and A Man from Over the Seas appear. The Woman With a Sickle berates Dr. Faustus for not being able to cure Marguerite Ida and Helena Annabel even though he's been to hell. Then a Chorus enters (a dramatic device also used by Marlowe in his version of the legend) and reiterates the words of the Woman With a Sickle:

> What is the use Doctor Faustus what is the use what is the use of having been to hell if you cannot cure this only only this Marguerite Ida and Helena Annabel.[33]

Although it is not entirely clear from the text that Faustus cures her, everyone ultimately says that he does. Whether or not Faustus does actually cure her, Marguerite Ida and Helena Annabel soon discovers that the real cure for a viper bite is self-realization; it is initiation into consciousness. As a result of the viper's bite (phallic symbolism obvious) she has lost her virgin innocence and is able to embrace her womanly power. The Viper, a fairly potent incarnation of a serpent carries with it the same connotations as the latter: in the Old Testament, Satan appears as a serpent in order to tempt Eve.

Because the serpent sheds its skin, dies and is reborn; it is a symbol of death and rebirth, eternity and consciousness; it is also a phallic symbol. Biblical references abound as Stein sends up the Judaeo-Christian tradition. Maybe Marguerite Ida and Helena Annabel can never return to the Garden of Eden (her bourgeois creature comforts) after being bitten by the viper but she now has her own viper, her own bite, and her own light, as we discover in Act II of the play:

> [T]here she is Marguerite Ida and Helena Annabel and she has an artificial viper there beside her and a halo is around her not of electric light but of candle light.[34]

Bowers points out Stein's iconography: "For the sun Marguerite has substituted candles; for the real viper an amulet; for sexual union, singularity; for nature, art."[35] Everyone thought Marguerite Ida and Helena Annabel was going to die. But she was cured. She says, "I am Marguerite Ida and Helena Annabel and enough said I am not dead." Marguerite Ida and Helena Annabel, like her male counterparts in the Epic, must evolve from a state of innocence to knowledge. Self-initiation and empowerment have not killed her after all. Ultimately, Marguerite Ida and Helena Annabel discovers she doesn't need Faustus. As Bowers points out:

> By creating a hero closer to Marlowe's Faustus than to Goethe's Faust, Stein skews the balance between male and

> female which Goethe established through the pairing of Margarete and Faust. Goethe's Faust is the archetypal questing male hero....By pairing Marguerite with such a hero [as Marlowe's Faust] Stein reverses the relationship between the male and female figures. Since the male is passive and suffering, the female can be active and questing. The very structure and focus of the drama reflect this reversal.[36]

At the end of the play, Mephistopheles tells Faustus that he can go to hell and can become young again if he kills. He kills the Little Boy and The Dog and wants Marguerite Ida and Helena Annabel to accompany him to hell. She won't. Instead, she falls back fainting into the arms of the Man from Over the Seas, seeming more stereotypical than archetypal here, as the Little Girl and another Little Boy plead with the Man from Over the Seas who we now see is yet another side (or manifestation) of Mephistopheles and who the children call "Mr. Viper." They cry:

> Please Mr. Viper listen to me he is he and she is she and we are we please Mr.Viper listen to me.[37]

When the boy and the girl plead to him and address him as Mr. Viper, it is as if they are begging him not to steal her individuality by absorbing her into the dominant culture. Is this a warning against the dangers of romantic love? After Marguerite Ida and Helena Annabel falls into his arms, The Man from Over the Seas says to her:

> Pretty pretty pretty dear I am he and she is she and we are we, pretty pretty dear I am here yes I am here pretty pretty pretty dear.[38]

Or does she faint because she has been through too much too soon and still needs to figure out what has just happened to her?

When Marguerite Ida and Helena Annabel refuses to accompany Faustus to hell, she is affirming her autonomy. The way to hell is not only through conventionality, it is by following a man, Stein seems to be saying. The way to freedom is by finding one's own direction.

Stein's naming of Marguerite Ida and Helena Annabel calls attention to her different sides. The chorus asks at one point:

> Would a viper have stung her if she had only one had one name would he would he.[39]

In other words, if she had not already evolved the different aspects of her personality, could she have been bitten by conscious awareness? Marguerite Ida and Helena Annabel's name can be seen as an amalgam of four aspects of the female principle as viewed through Stein's idiosyncratic sensibility and can be deconstructed into its referents as follows: Marguerite comes from Goethe's Faust -- the innocent young maiden who falls from grace. Ida is from Stein's novel of the same name, as Ulla Dydo explains:

> Between May and December of 1937 [Stein] started the novel Ida, a study of a public personality moving about in idle activity and going nowhere. But the novel gave her trouble....In December she wrote [Thornton Wilder] "Ida has become an opera, and it is a beauty, really is, an opera about Faust...." Late that summer, she returned to Ida. She finally completed the novel by the summer of 1940....Ida does not become Faustus, but she undergoes a change and is transformed, the traditional Marguerite becoming Marguerite Ida and Helena Annabel, a protean figure from a charmed, demonic world who summons Faustus as Faustus summons Mephisto.[40]

Helena refers to Helen of Troy, the ideal form of woman, as represented in both Marlowe and Goethe. Annabel, most people agree, is from Edgar Allen Poe's allegorical poem, "Annabel Lee," about a woman who dies prematurely in "a kingdom by the sea." Although Marguerite Ida and Helena Annabel embraces different sides of woman, these sides are initially incomplete. It is only through self-realization that she becomes transformed.

Suddenly everyone is coming to see this self-realized woman. Dr. Faustus Lights the Lights, with its female-driven center, is, finally, about self-initiation. Bonnie Marranca writes:

> In one of Stein's fabulous frames, Marguerite Ida and Helena Annabel is revealed behind a curtain, an artificial viper (now a symbol of cosmic, female energy) beside her and a halo above her, lit by candlelight -- as if she were a saint. A grand ballet of lights appears and, with a charming touch of self-irony, a voice announces:

> "They come from everywhere To look at her there. See how she sits See how she eats See how she lights the candle lights."[41]

Much has been made about the fact that the writing of this section of Dr. Faustus Lights the Lights followed a successful and well-publicized trip that Stein took around America in 1934, the lectures of which are published in Lectures in America. "Was Stein thinking about her life at rue de Fleurus?" Marranca asks,[42] referring to the parallels between this section of the play and Stein's famous salon at rue de Fleurus?

Another of Stein's ingenious and ironic touches besides her invention of Marguerite Ida and Helena Annabel is her depiction of the character of The Dog. In other Faust plays, the dog is a manifestation of the devil; although some of the directors feel s/he embodies innocence in Stein's version, I see The Dog as embodying artificial social conventions; conventionality will lead to hell; it is originality and truth that are ultimately liberating. The Dog is pretending everything is always all right when it isn't. Stein writes:

> [T]he dog dreaming says thickly...
>
> Thank you, thank you thank you thank you
> thank you, thank you thank you.[43]

Not only does the dog represent irritating, irrelevant convention, he also represents blind, unconscious indifference.

> Oh Thank you thank you all all of you
> thank you thank you oh thank you everybody
> thank you he and we thank you, a viper has
> bitten you thank you thank you.[44]

Unaware of what is really going on, he can only utter platitudes.

Because the need for creative and sexual self-definition and self-empowerment are central themes which run through the work, one can also read the text as Stein's authorial acknowledgment of her own self-generating and creative powers. During her life Stein had come out as an artist and as a lesbian. Neither she nor her "heroine" need a Dr. Faustus or a Mephistopheles. Like Marguerite Ida and Helena Annabel, Stein has her own viper, her pen, and her own bite, her way with words; she can cure herself. If not overtly feminist, Dr. Faustus Lights the Lights is certainly a strong sounding of the female voice.

DR. FAUSTUS LIGHTS THE LIGHTS: THE DIRECTORS AND STEIN'S INFLUENCE ON AMERICAN AVANT-GARDE DIRECTING

It is no surprise that a re-telling of the Faust tale by Gertrude Stein would engage the interest of alternative theatre practitioners. Stein's parody

of the Faust legend explores, among other things, creative and moral boundaries and is a fitting metaphor for artists challenging the boundaries of convention. Although Dr. Faustus Lights the Lights was written as an opera, it is not always produced as one. In fact, the contrast between productions of the work is striking. Dr. Faustus Lights the Lights has an open structure, allowing for a multiplicity of interpretations and diverse aesthetic points of view. Since dialogue and stage directions are often undifferentiated, the play allows the director to decide when individual lines should be spoken and/or enacted.

The directors of each of the productions of Dr. Faustus Lights the Lights have contributed significantly to the rise of a particular aesthetic and each represents a different facet of American avant-garde directing. Stein's influence varied from director to director and the very same material captured the imaginations of these four directors in very different ways. One of the common threads among these directors that I observed first hand in my interviews with them, however, is their propensity to contradict themselves. To my mind, this is a manifestation of their continuing involvement with the fluctuating process of directing and a reflection of the rehearsal process itself, in which a moment is "tried" in different ways -- and often looked at from

opposite perspectives. The "contradictions" that these directors are willing to express seem to me a more accurate mirror of the human psyche, of the creative process, and of the phenomenology of experience that they all express an interest in, than the closure and "wholeness" that usually construct individual identity.

Judith Malina and Lawrence Kornfeld marked a theatrical divide. Of the four directors, they were (and are) the two who still validated and adhered to traditional theatre referents. Malina and Kornfeld were concerned with actor and audience, with character and inner life, and with motivation. They were aware of the stage as a place to communicate ideas and as a place of theatrical performance, unlike Richard Foreman and Robert Wilson, whose staging, it would probably be fair to say, is in the case of Richard Foreman a form of writing and in the case of Robert Wilson a form of painting. Their processes are very present in their products. For Malina and Kornfeld, presence entails a relationship between the inner lives of the actors and the life of the play; for Foreman and Wilson presence is more phenomenological than psychological. Scenic devices in Malina and Kornfeld's production were "interpretive;" in Foreman and Wilson's production, they were iconic --

which is to say that objects and props were used as both cultural artifacts and also self-contained phenomena.

Each production of Dr. Faustus Lights the Lights reflects each director's interest at the time of its respective theatrical moment: Malina's production demonstrated her interest in creating a poet's theatre where language itself was a revolutionary tool (even before taking to the streets was a way of life); Stein's language was a perfect conduit for her. She used a cross-disciplinary vocabulary in her production -- one of the first in the American theatre to do so. Kornfeld was working within the tradition of naturalism and quite literally pushing open its frame; his operatic production was set in small-town America within a quilted picture frame which splits open when the devil (Mephistopheles) surfaces; he was also one of the first to introduce a multiple focus in theatre performance by using a "split stage." Foreman's production was filled with icons of religious orthodoxy, and as ever, had ontological terror at its center; moral and sexual boundaries of childhood were being tested; playground slides and menacing rocks filled the space. Wilson's painterly production evoked the sinister inferno behind the Faust myth and conjured images of, among other things, a decadent German cabaret through the dissonant sound score of Hans Peter Kuhn; fluorescent

lights were raised and lowered; actors wore white-face; and characters were doubled and tripled, reflecting Stein's multi-perspectival view.

Each of these directors has openly expressed his/her indebtedness to Stein. Although each of them has her/his own take on the play it is a tribute to Stein's radical innovations and insights that each production appears to have sustained its unique point of view within the parameters her work has set up. Each director inhabited Stein's open landscape through a unique imagination which opened the established frame of the theatrical canvas to include a more eclectic and popular vocabulary -- one which ironically requires a more elitist audience to decipher. These efforts opened the doors for a whole new language of theatrical production which has subsequently emerged and has come to define a unique alternative theatre form, one which I will examine in the following pages.

Notes: Introduction

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Chapter 2: JUDITH MALINA: THE GRANDE DAME OF ANARCHY DIRECTS MAMAN TERRIBLE, GERTRUDE STEIN'S DR. FAUSTUS LIGHTS THE LIGHTS AT THE LIVING THEATRE, 1951

Judith Malina was one of the pioneers of the American avant-garde theatre. When she met Julian Beck in the 1940's, their aim was to start a poet's theatre. At the time that Malina met Beck, she said she "took a week off from school and read everything and went everywhere and learned everything. However," she told me, "theatrically, my background then was through Piscator."[1]

Erwin Piscator, who as Brecht's director and dramaturg, developed "epic theatre," emigrated to New York from Germany via the U.S.S.R. and Paris in 1938. Malina had been studying theatre with him at The New School for Social Research where he started the renowned Dramatic Workshop in 1940. In his book The Living Theatre, Art, Exile, Outrage, John Tytell writes that like Meyerhold, Piscator had one aim only, and that

was, in Meyerhold's words, "to serve the Revolution." As Tytell explains, "Piscator's ambition was to find the sort of images that could appeal to unsophisticated audiences, a panoramic presentation that exploited the propagandistic potentials of theatre. The theatre, he believed, had to become a tribune where the people could speak."[2] Malina enrolled in The Dramatic Workshop in 1945. The roster of graduates was eventually to include luminaries such as Marlon Brando and Ben Gazzara. Maria Ley-Piscator, Piscator's widow and author of a seminal book on The Dramatic Workshop, describes the workshop as all-encompassing in its goals, meant to link theatre with life and art with science, as well as to provide students with skills to earn a living in the theatre:

> While the Dramatic Workshop's aim was to prepare in two years its graduates to compete with professional life of the theatre, it also held out the ideal of a wider field of theatre activity and emphasized community theatre, university theatre and other forms of theatre around the country.[3]

Malina came from a German-Jewish rabbinical family and was brought up on the European classics, including works by Schiller, Heine and Goethe, among them, the latter's Faust. Like Piscator, who was a descendant of a German-Lutheran clergyman, she emigrated to the United States from Germany before the rise of Nazism. Piscator's influence on Malina was to

have a lasting effect on both her life and work. Malina saw Piscator as a "form-breaker"; he encouraged Malina's own interest in breaking with tradition. According to Malina, Piscator wanted to break the physical structure of the theatre, the silence of the spectator/participant, the proscenium wall, and the unities -- essentially to re-invent the whole theatre experience. In Piscator's directing classes Malina learned how to carefully construct a Regiebuch-- a director's planning script -- which included a systematic breakdown of stagecraft into its component parts in order to translate these into production elements. She was to apply this rigorous method to her early preparations for Dr. Faustus Lights the Lights, filling her promptbook with detailed, carefully thought-out blocking notes and psychological actions, even before the play was cast and before rehearsals began.

Beck was a painter at that time and was focused on his art. He was involved in the modernist experiments of the period, was immersed in abstract expressionism and minimalism, and was influenced by and spent time with the major figures of the art world. He exhibited at the famous Peggy Guggenheim Gallery, which also represented the major surrealists and abstract expressionists. These included Max Ernst, André Breton, Robert

Motherwell, Hans Hoffman, William Baziotes, Robert Rauschenberg and Jackson Pollock. A number of these artists became early members of The Living Theatre's Board of Directors. Guggenheim's was considered to be the most prestigious and important of the international galleries in New York, Paris and Italy, and she was one of the first to introduce and celebrate these artists. These same artists infused Beck's weltanschauung so that experimentation with form was something that carried into his daily life and eventually informed his theatre aesthetic. As Malina explains:

> So we have an influence on Julian through that whole milieu and the mating of the European surrealists who came here when they could no longer work in Europe during the war, and the young abstract expressionist school fathered by Hans Hoffman and others who came through Europe.

Malina's exposure to Piscator's rigor, her own traditional European upbringing, and her absorption of the moderns through Beck combined to create an aesthetic that would ever after infuse her life and work. Productions such as The Brig and Frankenstein, in which she incorporated Meyerhold's rigorous biomechanics, reflected both her revolutionary ideas and her disciplined stagecraft. Biomechanics was a system of exercises aimed at using physical gestures to elicit emotional responses and in many ways could be seen as paralleling William James's theories, which had such a

profound and long-lasting effect on Stein's philosophy and work. What is referred to as the "James/Lange Theory" (1890) (after William James and Carl Lange) supports Meyerhold's view that an emotion is the result, rather than the cause, of physical sensations and is elicited by external stimulii.

Of all the influences on Malina, it was Gertrude Stein's looming presence on the avant-garde scene in New York that had the most significance. For Malina, an expatriate German-Jewish woman in the United States, Stein, an expatriate American-Jewish woman at the helm of a cultural revolution in post World War I Paris, was a role model and inspiration. Although Dr. Faustus Lights the Lights was The Living Theatre's official debut, earlier that year they had produced plays informally in the Becks' apartment on West End Avenue, among them Stein's play, Ladies Voices.[4] In addition to Stein's version of the Faust legend, they were also planning to do another version called Faustina, which was written by Paul Goodman.[5] Faustina was produced in May, 1952. The rest of their 1951-52 season included productions of Beyond the Mountains by Kenneth Rexroth, Desire Caught by the Tail by Pablo Picasso, Ubu Roi by Alfred Jarry, Troilus and Cressida by William Shakespeare, Trial Horse No. 1 by William Carlos Williams and The Book of Christopher Columbus by Paul Claudel.

The productions which comprised The Living Theatre's first season foreshadowed those that followed and for which they are best known. The texts which they produced in later years continued to be revolutionary in form, but the content began to gradually emphasize social and political issues more overtly. The Connection, written by Jack Gelber and produced in 1959, can be seen as a transitional work in their repertoire. The Connection is about heroin addicts looking for their next fix; its form mirrored jazz improvisation and included a live jazz band that jammed during the performances. The Brig, by Kenneth Brown, produced in 1963, was their next seminal production, although they produced several plays in the interim, including one Pirandello work and two plays by Brecht. The Brig, also structured in a non-traditional fashion, provided Malina with a framework within which she (as director) could depict the sadism and regimentation of the prisoners confined in the brig. Later works, such as Frankenstein, warn against the transgressions of human knowledge. With its huge scaffolding, it is scenically reminiscent of Meyerhold's productions. Paradise Now, the work which most exemplifies the anarchic philosophy and communal aesthetic of the company, completely eliminates the fourth wall; audience and company members disrobe together and share marijuana joints, joining,

if only momentarily, in a pacifist revolution, an ideal Malina was searching for. Malina's search for actors whose aims went beyond acting in a play to transforming their lives ultimately evolved into the communal living and working situation that The Living Theatre is known for.

Although Beck and Malina considered many possibilities, it seems unsurprising that they chose to do Stein's Dr. Faustus Lights the Lights as the premiere "full-scale" production of The Living Theatre. As Malina decribes it,

> Julian Beck and I talked about this for five years. About what to open The Living Theatre with. About the first season of The Living Theatre because we always intended for it to have continuity. That's why we called it "living." And let me begin this way. Let me begin by putting into some kind of map...the cultural/political context by which we opened The Living Theatre and in which we decided to open with Gertrude Stein's Dr. Faustus Lights the Lights.
>
> Essentially, The Living Theatre's model at the beginning, the very beginning, in 1945, let's say, when Julian and I began to talk about it, was the cultural energy that came out of Parisian and European post-war poetry and theatre. That still had the energy of being a resistance theatre, like Picasso's Desire Caught by the Tail, which really embodies the spirit of the artists living in Paris in dire straights under the occupation, with an artistic resistance that hardly ever speaks of politics, though it touches here and there, but hardly ever uses a political word until the very last line which is "eliminating all the bombs" and there's nothing else like that in the play and it's all about that resistance. And

> there was an energy at the time, and there was an energy in Europe that had not caught on in the United States.

Beck writes in "Storming the Barricades"

> We wanted to do some of her [Stein's] work and wanted to open the Living Theatre with Dr. Faustus Lights the Lights because it was like a manifesto and would always stand at the head of our work saying take the clue from this.[6]

And John Tytell writes that Julian Beck

> felt Stein was the best playwright of the twentieth century though he must have realized that her unusual innovativeness limited her audience. The play was produced for the coterie of underground artists who could appreciate it despite its murky labyrinthine mood and who would understand the importance of Faustus's tragic choice for knowledge and power as the principle underlying Western development since the Renaissance.[7]

The "coterie" that Tytell describes was in regular attendance at Living Theatre events, its members often giving poetry and play readings themselves. Besides the abstract expressionists from Peggy Guggenheim's gallery, this coterie included William Carlos Williams, Eric Bentley, John Cage, Kenneth Rexroth, Carl van Vechten, Paul Goodman, Merce Cunningham, and others. Their appreciation of Stein's play and the Becks' production of it is exemplified by William Carlos Williams' response to it in a letter of praise and support written just after he saw Dr. Faustus Lights the Lights. Williams writes:

> I'm walking in a dream, the aftermath of what I saw and heard at your Cherry Lane Theatre last evening...(I was thrilled!) but there was something else that overshadowed all that. It concerned the stage itself, the overall conception of the play as something elevated, a sure entertainment as something so well sustained....I swear it lives in a different air from the ordinary Broadway show. It is as fresh as a day in the country, the first really serious, really cleanly written, produced and acted play that I have seen, well in a long time.[8]

In their production of Dr. Faustus Lights the Lights, Judith Malina and Julian Beck's political concerns were already at the forefront of their work, and theatre for them was a tool for social revolution. Beck wrote: "We insisted on experimentation that was an image for a changing society. If one can experiment in theatre, one can experiment in life."[9] But at that time, Malina told me, they felt, "like George Bernard Shaw, that we had to sugar-coat the pill." Therefore, in their earliest seasons they did not choose plays with overtly political content but rather plays that did "political work through subversive formal experimentation." It was Stein's radical use of language not her politics (which in fact were quite conservative) which appealed to their revolutionary sensibilities. Language became a challenge to the artistic and social conventions that Malina and Beck felt symbolized the oppression they so strongly opposed. Since Gertrude Stein's name was very much in the air as a result of her successful American tour in 1934, Dr. Faustus Lights

the Lights was chosen as a symbol of the radicalization of language, a metaphor for the breakdown of the social status quo, and for the possibilities that this breakdown might herald for a future pacifist revolution. It was the pacifist essence of the work which in part motivated their choice. According to Malina, as pacifists and anarchists she and Beck felt, like Piscator, that the term "political theatre" could be cheapened to mean "propagandistic" and "agit-prop" -- labels they wanted to transcend. Malina explains:

> We were pacifists and we were anarchists and we did not feel at that time that one could create political theatre for the same reason that Piscator withdrew his nomenclature, "political theatre" and preferred to say "epic theatre." [The time] we're talking about, from 1945-1947, when Julian and I were brewing up The Living Theatre, at the time I was a student at Piscator's Dramatic Workshop until we finally incorporated The Living Theatre. Then we spent another couple of years creating our first production. But during that whole period there was already no question about our commitment and that our commitment was political. But we believed with the times, perhaps we were right, that, at that time, political theatre meant something which could be perhaps oversimplified as cheap propaganda. It was the sort of thing Russians were doing; it was the sort of thing that had no subtlety that tried to tell you what to think; it was the sort of thing that, as it were, was connected to certain low forms of art. "Agit-prop" was considered a dirty word. And we discovered something about it in the sixties, later.

Malina, of course, was one of the first women to direct in the alternative theatre. It is important to point out that in 1951 Malina was only

twenty-five. She was very idealistic and believed that she could change the world. Her interest in Stein was furthered by her interest in the Faust theme and Stein's use of that theme. As Malina told me, for her the Faust story symbolized the presence of evil in the world, and was particularly relevant after the recent holocaust.

Judith Malina's 1951 production of Dr. Faustus Lights the Lights was presented at the Cherry Lane Theatre in New York. It was the first "professional" production of Stein's opera (although simultaneous rights were given for a student production at Beaver College in Glenside, Pennsylvania) and it was Malina's first professional production. The Beaver production premiered in November, and The Living Theatre production in December.

The central event around which Malina built her production of Dr. Faustus Lights the Lights is the moment when Dr. Faustus decides to go to hell to pursue Marguerite Ida and Helene Annabel and is told by Mephistopheles that the only way he can go to hell is if he kills something. He does. He kills both The Dog and The Little Boy. According to Malina, this moment symbolized her own pacifist views that killing is taboo and was, she feels, an embodiment of the pacifist ideal. That moment became the

central theme of the production. Because she did not want to "hit the audience over the head with propaganda," she built this theme through the relationship Faustus has with Marguerite Ida and Helene Annabel when the latter tells Faustus that he could not possibly be the Dr. Faustus she loved because he has killed. According to Malina:

> The moment that Dr. Faustus decides to go to hell and pursue Marguerite Ida and Helena Annabel and asks how can I go to hell and The Little Boy says kill something and he kills something, he kills the little dog and he goes to hell and Marguerite Ida and Helena Annabel says you are not the Dr. Faustus I loved because you killed something. You killed somebody else. And for us that had a very clear pacifist point of view. And in our production this was not to be missed. That is, the intention was to build it around the thought and what I consider pacifist -- to make killing simply culturally taboo, something people do not do in order to advance to the next step in our development. We don't need to be scared of each other because we can kill each other. At least to take that first step.

Although Malina saw the work as pacifist -- a cry against murder -- and feminist -- an affirmation of female autonomy as seen in the character of Marguerite Ida and Helena Annabel -- her greater emphasis was on exploring the use of artistic tools towards a revolutionary end, as well as re-examining the traditional use of stagecraft. The anarchist means, so important to Malina, were embodied in Faust's iconoclasm, and, as already pointed out, in Stein's revolutionary use of language, and not in agit-prop

theatre. Although she had not yet clearly defined the ultimate form The Living Theatre would take, Malina knew at that time that she was looking for actors whose aims were to join in a "pacifist revolution" and whose interests were in creating an on-going company. She saw this work as a step towards her goal.

Using artists not trained specifically for the theatre was rare then and Malina's application of a cross-disciplinary vocabulary on the stage was still relatively new and paralleled Stein's inclusion of techniques from other art forms into her writing. Although the 1934 production of Stein's Four Saints in Three Acts had both an amateur cast (they were not professional actors although they sang professionally) and a set by the painter Florine Stettheimer, these practices were still not common in the theatre. Malina used a cross-pollination of artistic practices on the stage in a way which was to become increasingly prominent in the American avant-garde theatre, foreshadowing an emphasis on non-verbal signs over storyline. These included a painterly set, choreographed movement, and use of photographic slides. Malina was searching for a new theatrical form, but she was still groping. As one review of the production notes:

> Their [The Living Theatre's] circulars promised to give a new kind of "theater" to the public, and in that respect they

> certainly succeeded. They combined prose, poetry, music, and static pieces of dadaism with innumerable blinking electric lights. What it added up to was closer to painting than to drama. Of course if you love abstract painting and can project your mind beyond the conventional, you'll probably find something to ruminate.[10]

Because of the obscurity and difficulty of Stein's text, Malina's larger aims were not apparent to the members of her cast, and she met substantial resistance from several of the actors, one of whom suggested that next time she "do a play in English." However, as she describes it, she finally succeeded in creating an atmosphere of hope for the actors by elucidating, step by step, the ways in which the obscure language fed into the farther-reaching revolutionary aims of her theatre aesthetic. She attempted to provide a concrete foundation for the actors by her careful pre-planning and, as part of her rehearsal process, she carefully combed through the work line by line with the cast; she also attempted to root everything within physical actions. The three actors I spoke with, (Larry Swanson, Elizabeth Owens and Remy Charlip) remember that the rehearsals consisted mostly of "blocking"[11] -- not surprising since Malina had so carefully planned her Regiebuch ahead of time. In a program note for the production, Malina describes her aesthetic at that time:

> There is no final way of staging any play. That is one of the virtues of theatre: its plasticity. And no play will be liked by all. We can only expect that our audience understand and enjoy our purpose, which is that of encouraging the modern poet to write for the theatre and of bringing interest and stimulation to an art medium which tends to become repetitive in its form rather than creative.[12]

Malina was already familiar with Brecht's ideas, but she had not yet read Artaud nor thought of the idea of a collective creation. Though Malina's aims were always revolutionary, she believed that anarchy requires organization and that it is only through assiduous and detailed preparation that a revolutionary way of working (or the pacifist revolution itself, she said) can be achieved. As she describes it,

> Anarchism is organization and more organization....Liberty and limit is the question. Again, I come back to great generalizations. One tries to stretch the limits of means of expressiveness to the utmost and by recognizing those limits as you come to the outer edge of that, you see the form....You want human liberty and artistic expression to go as far as it can go.

Although Malina was formulating her own strong ideas at the time about the kind of theatre she wanted and what the basis for it would be, it would seem that as a beginner she was still uncertain of how to communicate those ideas. Malina's recollections of the rehearsal process and the memories of the actors I spoke with do not always coincide. Perhaps Malina recalls a

process which was gestating in her psyche but not yet formulated. Retrospectively she formulates her aims very clearly, but in 1951 she was still groping. She seemed to know instinctively that by choosing Stein's work she was on to something radical, but she had not yet, it seems, made the transition from radical culture to radical politics. Beck, too, was finding his political voice through his cultural expression. However, as Malina remembers and describes it, at the beginning of rehearsals for Dr. Faustus Lights the Lights, a substantial part of her rehearsal process centered around conversations about ideology and art with the actors and other members of the company, as well as a careful analysis of the material as it related to her ideology. Malina described the kind of difficulties she struggled with as she tried to define her aims to the Faustus company:

> Of course defining truth is a life-long search and this search is for time and body [sic] and playing this role, playing this play, and it's the same search for making more and more vivid the present reality and responding to that present reality on the highest and deepest level. These are sweeping generalities and in any given case might mean different things. But ultimately it comes to having a commitment and using the art work to try to express that commitment. If your commitment is to express the ineffable, you're in trouble.

Malina remembers that she was concerned with the subtextual intent of the author, as well as making the language as rich and vivid as she could.

She emphasized the importance of working in the present moment -- something integral to Stein's thinking as well -- and of leading the actors to an understanding of their own personal psychologies as related to text and character. Although Malina told me, "I don't like psychology. I like motivation," psychological characterization was still an important aspect of her work with Dr. Faustus Lights the Lights. Characterization was not just a theatrical construct or a "mask" as it was later to become in the works of Foreman and Wilson, but was a way of discovering the point of intersection between the actor's psychology and that of the character. Consequently, her aim was to develop a relationship between what the character was saying or doing and what the actor was feeling. Working within the modernist tradition, Malina was interested in subject and subtext as well as the inner lives of the dramatis personae.

> [I wanted to help the actors to] try to understand the meaning of the scene, the depth of the character. Usually there were talks with the group. But these are all just general rules. I'm not so much interested in the non-fictional motivation as in "what are you trying to say?" Is this in some way in conflict with what Stein is trying to say? or the character? How can we make what Stein or Faustus is saying with what you are trying to say?

She says she did this "by making clear the text. It has to be clear to the performer why she uses a very fine choice in order to express what she wants

to say."

Like Malina and several of the other actors, Elizabeth Owens, who played Marguerite Ida and Helena Annabel and was then known as Kathe Snyder, was just starting out. Like Larry Swanson (The Man from Over the Seas) who had recently arrived from Oklahoma, Owens was acting in one of her first New York productions. She briefly studied at the Dramatic Workshop but was studying with Stella Adler while she was in Dr. Faustus Lights the Lights. She told me that she was left pretty much to her own devices during the rehearsals and felt particularly at sea -- unclear about how to develop her character and where to place her focus. She went to an outside coach for assistance. Guided by a more traditional approach to drama, probably acquired from her studies with Stella Adler, she felt that she lacked a "beginning, middle and end" and felt that despite Malina's purported pre-planning, there was no central image upon which the production was built and no base from which she (Owens) could move. Neither Owens, Swanson, nor Remy Charlip (a promiment figure on the experimental scene who choreographed the production and also played The Viper) remember much discussion or communication of any central idea. Owens saw a lot of the work in the production as "gilding the lily."

According to her, a lot of the stylization seemed to be present for its own sake rather than as a means to an end, something she did not understand. She liked what she describes as Stein's "imagery" but was frustrated at not having any directions that would help bring life into her role. She felt that Malina didn't really "direct" her but allowed her the freedom to inhabit the role as she wished. Her sense was that Malina felt quite open to whatever the actors brought in as long as they filled her stage pictures. According to Owens, Malina seemed "almost relieved" when Owens had worked out the choreographic and character details of her own role. Owens remembers an "arty" idealism pervading the atmosphere.

Remy Charlip, who was trained as a dancer, was an original member of Merce Cunningham's company, which held classes and performances at The Living Theatre's loft. He was involved with John Cage's work on "chance operations" with Cunningham's company -- a logical preparation for working on a Stein text, it would seem, since Cage was influenced by Stein and since there are clear parallels between his work and Stein's abstract constructions. The late Sudie Bond, also prominently on "the scene" and also a dancer and designer, played The Dog. The cast, several of whom were recruited from Piscator's Dramatic Workshop, included the late Donald

Marye as Faustus, Robert King Moody (later the husband of performance artist Rachel Rosenthal) as Mephisto, Richard Wright as the Chorus, the already-mentioned Kathe Snyder/Elizabeth Owens as Marguerite Ida and Helena Annabel, Larry Swanson as the Man from Over the Seas and Constance Mobley as the Country Woman.

The highly stylized tone of the production, with actors in "heightened" gestural attitudes and tableaux vivants, reflected a resistance to naturalistic movement as a representation of "reality" or "truth." Therefore, Malina was combining a psychologically analytical approach to exploring the text (at least in her own thinking) with a choreographic stage vocabulary. Often, even when characters were not in a given scene, they were posed on stage, adding to the anti-naturalistic quality of the environment. Their movement and articulation were always heightened -- a fitting choice for an anti-naturalistic play and still new to the American theatre.

As choreographer, Charlip sometimes worked separately with actors on the "quality of their movement" as it related to characterization. Most of his choreography was for Sudie Bond as The Dog and for himself as The Viper because these non-human roles required the most stylization. He describes The Viper's movement as focused on a quiver in the right hand,

replicating a snake's rattle, as well as other serpentine movements with his body. However, he was always upright, never prone.

The costumes in the production had an eclectic feel to them. Some were evocative of the modernist poeticism seen in clothes worn by characters in the movies of Jean Cocteau (Blood of a Poet or Orpheus for example); Cocteau was one of the earliest supporters of The Living Theatre, Malina told me. Other costumes combined simplicity with surrealism while also evocative of the classical or medieval periods. This gave an ahistorical texture to the production, evoking styles which not only characterized modern dance performances but also harked back to the Goethe and Marlowe versions of the Faust story.

Faustus, for example, wore a flowing velvet cape atop a velvet tunic -- sometimes with tights and sometimes with leather pants; certain photos also show him wearing a modern business suit. (These latter may be rehearsal shots.) Marguerite Ida and Helena Annabel wore a long flowing dress and she, like Faustus, is often seen in modern dance poses much like those in Martha Graham works. Owens told me that her costume was in fact the very same one she used in a Graham performance at the Neighborhood Playhouse. The Country Woman with a Sickle was dressed in a simple peasant outfit

with a flowing blouse and long skirt. Mephistopheles' garb was a little more abstract and stylized. A photograph shows him barefoot and wearing a shiny, crepe-like tunic and head-band, with heavy make-up and darkened, lifted eyebrows; he looks like the archetypal devil drawn from images in medieval iconography. His was certainly a menacing presence. He also wore arm guards with wings, again reminiscent of a character in a Cocteau film --"Death" in Orpheus. Remy Charlip as The Viper was attired in a highly stylized costume, like Mephistopheles, with iconogaphic serpentine imagery painted both on his costume -- black, loose, Asian-like garb, consisting of a short-sleeved shirt and cut-off tights -- and his face. The look was derived directly from abstract expressionism and was meant to be very art-referential. (In later years, Alwin Nikolais' company had many costumes similar to the one Charlip wore at that time.) Sudie Bond was choreographed to move like a dog and was costumed in a shaggy terry-cloth type material with a ribbon around her neck, booties on her feet, a black dot on her nose and her hair in two side buns like dog ears. Malina points out that The Dog was meant to embody an ideal of innocence and unquestioning affection. The Man from Over the Seas, Swanson told me, was meant to be the romantic hero; he wore a burlap jacket with a white striped shirt

underneath, and burlap pants, which looked like a sailor's suit. He was directed by Malina to move and act in a way which reflected the romantic ideal. His costume was especially evocative of the romantic heroes in Cocteau's movies.

The Little Boy wore a short-sleeved white blouse and knickers cut just below his knees, and The Little Girl wore a simple blouse and skirt. The "abstractness" of the costumes liberated the actors both physically and stylistically to explore a range of movements and styles that were closer to the substantive qualities of the text than to any arbitrarily assigned genre -- fitting in well with the abstraction of Beck's set and the space Stein's text provided for interpretive possibilities. Malina had The Chorus played by a single actor, Richard Wright, who also read the stage directions. He wore simple clothes -- pants and a shirt -- with a flowing burlap cape.

Beck's set for Dr. Faustus Lights the Lights consisted of a wood frame with multiple panels, several of which were heavily plastered and abstractly layered with thick paint. Curtains hung between other panels, sometimes used for exits and entrances; two other openings were also used for entrances and exits, as were some spaces in the frame from which thick ropes hung. A four-tiered stair was placed in front of the frame and was used as a multi-

levelled playing area. The front part of the stage was open and also used as a playing area. Beck created an abstract space which could easily be transformed for different dramatic moments. The pictorial aspects of the stage space were emphasized as was the poetic quality of the work. Flashing lights, occasionally strobe-like, were central to the production, and the slides by Paul Johnson were used to enhance the strobe-like effect. Aimeé Scheff describes Beck's set and other aspects of the production in Theatre Arts as:

> strikingly ingenious and well-attuned to Stein's unique dramatic idiom. Consisting of panels of light, rope, plaster and wood, it was designed to express the structure of Faustus' brain.* The other characters, Mephisto, who rationalizes everything, Marguerite Ida and Helena Annabel who wanders about and looks for her own identity, the Little Boy who represents Faustus' youth, and the dog, symbolizing social amenities, were all projections of Faustus illustrating his struggle.[13]

Scheff's review was the most positive. The set, if not the production, received other favorable reviews:

> As for the production, the most satisfactory feature was Julian Beck's setting, which seems to be true of every production he finds himself affiliated with. His setting for "Dr. Faustus Lights the Lights" affords the audience an abstract picture, whereas the play offers only a confused one.[14]

*(Malina says that although the set was not intended to, it may, indeed, have had that effect.)

Other reviews ranged from sceptical to scathing. The critic for the New York Times, for example wrote:

> The set, consisting largely of flashing lights, suggests a gigantic, angry pin-ball machine (tilted). The musical effects come from a piano and two oboes....The Living Theatre, Inc. which chose "Dr. Faustus" as its first offering is dedicated to the noble purpose of encouraging the modern poet to write for the theatre. Perhaps in selecting its current production, the group has gone too far in specialization. Dr. Faustus provides impact -- but so does the bottom of a swimming pool.[15]

Another, no more flattering, review states:

> For those who confuse the obscure with the profound and enjoy being teased into vague-ish "feelings" by vagueish literature, The Living Theater's production of Dr. Faustus Lights the Lights may prove an entertaining business but I found it so much weird, half-baked nonsense.[16]

Vernon Rice of the New York Post attempted to provide a bit more perspective:

> I'll not call it spinach, for it is not without interest, even though monotony often stalks, and I'm sure even [Stein's] devotees will have to admit that some of her rhyming is downright bad. Juian Beck has given the play a fitting abstract background and Judith Malina, with the trying task of being the play's director, managed effective group stagings upon occasion. The Living Theater's production gives the impression of being a united whole, for it fits the Stein eccentric word patterns. Those who get high blood pressure at this sort of thing, for health's sake had better stay away. Those who remain calm when confronted with

> abstract art, will find the stylist Stein running true to form, but not the best form.[17]

Gilbert Gabriel writes in Cue:

> No business of mine to begin autopsying Miss Stein's fiercely repetitive mode of self-expression -- what an analyst once diagnosed for me as her retention-complex....She plays hob with the old Faust legend, but, Lord knows, she isn't half as dreary about it as some of her classic predecessors. And this present production has all of the odd humor she'd have wanted and have liked to see.[18]

Malina claims that the composer, Richard Banks, was forced upon her. She describes his music as "forgettable" and she used it "incidentally" rather than "operatically," underplaying the operatic aspects of the text. The words were not sung although music was used continuously throughout the production. About the music, one of the reviewers of the production writes:

> I liked Miss Stein's opera, "Doctor Faustus Lights the Lights," considerably better than the common practice of Broadway says I ought. Opera is a semi-right word for it, since it started off to be one. I can well understand Virgil Thomson's hesitation to supply it with such a delightful score as he once did the same poetess' "Four Saints"; this isn't, and never could be, half so inviting a libretto. But there is much music to it, and shrewdly suitable music by Richard Banks which really helps.[19]

Larry Swanson remembers three live musicians playing in the orchestra pit in front of the stage and constant "experimental" music used throughout the

production with dissonant, rather than melodic sounds.

Overall, Malina's interpretation of the text was conceived from Marguerite Ida and Helena Annabel's point of view. She told me:

> Stein's ultimate understanding [is] that it's Marguerite Ida and Helena Annabel that causes Faust's tragedy and is Faust's tragedy. Faust's tragedy is that while he'll go to hell for her, he doesn't really love her. He can't really love her, that's why he kills the dog. That's why he can do one thing that he should have been wise enough to know and how with all his wisdom, he couldn't foresee that she would say, "no way, Dr. Faustus you are not the one I love." How could he not know that? Because he never loved her. Because the passion that he felt for her was no more in Faust's heart. In Goethe's Faust he may have loved Gretchen, but he sure screwed around....He sure said, "Let Helen make me immortal with a kiss." And the love of Helen is not the love of self.

For Malina, Marguerite Ida and Helena Annabel was a manifestation of the different sides of Woman. Malina was influenced by the traditional archetypes from which these names derived.

> I think that what Gertrude Stein meant was that she was all of these women, or Everywoman, a little bit Marguerite, and Ida as in Mt. Ida, Aunt Ida, whatever; and Helena as the visionary Helen, or the aristocrat, Princess Helena, and Annabel was from Poe. That was what I always felt. I think that what she was intending to say was that she's all of these different attitudes that men have about women; she's classical, she's Goethe's Margaret, she's Annabel, the little innocent sweetheart who dies. She represents in some ways Womankind. And I think that by giving her a string of

> names, Stein implies this. This is just my assumption. I've not read any text by Gertrude Stein which says this.

The Woman With a Sickle was another aspect of "Woman" for Malina. In fact, Malina saw her as Gertrude Stein's authorial presence in the work and as a representation of concrete reality -- the woman who demands to be *seen* and is the stabilizing force of Marguerite Ida and Helena Annabel. Malina explains:

> [The Woman with a Sickle says:] "I'm here, at the window." That is, I'm not an abstract, I'm here, I'm a real person, I'm at the window; "Dr. Faustus do you not know...." She is this other woman force, very different from Marguerite Ida and Helena Annabel; she's the earth mother one here, she's the healing force. "Dr. Faustus, do you not know what is happening!?" You see that's what I was talking about when I said that the actors stopped resisting. It's very concrete. That is they try to make him see the light. Everybody sees it, but he can't see. NO. "Here I am at the window...." That is the voice of reason talking to him. And keeps saying to him, the problem is that you don't look at her. Every woman that has any kind of complex relationship with men knows that there is a point at which she has said, you are not listening to me. You're not really looking at what's happening. You don't see me. Haven't we all said that? You're not looking at me. You're not seeing what's happening to me. This is a very important scene. There is this other Marguerite: The Woman who's at the window. The window is very important. She's looking through. She's looking into it, as in I'm looking into it. She's looking through the window and she's saying, you're not seeing, you're not looking through the window; you've got blinders on.

The Woman with a Sickle was played "larger than life," as an earth woman who tells Marguerite Ida and Helena Annabel, her alter ego, that yes indeed she *can* turn night into day.

As for The Dog, Malina sees that role as embodying social decorum -- always polite and innocent of the evils of the world. As Malina describes it,

> [The Dog is] purity. The Dog is unconditional love. The Dog says thank you (and) he's purity, he's truth, he's the best of our animal instincts. Innocence. Thank you. He's grateful. The Dog is pure grateful loving. You're going to kill me....He was slightly doggy, but not very doggy. Sudie Bond played The Dog. A very fine actress. To me this is a very central part.

If Malina's vocabulary was not yet fully established at the time that she was directing Dr. Faustus Lights the Lights, she was certainly building it, and other artists recognized the importance of her revolutionary experiments as paving the way for their work and experiments. The attempt to integrate different art forms into one work was radical, even if an "integration" of these forms was not to be the direction in which Malina's experiments were heading.

. Malina describes working on Dr. Faustus Lights the Lights:

> [W]e all reach for the highest, and we may be stuck in shit, but it's bathed in light and look how wonderful it all is. It's a very uplifting play although it's about the devil and there is no real solution and Marguerite Ida and Helena Annabel

doesn't reconcile with Faust, there's no love story and everything ends in some kind of disillusionment between light and dark, between knowledge and ignorance and yet it's so beautiful.

Apparently many other artists found it so too, as we shall soon see.

Notes: Chapter 2

1. Judith Malina, interview with author, New York, 5 July 1995. Unless otherwise noted, all direct quotations from Malina come from this interview.

2. John Tytell, The Living Theatre, Art, Exile, Outrage (NewYork: Grove Press, 1995), p. 30.

3. Maria Ley-Piscator, The Piscator Experiment (NewYork: James H. Heineman, Inc, 1967), p. 108.

4. Betsy Alayne Ryan, Gertrude Stein's Theatre of the Absolute (Ann Arbor, Michigan: UMI Research Press, 1984), p. 140.

5. Tytell, p. 72.

6. Julian Beck, "Storming the Barricades," Introduction to The Brig, by Kenneth H. Brown (NY: Hill and Wang, 1965), p. 8.

7. Tytell, pp. 76-77.

8. William Carlos Williams, to Judith Malina and Julian Beck, 15 December 1951. Clippings File, The Living Theatre.

9. Tice L. Miller and Don Wilmeth, eds., "The Living Theatre" in The Cambridge Guide to American Theatre (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 283.

10. Dan Hammerman," Review of Dr. Faustus Lights the Lights, "Theater-ing," West Side News, 5 December 1951, Clippings File, The Living Theatre.

11. Elizabeth Owens, Larry Swanson, Remy Charlip. Interviews with the artists in separate conversations on July 11, 1997. All material and quotes about and from these artists, unless otherwise noted, are derived from these interviews.

12. Program for Dr. Faustus Lights the Lights.

13. Aimeé Scheff in Theatre Arts, quoted by Ryan, p. 96.

14. Harold Stern, Review of Dr. Faustus Lights the Lights, "Reviews," Show Business, 10 December 1951, Clippings File, The Living Theatre.

15. J.R.S., Review of Dr. Faustus Lights the Lights, "From the Highboard," New York Times, 3 December 1951, Clippings File, The Living Theatre.

16. Louis Sheaffer, Review of Dr. Faustus Lights the Lights, "Curtain Time," Brooklyn Eagle, 5 December 1951, Clippings File, The Living Theatre.

17. Vernon Rice, Review of Dr. Faustus Lights the Lights, "Two Plays Open in Village," the New York Post, 3 December 1951, Clippings File, The Living Theatre.

18. Gilbert Gabriel, Review of Dr. Faustus Lights the Lights, "The Theatre," Cue , 15 December 1951, Clippings File, The Living Theatre.

19. Ibid.

Chapter 3: LAWRENCE KORNFELD: SCULPTOR OF SPACE DR. FAUSTUS LIGHTS THE LIGHTS AT JUDSON CHURCH, 1979

Lawrence Kornfeld describes himself as a "sculptor of space."[1] In his 1979 production of Dr. Faustus Lights the Lights he was interested, as he describes it, in "breaking down the planes of the cubed space that a play took place in and having representations of distance [go] forward and then cracked open...making what was ordinarily a linear space or a cubical space and breaking it down to many ways of looking at it," something he did in the many other Stein productions he directed as well, and for which he became noted. These included A Manoir, What Happened, In Circles and The Making of Americans (adapted for the stage by Leon Katz).

Kornfeld was first introduced to Stein's work at the age of fourteen or fifteen when he was given a recording of Four Saints in Three Acts by Ed Lazansky, who was later to become the set designer for Dr. Faustus Lights the Lights and many of Kornfeld's other Stein productions. Kornfeld listened to the opera over and over again and memorized it. As a result of this early exposure to her work, he claims that he always reads Stein with "sounds in [his] ears" and feels strongly that Stein needs to be heard as well as read.

After double-majoring in Comparative Literature and Biology at Adelphi and serving time in the army, Kornfeld came to New York in the 1950's. A friend of his was in a drama group at Hunter College at the time and asked him if he wanted to direct a version of Stein's opera In a Garden, with music by Meyer Kupferman. He agreed. In a Garden was performed in 1955 and was Kornfeld's first Stein production.

Kornfeld's experiments with Stein's works and her ideas were to span many productions and many years. He experimented with doing her "operatic" plays with and without music, and, like Malina and Beck, he was inspired by Stein's challenging of generic boundaries to undertake his own experiments with a cross-pollination of artistic practices. Unlike Malina and Beck, however, Kornfeld was not interested in making political theatre as such although he was deeply affected by the political climate. Rather than the expression of a political agenda, his work was a challenge to the aesthetic status quo, foreshadowing the work of both Foreman and Wilson.

It was at New York City's Cedar Tavern, the central gathering place for the New York arts scene in the 1950's and 1960's, that Kornfeld first met Julian Beck who was to have an enormous influence on his theatre aesthetic. Beck's interest in Stein fueled Kornfeld's own interest, and Beck also

provided the chance for Kornfeld to be involved in the theatre on a daily basis. Kornfeld joined Beck's directing class and later became a member of The Living Theatre where he stage managed, raised money, and swept floors. He also regularly observed Merce Cunningham and John Cage's classes which were held in The Living Theatre's loft, and was influenced by their use of space and chance operations, which he felt corresponded to Stein's open landscape with its surprise plateaus. Observing these classes contributed to the evolution of his own theatre aesthetic.

Stein's symbolic presence on the arts scene at that time, as Kornfeld describes it, was filtered through the quite literal presence of Paul Goodman and Fritz and Laura Perls. Goodman was a psychologist, the "official mentor" of The Living Theatre, whose seminal book Growing Up Absurd became a kind of Bible for the counter-culture as it challenged artifice and searched for cognitive wholeness. These were the days of "Be Here Now" which anticipated the later "I'm OK, You're OK." The Perls were influential in the development of Gestalt Therapy which is an "existential and phenom-enological approach" to living one's life, and emphasizes "the principles of present-centered awareness and immediate experience." This interest in presence extended Goodman's theories and mirrored Stein's, and was central

to the human potential movement, the philosophy of which was permeating the counter-culture at that time. Further, Gestalt Therapy is "nonalytical and noninterpretive,"[2] a fitting perspective for an appreciation of Stein's work. Additionally, as Kornfeld describes it, Stein's influence at the time

> came through Dada and through the realization that she was not just a funny lady that people visited in Paris. There was an underground group of many people who really felt that she was the most important influence on (certainly) American art.

Although Kornfeld is against polemics and refuses theories and manifestos of performance, preferring the phenomenology of discovery and the engagement with process rather than the perpetuation of a particular interpretive strategy (also very Steinian), he explains that he was influenced by the Perls' views that dreams are an aspect of reality and that every aspect of a dream is an emanation of a single mind (the dreamer's) -- a view not so different from Stein's trust in the associative process. The Perls' theories extended into Kornfeld's theatrical aesthetic in that every artwork, or stagework, for Kornfeld, is also a kind of a dream. Therefore all of the characters in a play are also emanations of a single consciousness while simultaneously maintaining their individual identities.

Kornfeld cites Marguerite Ida and Helena Annabel's line in Dr. Faustus Lights the Lights, "I am I and they are they," as an example of Marguerite Ida/Stein's struggle with self-definition in relation to the awareness of the Self and the Other as part of a single consciousness. Furthermore, this awareness connected for him to Stein's interest in types as a further example of how she struggled to define "identity." Kornfeld views Stein's breakdown of people into types as a strategy for developing characters' actions on the stage:

> Stein, you know the way she broke down all people in the world into types and people have functions in life. And complicated characters had a couple of those. And there's a great topography which makes a landscape. So the function of any of these characters is what they do and what they say and how you interpret what they're doing and saying.

When beginning to grapple with a text by Stein, Kornfeld says that in addition to defining characters' functions

> I have to find a handle. Now the handle is not necessarily what the play seems to be about [or what] the words are about. The handle that I'm looking for is how the text reaches me and what provokes me to do it and I was doing this back in the 50's. And now of course I look back and I say oh my god, that was post-modernism and then I had no idea what it was about....I get filled up on what the text provokes in my mind -- it works both ways. I have things I put on the text and the text then leads me.

In 1961 Kornfeld met the poet and playwright Joel Oppenheimer, also at the Cedar Tavern. Oppenheimer had just written a play, The Great American Desert, and told Kornfeld that there was "this strange church" that wanted to do theatre and that they were interested in producing his play. The church was called Judson. They had just hired a new young minister, the Reverend Al Carmines, to identify the needs of the community. According to Oppenheimer, Carmines decided that what the community needed was a place for artists to work and congregate. He set about to create a place for them to do just that. Gradually, the whole Judson movement evolved, fomenting alternatives in all of the arts, and the church subsequently became the place that introduced happenings, opened a gallery that presented the work of the minimalists, became the birthplace of the postmodern dance movement, and began the Judson Poet's Theatre of which Kornfeld was to become Resident Director and where he was to do many of his Stein productions.

Although Kornfeld was still associated with The Living Theatre, Malina and Beck were straightforward about the fact that they were its sole directors. Kornfeld had directed a few staged readings for their Monday night series but was interested in doing more than he was allowed to do at

The Living Theatre. So he agreed to direct Oppenheimer's play. It opened in December, 1961. Although Judson, like many other churches at that time, had already presented a play publicly (Goethe's Faust, directed by Charles Gordone, who later became the first black playwright to win the Pulitzer Prize for his play, No Place to Be Somebody), The Great American Desert was to be the premiere production of what was now officially The Judson Poet's Theatre.

The Reverend Al Carmines subsequently became Kornfeld's creative collaborator. Although he had never formally written music before, he composed the music for many of Kornfeld's Stein productions as well as for his other productions. Kornfeld describes his creative beginnings with Carmines:

> Al was a wonderful pianist. He would sing at parties. So I said Al, come up to rehearsal and play some music for me so that I can show them what this means. So he did this wonderful melody. I said what's the name of that? And he said, I don't know, I just wrote it. So he played this thing, we rehearsed, and I said come tomorrow. Why don't we just keep you. Why don't you just play this music under the piece....Then he wrote a little song and that was the first piece....Then he really got, hey, I can write songs. And...I had read What Happened I said, Let's do this. I said I want to work with dancers. And we had five women dancers and four men singers.

His first Stein production at Judson was indeed to be Stein's What Happened, and those dancers he refers to were Lucinda Childs and Yvonne Rainer, innovators in postmodern dance, as well as Aileen Pasloff, Joan Baker, and Arlene Rothlein. Kornfeld had seen them perform for the first time in a work in which they were vacuuming to electronic music. What Happened opened in 1963. Kornfeld had the performers do solos and duets which consisted of double-hopscotches, running, wearing shoes that were too big for them and smelling the audience's feet. Baker took an exotic bath in the piano and Carmines played romantic music. The piano was moved around processionally. Kornfeld points out: "It's not vacuum cleaners, you know, but since every one was committed to the outrageous, we finished it. I got very unhappy because I knew that the women I respected so much really were unhappy." Apparently, the performers didn't have a clue as to what Kornfeld was up to at first.

It was only on opening night that the performers realized the impact of the work. The audience gave them a twenty-minute standing ovation, cheering and roaring with laughter. Combining the vocabulary of postmodern dance with the aims of the poet's theatre as embodied in the musicality of Stein's words was revolutionary in a different way than The

Living Theatre productions in so far as it reflected an aesthetic, rather than a political stance. Kornfeld was willing to move even further away from narrative than the Becks by allowing the text to recede even further from the center and giving the physical aspects of the production equal emphasis. Both Kornfeld and the production won several Obies for the work which essentially put them all "on the map" and identified Kornfeld as *the* foremost interpreter of Stein's works for the stage.

By 1979, the year of his Dr. Faustus Lights the Lights, Kornfeld had already directed numerous Stein productions, and in Dr. Faustus he continued to experiment with form as he had in his other productions of her work. Kornfeld also used what Michael Feingold, the Village Voice critic, first referred to as the "split stage,"[3] something Kornfeld parallels to Stein's literary cubism:

> She was the equivalent in words of Cézanne. When I finally understood her interpretation of the Cézanne landscape and her interpretation of cubism, which she really understood so well, I was able to direct plays in which I didn't need to have a focus. And I developed what Feingold was one of the first to discover... my concept of the split stage. In some of the early Stein pieces, I have two and three things happening at the same time, going much against the traditional points of where the strength of the stage is. I used a split stage. I was very much involved in the cinema techniques from painting. And since we all talked to each other, I would do one play in the style of a painter...and

> (another) production that I really based on my interpretation of Schubert's "Lieder." Now what that meant -- I never tried to explain it to anybody -- but my idea of what Schubert did with tonality and key change and the structure of the song, I didn't try to imitate that, but I let that become for me a new structure. And every show I did was trying to find a new structure.

The locus of Kornfeld's production of Dr. Faustus Lights the Lights was small town America, land of patchwork quilts and wood houses; it was designed by Ed Lazansky. Although Kornfeld (and Lazansky's) setting was painterly, Kornfeld felt that it needed to be very specifically American. The demise of values in Stein's landscapes was, to him, very "American" and very relevant for the theatrical and political moment. He wasn't interested in making Faust German, he told me, as he might have if he had directed Goethe's version of the play. A miniature painting of a town hung as a backdrop and was held up by two angels in a frieze which was part of Judson's permanent playing space; a quilted frame was carried in and out to bracket and alternate perspectives. This frame could also be split in three parts or reversed creating different environments. Tish Dace in her review of the production described it thus:

> (Kornfeld) frames his principals with the one set piece -- a sort of holiday greeting card -- by dismantling it into its three component pieces, which can reverse, turn sideways, topple on an actor or close in like walls on Charlie Chan.

> Kornfeld moves his performers occasionally from the Judson stage to the floor beneath, and he equips them with minimal props -- an electric cord, a chair cum candelabra.[4]

It was the words "not be" in Stein's text that first inspired Kornfeld to build his production upon a series of frames. For example when Marguerite Ida and Helena Annabel is invoked by Faustus she is all alone -- in "no space." She therefore tries to construct a personality. This is, according to Kornfeld's interpretation, very similar to the artist's dilemma, both as seen in Marguerite Ida and Helena Annabel (as a Faust figure herself) and as seen in the person of Stein. For him, an artist is always trying to construct an identity. In his production, when Marguerite Ida and Helena Annabel closed her eyes, the frame was moved away from her and she lost the context of her existence; thus Kornfeld physicalized the metaphysical dilemma of the artist.

Because of his interest in the split stage, Kornfeld divided the focus of the action; several actions took place simultaneously, thereby transforming a singular landscape into a multi-perspectival one. As a "sculptor of space," his spatial vocabulary was close to the post-modern dance aesthetic to which he had been exposed, with its decentered focus and multi-artistic referents (including the visual arts and film) which in turn reflected Stein's literary cubism.

Although Kornfeld adheres to the abstract elements of the play in so far as all of the characters are presented in one refracted space, he uses a traditional theatre vocabulary vis à vis actors. He adheres to classic acting terms and actions: "What are you doing? What's our attitude? Where are you going? What's your action? What are you thinking? Where have you come from? I was one of the few directors in the avant-garde to use acting terms; I learnt that from Judith and Julian," Kornfeld told me.

Unlike other Stein plays he had directed, Kornfeld felt that in Dr. Faustus Lights the Lights the scenario was already there, but that in order to make it happen on stage, numerous actions needed to be created, as well as specific situations. He had very "scenically abstract physical ideas" that he tried to metamorphose into actual events on the stage, such as "people fighting, loving, hitting, building, screwing, running away," all of which he tried to make into a reality. Any idea, thought, or emotion needed to be manifested into a physical action. He felt, further, that the reason even his most abstract productions were accessible to wide audiences was that the characters were real people no matter how abstract their actions, even if they were standing on their heads. Each moment was always very specific and concrete and characters were never presented abstractly, even if what they

were doing was not conventional. It was always rooted in something tangible.

Kornfeld divided the text into beats; if they weren't in Stein's text, he made his own decisions about where they occurred. He relays an anecdote about an argument he had about his rehearsal process with the director and teacher Harold Clurman, a founding member of the Group Theatre. Kornfeld did a play at the Actor's Studio and Clurman thought it was wonderful. He asked Kornfeld how it was planned and rehearsed. Kornfeld said that he worked from second to second and Clurman said that that was impossible because if he hadn't planned it before beginning to rehearse, it couldn't have worked so well. Clurman told Kornfeld that things don't work that way. The actors backed Kornfeld up, however, and said, indeed, that was how they had rehearsed, discovering the actions from moment-to-moment. Kornfeld is fond of this anecdote because, he says:

> For all of my thinking about metaphysics and all of my ideas about subtext, essentially what I do is have that all almost invisibly in front of my nose as a character and I basically build each step as I go. That's why when I do plays like this I will spend eight hours and end up with maybe three minutes of stage time. Because we can make all kinds of pretty things happen, but it has to make sense, at least to that script and to what's coming out of it. I don't tell each one what to do because each actor is involved in choosing where their character goes. I say here are these

> moments, here are these words, what does that do to you? What about you and how are you going to handle this thing coming out of you? And we work with that and finally it opens up into something -- that truly dramatic moment coming out of their exposure to the text and my passion in it.

Kornfeld does not deviate from his standard approach to a text when he directs Stein's works. In fact, his methodology lends itself very well to Stein's interest in exploiting the "continuous present." He continues:

> Dr. Faustus Lights the Lights and every one of the Stein pieces are about what Stein put into it, what I put into it, and what each performer puts into it. Because I don't exclude the performer in that. Other people do with a Stein work. I've seen the performers totally excluded. They do what the director says. I include the actor. I love actors. I love to work with them. When I do Stein plays I gather very particular kinds of actors. They have to be in tune, they have to be able to listen for themselves; they have to be able to hear a line and find a kind of passion in it, a hate or love. So when I cast for a Stein piece I don't necessarily have the best actors. I have actors who perceive in words and images real actions. In Stein, you're open to much more. But basically once you get started, when I'm rehearsing a play, any play, Shakespeare, Stein, Lanford Wilson, Tennessee Williams, it doesn't matter, I spend an enormous amount of time getting into the first sixty seconds of the play, finding out what's really going on.

Kornfeld explains that he works diligently on the first beat of a play and then he and his company create a subtext from it. Although Dr. Faustus Lights the Lights was not a linear play, it was important for the company to know

where it ends up. As Kornfeld sees it, Faustus is heading towards death. Therefore the first moments of the play had to be found very carefully in order to set up that journey on stage.

Kornfeld's approach to his production of Dr. Faustus Lights the Lights was very methodical. He was aware of both the history of the play as well as its relevance to the "present moment" (1979.) Like Malina, Kornfeld took extensive notes as he prepared his production, although unlike Malina, he did not prepare an "official" Regiebuch. As is typical for him, he made many notations in the script, but he did not write down the stage directions beforehand. His methodological strategy is to "think aloud on paper, freely associating the breakdown of text into action and making notes in the margins." By so doing he sets up

> the basic ambiance of despair and solitude, a condition of life devoid of meaning, epistemology as unreal. So there is a kind of metaphysical stance that I see taking place from the first speech. I have this theory that in any great work of art you really unlock the first page of it. And then the whole thing is all there.

It was in rehearsal that both he and the cast decided at which moments to have the narrative -- as opposed to dialogic -- sections of the text enacted and when to view them as stage directions. He explains that he's always anxious to block as early as possible in the rehearsal process because that's

where the work is made concrete. When the actors sit around a table reading the script, they're preparing to enter a particular world. But it is when they get on their feet that they're "checking the words out," as it were, and asking what they mean and how they can be represented. Nevertheless, he worked intensively to comb the play line by line and to break it down moment by moment. Kornfeld described coming across a passage of Stein's at the time she began to work on Dr. Faustus Lights the Lights in which she wrote, according to Kornfeld, that she "had been struggling with the problem of Germanic narrative, theology and drama," and that she felt "confronted with the breakdown of the things that meant anything to [her.]" She reflected upon the horror of the approaching darkness. This passage was central to informing Kornfeld's conceptual approach to the work.

Kornfeld saw the play as a metaphysical melodrama with political overtones; for him, the "meaning" was in the script, although he explains, "Stein wasn't political. She was just a starter of her own. She was right. She was a genius." Therefore he felt that this text was not an open landscape in the way that some of Stein's other works were. He did not feel free to do or say whatever he wanted in his production but felt, rather, that he had an obligation to the work itself. Unlike, for example, his production of another

Stein play, A Manoir, in which he created a subtext built upon selected passages from Ovid's Metamorphoses and Rilke's Duino Elegies, he turned all of the metaphysical and philosophical "stuff" in Dr. Faustus Lights the Lights into physical actions, literalized within the context of the landscape of Americana.

Although he believed in discovering the text as he rehearsed, he nonetheless had certain basic concepts that he wanted to explore. For example, he knew that he wanted to have an a capella chorus and that he wanted Faustus himself to create the blaze of electric light that opens the play. Kornfeld explains that a literary understanding of Stein does not a theatre piece make:

> You can be filled with all the images, all of the theory, all of the understanding of Gertrude Stein, but if it's a play and people are in it, not images, or icons, but people, then there has to be something underneath that, making them move, which will then open up that speech with all that poetry. I would always talk about Cézanne. Always with Gertrude Stein. I'd somehow try to get them to look at a little bit of it. I talked a little bit about cubism. I'd talk a little bit about text as text. I'd say, okay, text is text, but it's got to live now on stage. I'm sorry, it really does have to live on stage. Even if I have people speaking in rhythms, that has to be meaningful to them. It has to be real, not realistic.
>
> If text is text, then it really has to be text. I always try to explain to actors, nowadays they understand this, but then they didn't, now you're not in Sweden, you're not in

> Louisiana, or Edinburgh. You're on a stage. You're now in this theatre and you're going to create something else. I always do that in terms of actions. Let's just pick any line, "How wild they are, wild and wild and wild they are. How do I know how wild the woods are...." Now I'll ask the actor what do those lines mean to you, what's happening here and now? Notice the repetition of the word "wild." Notice how that's being repeated. Take it to your awareness, the fact that the word comes up later. Let that word fill you as part of you. Let it push you somewhere. "How wild, and wild..." Have an image for yourself.
>
> I call attention to the text as text but then ask them to connect emotionally to it. For me, when I go to readings and I hear people doing what I call textual readings, paying attention to the text, I fall asleep. Cause I'm not interested in great poetic texts that are not linear unless it lives in me. The language is the character. Now she breaks Faustus into real people. You know you can do a production of Dr. Faustus and just forget about the breakdown and turn it into a hodgepodge.

A lot of what was decided conceptually, he explained, boiled down to a description of the various problems of narcissism -- seeing and being seen, or being seen being seen. Kornfeld believes that all of Stein's work is concerned with the narcissistic wound. The psychological concept is real for him. It is similar to the child's game of "hide-and-seek," where children are testing the waters to discover the parameters of visibility or invisibility. Of course Kornfeld's evoking a child's world is reminiscent of Stein's own inclusion of nursery rhymes and other children's ditties in Dr. Faustus Lights

the Lights and many of her other works.

Kornfeld chose Ed Lazanksy because he was a painter and not a set designer, and the environment was therefore very painterly. All of the Stein pieces that Kornfeld directed were based on painterliness, the abstraction of which is an interesting contrast to the concreteness of the characters. Instead of appearing on stage from a specific locale, the actors stepped out of the shifting picture frame Lazansky designed.

Kornfeld also paid very close attention to Stein's concern with landscape, filtering it through his own sensibility. He saw every square inch of the painting (as set design) as equal to every other square inch. One aspect of his theory of stage space is his notion that the stage does not have any strong points in and of itself. The director makes them. In Stein's works, more than in plays by other playwrights, Kornfeld feels, lie both the opportunity and the need to be more subjective than in a conventionally scripted play, in the sense that it is possible to put in one's own parallels, and that in fact, that is what is often called for, as it was in A Manoir. The parallel story or "sub-event" which goes along with the text, informs it but maintains its own integrity, as Kornfeld explains: "It happens in every play. Because you discover a sub-text which you believe hopefully is what the

author meant or what the author's unconscious meant, you discover that and you put them underneath the words and it informs the words."

When rehearsals began, Kornfeld told the cast the Faust legend and they sat around and talked about the war and about what lights were. Kornfeld was very careful not to tell the cast what to see, yet he tried to make them more observant. Rather than, for example, telling the actor playing The Dog that The Dog is innocent, which he feels will simply cause the actor to enact an *idea* of the character, Kornfeld prefers to try to point his cast in a direction so that they can make their own discoveries.

Kornfeld was particularly interested in the emotional resonances of Stein's words. Through repetition of a single word, he felt, a different emotional texture could be evoked, bypassing what he refers to as the "cutesiness" or "campiness" of most Stein productions.

> There are just too many campy productions of Gertrude Stein. She's deadly serious; she had a lousy sense of humor; and the reason that you laugh at her plays is because she's so startling, that's what you're laughing at. So I get very angry about this idea of cutesifying, making it little boy, little girl. Nothing like that. She was interested in the epic. She thought she was an epic. Building a character in a play like this, in any play, comes out of what they *do* dealing with the language. If you have lines you have to say, you have to create actions in order to say them. Or go against what you say. If you create characters out of archetypes of behavior, then the words are going to lag behind that behavior. But if

> you discover coexistently the actions with the words as what the words demand and the actions demand of the words, then you get that present moment happening. And that's what makes directing Stein plays so difficult. Because you're creating a time that becomes past; something for the future which is going to be present all the time. And the only way you can do that is if you stay true to discovery.

The revue-like music for Dr. Faustus -- very American, very contemporary -- was composed by Carmines who also played Mephistopheles. Jeff Weiss played Faustus; Zoelle Montgomery, a black soprano, played Marguerite Ida and Helena Annabel; and Florence Tarlow, a regular on the early Off-Off-Broadway scene, played the Woman with a Sickle. Kornfeld and Carmines had worked together frequently since 1961, doing many of Stein's plays and operas, so by 1979 their collaborative process was almost instinctive. Kornfeld says that they spoke in metaphors and that it often took only a single word from one of them to set the other into gear creatively. Kornfeld wanted to have every moment fulfilled with absolute integrity and to make those moments exciting. He also had a sense of pacing and theatricality. Carmines, without directives from Kornfeld, often discovered those moments on his own and would, in fact, point out moments in which to include music.

The Vietnam War was still very much on Kornfeld's mind at the time of the production and Kornfeld was concerned with communicating the potential danger of the presence of evil lurking behind a facade of innocence (his view of Vietnam) and something he felt echoed Stein's own subtextual intent. When Faustus goes to hell at the end of the play -- symbolized by the frame crumbling on top of him -- it signifies both Faustus's own demise and the breakdown of values in society.

However, Kornfeld's desire to do a Faustus at this time -- particularly Stein's version -- also had to do with his desire to continue to experiment with form and to do "pieces that are just blow-outs." He'd been doing a lot of regional theatre and although he was usually called in to do non-traditional works, he felt that the audiences were still quite traditional in the regions and that he was limited in his creative options.

Kornfeld took Marguerite Ida and Helena Annabel's words as a reflection of Stein's own sentiments. For example, when Marguerite Ida and Helena Annabel says "there is no here, there is no there," he feels that Stein is referring to her own birthplace, Oakland, California, which was like nowhere to her (a little like Ubu's Poland, perhaps). Kornfeld adds that you have to have been in Oakland to know exactly what she meant.

Kornfeld emphasized that the word "it" is a very important one to Stein. He points out that in her play Listen to Me there were large sections of "it." And in Dr. Faustus Lights the Lights "it" refers to all knowledge and experience.

Unlike Stein's other works, which Kornfeld believes are more abstract and written primarily to experiment with language (for example, Tender Buttons which he describes as "this wonderful word/sentence thing") in Dr. Faustus Lights the Lights, "she is really saying something." According to Kornfeld, Faustus was tempted by a short-cut, and he questions why he ever bothered with the devil, why he wanted more light, and whether the devil had anything to give him or vice versa. Kornfeld sees this self-doubt as a key motif. Another motif is the need, shared by both Faust and Stein, to be truly unique -- "the one and only one;" this motif is an elaboration of the connection between the artist and the Faust figure.

Faustus's despair, he felt, was open-ended and paved the way for the end of the play when he says "dog and boy, let me alone." Kornfeld further believes that all of the dog's "thank yous" create a landscape of light as well as space, and that Faustus invokes Marguerite Ida and Helena Annabel to in some way personify the light, not to create a so-called "rival" to himself. As

the lights get brighter, knowledge is not necessarily more immanent; the lights are connected to despair and the sense of isolation. The harder Faustus tries to invoke and evoke meaning, the greater his despair, since all of his efforts fall short.

The obstacles presented by trying to stage Faust's contradictions while trying to "frame" a moment provided an interesting challenge for Kornfeld. The ensuing theatrical dynamic provided a dramatic tension for the metaphysical ideas of the production. One of his solutions to this theatrical challenge was to have the characters in the play construct and deconstruct the frame dressed like the stage hands in the Kabuki theatre. This strategy was meant to call attention to the theatre as a construct, to call attention to its component parts, and to create awareness of the playing space, raising questions about perception, framing, reality, and landscape. What *is* a landscape, Kornfeld asks, describing it as something literal.

Hell, as noted above, was the collapse of the frame. It is when Marguerite Ida and Helena Annabel has no frame (of reference), for example, that she sees the devil -- an ingenious physicalization and literalization both of Kornfeld's central concept of the demise of values leading to evil and also of Stein's challenge to Marguerite Ida and Helena Annabel to surrender her

bourgeois comforts for a higher truth -- the dramatic question, of course, being whether the surrendering of the familiar and comfortable leads to creativity or leads to hell -- a frightening challenge for any artist.

Another aspect of Dr. Faustus Lights the Lights which interested Kornfeld directorially were the circumstances that triggered Marguerite Ida and Helena Annabel's appearances. It seemed to Kornfeld that she appeared every time Faustus was in doubt. Thus she was an alter-ego as well as a parallel force. He sees in the play a conflict of narcissism, when two characters need to be seen and to exist for each other, and subsequently one of them (Marguerite Ida and Helena Annabell) individuates and the other disintegrates. Out of this dilemma arose "epic acting-out of the paradoxes of narcissism," an idea Kornfeld found central to the play and brought forward in his production. In the play, Kornfeld found important blocks of monumentally mythic and psychological phenomena overlapping and sometimes inexplicably present. He saw his job as a director to set them in motion and then let them travel on their own momentum. "One of the very important things about directing Stein is to discover it as you do it," Kornfeld stresses yet again.

Faust needs to deny Marguerite Ida and Helena Annabel, just as he needs to deny anyone else who isn't him because everyone else's existence threatens to negate his own. He had to sell his own existence in order to have the light all for himself, and the price he paid was non-existence. As Kornfeld describes it, this is a central philsophical dilemma of the twentieth century which is dealt with by many philosophers and which was an aspect of Stein's work that he felt he needed to grapple with.

It wasn't important for Kornfeld, however, that the audience know the specifics of his intentions. What was important for him was that they could view the elements of his production first within the context of the theatrical experience and then find their relevance outside the narrative frame, recognizing them as artificial constructs within their own autonomous existences and as things "to be played with." Says Kornfeld:

> For me it's always important that the stage space and the things on it are...active and...beautiful and...part of the plot. And sometimes it's just a background....Aesthetically, what I was dealing with in terms of my own personal aesthetic experience of space on the stage...was just...breaking it down to many ways of looking at it. And I didn't care if people were aware of that. But it just helped the tension. I mean a painter doesn't worry about the strokes of the brush, but they're part of the painting. It's life.

Kornfeld claims that Stein had a great problem with inertia all of her life and felt herself to be acted upon; he correlates this with Faust's need to "invoke" Marguerite Ida and Helena Annabel. However, by questioning themselves in history (and action) both Stein and Marguerite Ida and Helena Annabel are able to find a place for themselves. Kornfeld directed three of Stein's history plays at Yale and sees her place in history as a central concern of hers and a theme which is repeated in many of her works. Finding that place would be a means of defining herself and creating an identity. He sees this "four-part woman" (Marguerite Ida and Helena Annabel) as Stein trying to locate herself in time and history. The quandaries that Stein created for Marguerite Ida and Helena Annabel were the ones which challenged her to action. Kornfeld felt that he translated these quandaries into stage action by giving the actress playing Marguerite Ida and Helena Annabel a speeded up rhythm and direction as she raised questions about existence. She moved from being a solitary figure sitting on stage with lit candles dripping on her to gradually moving around the stage as she works out her quandaries line by line.

Stein's so-called "identity writing" was also significant for Kornfeld in this production. While not written as an identity play per se, Dr. Faustus

Lights the Lights nevertheless explores the question of identity. Faust's quest for knowledge is also Stein's (and Marguerite Ida and Helena Annabel's) quest for identity. If Stein (and Stein as Marguerite Ida and Helena Annabel) could know everything, Kornfeld felt, she could prove that she existed. So could Faustus. He points out that Stein ultimately saw her brother Leo -- someone she was intially very close to and who influenced her -- as someone who could only think about thinking and that this for Stein symbolized his metaphorical death and marked their life-long estrangement. Thinking versus action was another central theme which Kornfeld wished to explore in his production of this play.

How does Kornfeld work on characterization and the characters as individuals?

> I believe in characters. I don't believe in characterization. I don't believe that people have characters and that then they act accordingly. I think people do things that determine their character. Now very often they do things that are deeply compulsive or dependent upon certain needs they have but I never believe when somebody says, well, the character couldn't do that. That's bullshit.

The Country Woman with a Sickle, for example, represented the voice of concrete reality for Kornfeld, because of what she did, in contradistinction to Faustus and Marguerite Ida and Helena Annabel who are more representative

of a metaphysical dilemma. The Woman with a Sickle was the one who did the work; she cut the hay. She was not a symbol of death as the sickle might suggest, but a symbol, for Kornfeld, of work; she was also the leader of the chorus. The Viper was not played by an actor but was represented by a piece of old electrical cable. The Dog was played by an actor who was also a trained mime. The actor playing the Dog was so involved in the role that during one of the rehearsals he bit Marguerite Ida and Helena Annabel who was so frightened that she asked him to leave her alone. The character of the Dog is, for Kornfeld, caught in the dilemma of his own isolation. The Chorus recapitulates this dilemma and each character presses its point of view. Kornfeld explains that Stein also had a strong connection to dogs because of her attachment to her own dog and that The Dog was actually "in the same world" (theatrically speaking) as the children in the play were. Since The Dog was played by someone who was experienced in mime, his background enhanced his physical life on stage. Kornfeld was reluctant to attach any specific symbolism to The Dog, preferring to create a space for the audience to make their own associations, despite the fact that he feels that in creating an art work, it is important to be specific.

As for the costumes, Kornfeld explains,

> I believe that there are certain plays that are about a certain specific period, that you can do in certain costumes, but these Stein pieces need to be sort of aimed at one period in a way, but have different periods. The play was American, quiltish, but some of the chorus people look like some of the people out of the 20's, almost. The costumes are close to what the characters are doing, what the character is.

The Dog was clothed like a farmer, in a pair of overalls and without socks; he moved like a dog on his hands and knees but was not costumed like a dog. Faust wore a coarse collarless shirt and sometimes also wore a leather jacket and corduroys. Mephisto wore a tuxedo with a red "diplomatic" sash. The other costumes were quite eclectic as they were in Kornfeld's other Stein productions Although the production wasn't meant to be set in the 1890's, Kornfeld explains that it gave that feeling. According to him, Marguerite Ida and Helena Annabel and the little girl and the little boy all looked kind of "Mark Twainish."

Kornfeld's approach to directing Dr. Faustus Lights the Lights was to adhere to Stein's "continuous present," to the "here and now" in both Stein and in the Gestalt movement. Kornfeld emphasizes that

> She was very serious, not kidding around. So the only way to do that is to do it. And when you're rehearsing you literally don't know what the fuck is going to happen next. Even though you've got to mount a show, even though you've got a theory of philosophy, what happens on that stage must be a surprise to you and the person doing it.

> There's a kind of trick to doing that, because you're also technicians creating something.

Faustus and Marguerite Ida and Helena Annabel play a metaphysical game of trying to entrap one another into seeing each other, thereby confirming each other's existence and even endowing existence with essence. Existential elements continue to abound in Kornfeld's interaction with Stein's phenomenology. He explains:

> The whole play is really, as all Faust plays are, really battlegrounds for great metaphysical encounters of good and evil, sin, despair, death, perception, non-perception, and each writer deals with different aspects, great monumental structure of what do you sell, what do you want, what are you giving away for what you want?

Marguerite Ida and Helena Annabel's impending death from a snakebite shortly after her first entrance forces Faustus to focus on her because of the threat that the light will go out with her, according to Kornfeld. He has to *see* her in order to rescue the lights. He is forced against his wishes to cure her. At this point, she has identified herself so securely that he can't ignore her anymore and he is trapped into awareness of the Other. This Kornfeld sees as an epiphany of sorts.

Mephistopheles was as much of a creator as Faustus himself. He forms a trilogy with Faustus and Marguerite Ida and Helena Annabel.

Kornfeld feels that Marguerite Ida and Helena Annabel faints at the end of the play because others are approaching her solitary state in Kornfeld's production. "Being in the world," as it were, is what causes the fainting -- a different take than my own, which is that it is a warning against romantic love. Kornfeld feels that Marguerite Ida and Helena Annabel is behaving here exactly as Faustus did, except, unlike him, she is expressing it in a vocabulary traditional to women. He sees The Boy and The Girl as innocent and therefore comfortable singing to a stuffed viper, since Kornfeld feels that the innocent do not recognize the emptiness of images. The Man from Over the Seas, he feels, loses his power because of sentimentality and his blind dedication to Mephisto.

By the end of the play, Faustus recognizes his loneliness; like the artist he realizes that in order to see the light, he needs others to see it too. Kornfeld explains:

> He shares the light with the dog whose lights have always been before Faustus in the light of the moon. The boy rationalizes that Faustus has removed craziness by removing the moonlight. A symphony of barking, howling, from all the company, who bark and howl at the moon and all sleep in the dark with him...

Kornfeld mostly tried to plot out the metaphysics of power and self-identity in line with his original concept of a metaphysical melodrama. He

compares Stein's Faustus to Mozart's Don Giovanni as well as to the tragic Greek heroes. Faustus sells his soul to get light but only receives darkness.

> Now that doesn't mean that I make plots and then take Stein's words. But I just let those classics in me resonate in me and this is what I got from John Cage. I trust that unconscious, whatever you want to call it, is filled with the Ovid and the Shakespeare, and the Rilke and I let that feed me. Then I also had a sub-sub-plot. Because what I looked for in A Manoir is that I used the story of the loss of a world. And I knew that the first act plot would be the destruction of the world. And the second act would be the building of a world. And I had as a plot that it would be an epic. So I let the first act resonate as a classical golden age. So it was a metaphysical and also a literal historical thing. I feel that Stein's plays always have to deal with history.

Dr. Faustus Lights the Lights clearly consisted of images from the major Faust texts, including those of Marlowe, Mann, and Goethe. The literary sources were present, and therefore Kornfeld did not have to dig very deeply for a structure. He trusted that Stein was doing a Faust piece. On the other hand, A Manoir had a very open landscape, so by setting it in a mid-Western desert, Kornfeld was able to parallel on the stage the emotionally flat and repressed inner quality which is characteristic of people who go mad.

Like Malina, Kornfeld paid very close attention to the information in the text and set about to analyze and interpret it very systematically. All of the physical actions and staging derived from this close reading. Although in

other Stein productions Kornfeld favored creating a universe which paralleled the dialogue, in Faustus there was an enactment of the text itself as he related to it. Following Malina, Kornfeld journeyed even further along the theatrical divide they marked, foreshadowing postmodern production while still embodying the values held dear in modernist thinking. Both Malina and Kornfeld validated a subject, a point of view and an interpretive strategy rather than iconicization. They were also interested in the individual identities of both actor and character -- interests which became less and less important in subsequent productions of both Dr. Faustus Lights the Lights as well as in the concerns of alternative American directors.

Notes: Chapter 3

1. Lawrence Kornfeld, interview with the author, 12 July 1995. Unless otherwise noted, all direct quotations from Kornfeld come from this interview.

2. Raymond J. Corsini, ed., Encyclopedia of Psychology, 2nd edition, (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1994), volume 2, pp. 69-71.

3. Quoted to me by Kornfeld.

4. Tish Dace, Review of Dr. Faustus Lights the Lights, Other Stages 1 November 1979, p. 6.

Chapter 4: RICHARD FOREMAN: FROM PAPA BERTIE TO MAMA GERTIE DR. FAUSTUS LIGHTS THE LIGHTS AT THE FESTIVAL D'AUTOMNE, 1982

If Malina and Kornfeld's creative world is situated in humanistic, character-centered and psychologically motivated actions and is theatrical in its vocabulary, Richard Foreman resists discussing his work in theatrical terms. He draws largely from sources in the visual arts. Although Malina and Kornfeld were among the first to introduce a cross-disciplinary vocabulary into the American theatre, they were nonetheless interested in narrative and character and in a theatre-centered vocabulary. Foreman prefers to view his theatre pieces as states of mind and to describe them in terms of metaphysics or psychology, although he does not have a psychological approach to character and action. It is Foreman's shared interest with Stein in states of mind that has had so much impact on his aesthetic.

Although Foreman usually uses his own texts in his productions, he has also directed several works by other writers, including The Threepenny Opera, The Golem and works by Botho Strauss. But Dr. Faustus Lights the

Lights is the only work by Stein that he has directed -- the work he chose when the Festival d'Automne in France invited him to participate in 1981. It was translated into French by Marie-Claire Pasquier.

Kate Davy was one of the first to write about Stein's influence on Foreman's performance style:

> [Foreman] takes the fundamental conflict (hysteric) basis of most traditional theatre and renders it phenomenologically -- retarding and breaking up the hysterical situation or state, and focusing on the moment-to-moment reality of things-in-and-of-themselves. Foreman shares this phenomenological esthetic with Gertrude Stein.[1]

As Foreman told me, for a long time he considered Stein to be his artistic mother and Brecht his artistic father.[2] He was interested in Brecht's concept of the verfremdungseffekt and, as he describes it, in Stein's "continual flow of mother's milk." Eventually, his interest in Brecht waned and his interest in Stein grew. Nevertheless he recently said to me that "For six to eight years Stein was a huge influence on me and then one day she just stopped being." Even though Foreman claims that he is less interested in Stein now than he was ten years ago, her influence has so permeated his way of working that it has been absorbed into what is now recognizable as his signature aesthetic. As Foreman ultimately acknowledges: "I think it's probably so deep in me that it's nothing I ever think of, but it's probably still

there because it was a tremendous influence on me." Foreman acknowledges many other influences on his work as well -- Gaston Bachelard, Trigant Burrow, Georges Gurdjieff, to name a few-- but none as far-reaching as Stein's has been.

If Gertrude Stein and the cubists were pushing the margins of their literary and visual canvases away from center, and if their influence on Malina and Kornfeld was reflected in the fracturing of stage space rendered through the dislocation of planes, then Foreman (and Wilson after him) pushed these concerns even further. They essentially divested the stage of individual characters and replaced them with archetypes of cosmic and spiritual states of being. Elinor Fuchs describes the shift from an interest in character to an interest in states of mind in twentieth century drama in a 1983 Theatre Communications article, "The Death of Character":

> The energy underlying dramatic structure moved from the physical realm outside the mind, and often outside the... human order, to the psychic and spiritual realm within. Consciousness replaced action as the central fascination of the stage....[S]ettings, characters, incidents become projections of states of awareness.[3]

Fuchs could easily be describing Foreman's focus. In Unbalancing Acts, Foreman writes about his own motives for de-emphasizing character:

> Sometimes I'd reread material and not remember who was saying which line, so I realized it must not really matter....I also began to leave out the stage directions....I realized the staging no longer illustrated the text, but had acquired a life of its own, inspired by associations the text suggested.[4]

More recently, Foreman has acknowledged that "characterological" elements now "creep" into his work but that he is not interested in developing them. He is more interested in a theatre of types and in the more general and universal aspects of character. Of course, Stein too, was interested in a genealogy of types.

Stein's influence on Foreman can be seen in his work as both a writer and a director. Like Stein, who introduced in her writing a unique approach to language through her re-organization of syntax, Foreman introduced a unique vocabulary into contemporary theatre practice, a vocabulary that validates non-theatrical sources as legitimate components of the theatrical experience. Another characteristic of Foreman's aesthetic is that his staging is a form of writing. He uses the stage as both a writer and a philosopher to explore phenomenological questions. Additionally, Foreman sometimes uses objects and props outside of their "logical" context; they are valued as much for their iconic as for their interpretive potential -- that is to say, they are at once cultural artifacts and also self-contained phenomena.

Another characteristic shared by both Stein and Foreman is that their authorial presence dominates their work: the creator's voice is ever-present in the creation. In addition to Foreman's literary self-referentiality, his presence is also literal. One can observe him at every performance of his work. Initially he served as the mastermind, operating light board and sound cues, always in full view of the audience, his voice audible on a taped soundtrack. Now, although still visible to the audience, he is also a part of it, as he sits nightly observing performances of his work.

Foreman's early works were staged in a large loft and the same characters appeared again and again, although the pieces had no narrative continuity. Like Stein, Foreman is interested in the substructure of experience more than in narrative form, which is to say he is more interested in revealing a process than in producing a "closed" end-product. He writes: "My works...are a mode of literary criticism, in which the object under analysis is itself."[5] Foreman claims that although he is a "closet romantic," it was Stein's minimalism, which he sees in the art world in the works of Frank Stella and Robert Morris, which fed into his own interest in "repetitive and meditative structures." These structures have infused his work over the years.

Although he first encountered Stein's works in John Gassner's playwriting class at Yale in the 1960's, he did not take her seriously until he came upon her again several years later through reading the writings of the filmmaker Stan Brakhage, who was also influenced by Stein and whose works were being shown at the experimental New York venue, Anthology Film Archives. In one article, Brakhage points out the similarity between the difficulty viewers experience when watching one of his films and the difficulties experienced when reading Stein:

> [T]hey are both deceptively simple and deceptively difficult....Gertrude Stein chose to write out of her listening, and her ability to listen to the thought processes of mind that were directly in her mind. People don't listen to others talking with any specific attention. This means that Stein seems harder than she really is....What seems far too simple becomes really profound, because...she deals with everything....Stein began with Williams James....She was also a court stenographer....If you read transcripts of court stenography, you're not that far removed from Gertrude Stein in her beginnings....It sounds perfectly mad, but to me there's absolutely nothing difficult about my films, or her writing, that couldn't be just rolled out before any audience and enjoyed.[6]

Foreman identified with what he describes as the strong emotional undercurrent of terror present in Stein's plays ("...partially because that's what I'm into..." he said laughing). "I try at all times to stage the psychological anguish present, but hidden, in each moment of the text."[7] He

feels that this anguish or terror is absent in other productions of her work. As he describes it: "The opportunity, as far as I know, has never been seized to mount her plays as I believe they should be -- as Stein's collision with a physical and spatial and temporal reality -- the stage -- which DOES resist theatre."

Foreman told me that he believes that Stein's techniques "almost live defensiveness." She is "up against the wall in some way." Being up against the wall is something quite literally characteristic of a Foreman production, as actors not only move to the edge of their visual periphery but to the periphery of the stage space as well, and, one might add, to the periphery of their sanity. Although Foreman says he does not believe in exercises and prefers to stage and re-work material on its feet, he found that the one rehearsal exercise that was continually useful was drawn from his readings of the American psychologist, Trigant Burrow. Burrow's central theory, as interpreted by Foreman, was related to what he called "false personality," which Foreman describes:

> Burrow had this theory that we formed a false personality, essentially language-based and symbol-based because of the way we focused our eyes and that by releasing that focus you could bring up a wide -- you could detach yourself from the false structure of the ego. (Laughs.)

Foreman had his actors focus on the periphery of their vision in order to detach themselves from the false structure of the ego and to penetrate to a more direct and visceral energy.

> There was a period when I was telling people...again, opening them up to the possibility of alternate interpretations, underlying reason...and telling people to focus on their visual periphery.

The effect on the viewer of the gestural vocabulary which stems from this exercise is the perception of an underlying terror present in the behavior of the actors. As they run wildly across the stage, they are constantly running "up against a wall." Photos of Foreman's productions are filled with images of actors backed up against walls, their arms horizontal, a look of terror on their face. This particular exercise was relevant to Stein in that it provided a channel for Foreman to funnel her terror into stage action.

"I tend to think in a very frontal, picture-plane way," Foreman says.[8] Because his own sensibility and Stein's were so close, he didn't want to be left with what he describes as "a flat surface" in his production of Dr. Faustus Lights the Lights. He took the landscape of his stage canvas and introduced the kind of tension found in cubist paintings into the body of the actor. Psychological characterization was replaced by the physical dynamic within the actor's body. Foreman's characteristic framework, consisting of planes

and geometric grids was now *embodied* in the planes and movements of the actors. The most glaring examples of this can be seen in photographs of Kate Manheim, not only as Marguerite Ida and Helena Annabel in Dr. Faustus Lights the Lights, but in several other Foreman productions as well, where parts of her body face in different directions, resulting in the seeming fracturing of her body parts into geometrical planes.

In an early interview with Kate Manheim, Kate Davy describes Manheim's process of working in one of Foreman's productions:

> In relation to what many spectators have labelled "presence," Manheim works with her body in certain ways to [quoting Manheim] "make myself feel more intense when performing." For example, while simply walking from one point to another, she will "tighten up" muscles...in her stomach or arms. In general, she attempts to push her body into uncomfortable positions....Often, when she is merely standing motionless onstage, one might notice that her foot is turned in a somewhat awkward direction or an arm might be slightly twisted into an uncomfortable position. In fact, if her body gets accustomed to such a position through repetition, she will make the position a little more extreme, thereby pressing the body in order to recapture the original feeling of discomfort."[9]

Davy continues:

> In her mind, she considers individual gestures and movements as consisting of several independent units. "I think of the movement I'm doing in terms of breaking it up." Although each gesture is carried out swiftly and appears smooth and connected as a whole, she explains that,

> "I think of each gesture as all of the fractions of movement that make up the general movement." While her movements do not come across as a series of short, broken or choppy component parts, the fact that she imagines them in a manner similar to Duchamp's painting Nude Descending a Staircase lends a certain quality, perhaps tension, to her general movement pattern.[10]

Although Foreman is often accused of using his actors as puppets, it is clear that Manheim contributes a great deal on her own initiative, at the same time furthering Foreman's use of "theatrical cubism." Foreman himself, in response to the charge says:

> [F]or years I was accused of using my actors like puppets. But they were *not* puppets, because I was totally dedicated to the idiosyncratic awkwardness of each nonactor as he or she carried out my instructions in his or her own precise and idiosyncratic way.[11]

And he told me: "I'm very concerned about trying to get the best people I can who seem to have the richest private life on stage." Describing his way of working with actors, he writes:

> If an actor is having great difficulty with a scene I sometimes will offer suggestions in psychological terms, but in general I prefer to propose to the actor physical sensations the character might be feeling in his or her body....I have found it more productive to resort to a physiological fantasy...[The fantasy] reinforce[s] my attempts to distance the work from the societally induced psychological grids against which most theater operates.[12]

Foreman believes that his psychological explanations for stage action are primitive and cuts back those directives if he feels they are "too" psychological.

> I always myself, want to feel that I really believe that at this point they would be doing this large physical maneuver. If it doesn't work, I throw it out. Other people may disagree with me, maybe, but I see it as abstract and the actors don't have any reason to do these crazy things, and me, I work on that an awful lot.

And he told the Festival d'Automne at the time of his production of Dr. Faustus Lights the Lights that because "la pièce de Stein est fort abstraite, je veux que tous les moments soient concrets."[13] Even if not psychologically motivated, he thinks that all actions need to be justified; he derides the directors who think of themselves as little Foremans, claiming to be influenced by his directing style:

> [A]ctors have to justify their physical action....If I have the feeling that the text implies or says, "he lunges backwards" and slams against that wall, I have to make sure that that really makes sense in terms of what's going on in this actor and this character. And I say that because I hope my work does not fall prey to what I have seen in the work of two young directors that I think have been influenced by me; they seem to be fascinated with these kind of very blocked choreographic kinds of movements in the play and yet I don't believe their actors when they do that.

Foreman emphasizes that he prefers that actors associate to props rather than develop their dramatic creations from exercises, so that the work is created in the present. But he discovered within the first week of rehearsals for Dr. Faustus Lights the Lights that overloading the stage with props was unnecessary since the text was already filled with its own "linguistic props...the way in which the language broke up normal progressions and so forth." Therefore, the techniques he had developed as both a director and writer, influenced by Stein's theories, became redundant when working with a text written by Stein herself.

Foreman was asked by one reviewer if his way of working was not in fact antithetical to Stein's: "N'y a-t-il pas une contradiction entre le caractère fluide, homogène, du langage de Gertrude Stein, et la discontinuité, les ruptures, qui caractèrisent votre style habituel de mise en scène?" And Foreman replied:

> On verra. Pour l'instant, je pense à une forme de théâtre moins 'ponctuée' que ce que je pratiquais jusque là. Mais c'est difficile à préciser pour l'instant. J'imagine des rythmes et des changements à partir de la bande sonore, qui relèveraient plus de la segmentation que de coupures abruptes dans le texte.[14]

He explains that whether he is directing a text by Stein, himself or any writer, the process must ultimately be about

> Deciding, from moment to moment, whether the staging should reinforce the overt meaning of the text, or if it should contradict it in some way. Sometimes it's as simple an issue as whether an actor should move toward or away from an object...If (an actor) says the line while backing away...until he bangs into the opposite wall, it gives...more importance ...The distribution in space of actions and objects -- whether that distribution suggests expansion into a field or contraction into a point -- may well be the unconscious focus of my direction, because that's what I always seem to be manipulating. I want to take every moment of the play and give it a relationship to the total field of the world in which it occurs. I find that can best be done by orchestrating how the actors approach, receive, replace, or reposition the objects and themselves onstage.[15]

Directly engaging with a work written by Stein presented other challenges for Foreman as well. For one thing, Foreman wanted to counteract Stein's playfulness. As he expresses it, he was searching for a way to work *against* the language rather than emphasizing it and was also searching for ways to physicalize the psychological substructure of her work, thus paralleling in stage space Stein's disrupture of language, an aspect of her influence most apparent in his other productions. "I'm trying to function as an atomic physicist of theater... I try only to be a little kid and say, 'Gee, what can we put in there?'" In the role of director, he found it particularly interesting to explore what he describes as "the psychological roots of her disassociation" and to make those dominant. He felt that this disassociation

was related to Stein's own "problematic and psychological nature."

Ironically, one of the most difficult challenges he encountered in staging Dr. Faustus Lights the Lights was how to deal with Stein's repetitions -- something that was of particular interest to him with regard to her work. Foreman saw in Stein's repetitions, "a connection to the dissolving of the notion of sensations seen in the work of the minimalists, as well as a connection to the alchemists' re-working of material." Foreman's interest in repetition dates back to John Gassner's writing course at Yale. He discovered that he had an instinctive propensity to use repetition and had the tendency to obsess about aspects of his own work that he found compelling and to repeat those obsessions again and again. Gassner was critical of this tendency and suggested that Foreman "work on it." Foreman did. Instead of eliminating the repetitions, he decided to transform his "defect" into an exploration -- one that has continued for almost thirty years in both his writing and directing. Kate Davy describes Foreman's "extensive use of repetition" as "'cinematic'...like the consecutive frames of a film that create an image that seems to extend itself in the present for a given period of time."[16] Stein describes her own process in a similar fashion: "I was doing what the cinema was doing, I was making a continuous succession of the

statement of what that person was until I had not many things but one thing."[17] And Foreman describes the repetitions as "...making an art that focuses on the hum, the energetic blur, of [a] spinning top, rather than on the pictures visible after it has come to rest and died."[18]

Repetitive actions have, for Foreman, the potential to "accelerate to the point where grace could descend upon them and could be redemptive." His use of the word "redemptive," rather than "cathartic" is a telling example of his interest in moving beyond the confines of a narrowly circumscribed theatrical order towards a vocabulary which indicates the enactment of a more spiritual drama. "Stein herself," he told me, "spoke of writing as being a kind of prayer, and repetition itself is a way of working on the psyche, as when the alchemists mixed something 25,000 times."

He compares the challenge of working with Stein's repetitions to the challenges he encountered in 1990 when directing Philip Glass's opera, "The Fall of the House of Usher," based on the Edgar Allen Poe short story, since Glass's music is also characterized by repetitive structures.

> What do you do...(Foreman said mimicking both Glass's and Stein's repetitions) "Going home, da da da da da da da.. (laughs) I am too...da da da da da da da." Here, "I am I and I am Ida...." Both in Phil's work and in this work I wanted to have a kind of realistic scenario like these people moving and continually having new ideas and doing things, having

> new takes at every moment. To me, what's interesting in the theatre, is to see one right after another (snaps fingers) decisions, decisions decisions.

The set of Dr. Faustus Lights the Lights included a menacing rock hanging overhead, Foreman's signature bright lights (although not, as is usually the case, flashing in the eyes of the audience), plain chairs, candelabras, mirrors and empty frames hanging from strings attached to the ceilings, like tabulae rasi waiting to be filled with answers to the dizzying questions. Other scenic devices in Dr. Faustus Lights the Lights included a couple of "whirling machines" used in the ballet section of the opera which Foreman calls "The Light Ballet." These whirling machines were versions of early movie-making equipment. They were cylindrical, had slits and pictures on the sides. While these machines "whirled," the actors "strutted" across the stage. Foreman's theatre landscapes are normally filled with icons from the darker reaches of the subconscious and replete with objects from childhood. These icons and objects permeate a physical terrain always rendered scenically as either a synagogue, playground or gymnasium, and sometimes a combination of the three.

> I should say again, that *all* my plays are gymnasiums, factories, synagogues, playgrounds, machines. But I think that I'm only attracted to plays in which that basic world that I've described seems sort of right. That's probably

> another reason I chose that play as opposed to Byron. [Byron is another Stein work.]

In Dr. Faustus Lights the Lights the scenic landscape was a playground which Foreman divided with synagogue railings and two playground slides. As one reviewer noted:

> L'image essentielle à partir de quoi [sic] j'ai réfléchi, travaillé, et qui s'est imposée pratiquement depuis le début, c'est celle de trois toboggans, comme ceux où les enfants s'amusent à glisser. Et je vois ça, pendant que ce langage arrive, ce flot de langage, des cercles et ces cercles, et il semble qu'on arrive a une impasse avec ce langage, les acteurs glissents sur les toboggans. Et la pièce continue, le flot, et on recommence avec les toboggans, et ça revient, wooosh!! La glissade...[19]

(The use of playground slides calls to mind the constructivist sets of Vassily Meyerhold, that also included ladders and ramps that were used for their symbolic, rather than literal, value.)

The Faustus set, like all Foreman's sets, was divided into planes by strings stretched across the space, linking object with object, defining playing areas and creating geometric grids. When asked by Lettres/Arts at the time of his production of Dr. Faustus Lights the Lights in France,"Que reste-t-il alors de vos pratiques à vous*?*" Foreman explained his use of strings:

> Les 'fiçelles': de vraies fiçelles qui découpent l'éspace en un jeu géometrique. Pour moi, le théâtre est un effort pour

> faire danser les mots, écrire une danse totale des mots. Quand je fais un dessin, la plume gratte sur le papier; je veux réproduire ce même bruit sur la scene. Le théâtre est aussi un griffonage.[20]

Elinor Fuchs describes the effect of Foreman's strings: "The audience is not following relationships between characters, but relationships among planes or channels -- verbal, visual, musical, etc."[21] And in Unbalancing Acts, Foreman writes:

> The sets are enclosed spaces, but in no sense should the audience feel it is peeking through an imaginary, transparent fourth wall. Instead, the action of the play should bounce against the three walls of the stage, then flirt with the trick surface of a fourth wall that the audience is continually, vaguely, reminded of. Often I introduce a railing, or some string, or even a wall of glass as an obstruction between the front row of the audience and the playing space. These barriers reinforce aesthetic distance. I do not want the audience to be sucked into the resonating chamber of the stage. I want the spectator to keep his distance, precisely so that the action can bounce against that subtle fourth barrier.[22]

Foreman's "obstructions" often include a reflective surface which not only creates aesthetic distance, but becomes a self-conscious tool in which the audience observes itself observing. This seems like an open invitation to the audience to engage *with* the process rather than to passively observe.

In Dr. Faustus Lights the Lights, Foreman's "reflective surfaces" were mirrors placed all around the stage, as well as the above-mentioned empty frames -- opportunities for self-reflection in all senses of the word. (One is reminded of Frida Kahlo's self-portrait which includes a second frame containing a mirror for the viewer to gaze at her/his self-portrait, too.) The mirrors in this production, although not placed directly between the actors and audience, still served the same function -- they were used to enhance self-consciousness and to make each audience member's self a continuous referent in the production. Although Foreman hasn't referred directly to the Stein works usually described as "portraits," this approach can be looked at as Foreman's own version of portraiture. The audience, it seems, is invited to participate in character development through the act of seeing *them*selves as characters. Foreman forces the reader/viewer to engage in the process she/he is watching onstage through an associative flow of thoughts and responses; he forces the viewers to create *themselves* as characters by constructing their identity within the array of objects he places on the stage. Marvin Carlson points out that the involvement of the audience in the production is characteristic of much contemporary performance:

> The audience's expected "role" changes from a passive hermeneutic process of decoding the performer's articulation, embodiment, or challenge of particular cultural material, to become something much more active, entering into a praxis, a context in which meanings are not so much communicated as created, questioned, or negotiated. The "audience" is invited and expected to operate as a co-creator of whatever meanings and experience the event generates.[23]

Foreman's geography in Dr. Faustus Lights the Lights, as in most of his other productions, reflects an interest in an "ontological condition." By juxtaposing the contradictory symbols of innocence (the playground slides) and danger (the menacing rocks) he created a landscape of anxiety. When he claimed that Stein's techniques "almost live defensiveness," he also claimed that he wanted to stage her terror -- seemingly so close to his own. Ironically (since Foreman claims a lack of interest in psychological theatre) in Dr. Faustus Lights the Lights, as well as in his other productions, Foreman was able to connect to Stein's interest in what Stanislavski might call the "inner life," not with the aim of achieving a realistic result, but in order to represent a state of being. The construction of this inner world is created through the juxtaposition of iconic properties that are evocative rather than literal. These are given shape within an artificially constructed situation known as a "story" or "play."

In this case, completing an ontological circle, the story has at its center an archetypal male figure who is searching for answers to (ontological) questions. It is Stein's irony that this archetypal figure has been displaced by a female subject, Marguerite Ida and Helena Annabel; by her very existence she challenges issues and ideas that Foreman has explored in other productions: gender boundaries, the parameters of truth and knowledge, and the repetitive confusions encountered on the journey towards discovering boundaries.

Foreman says that in Dr. Faustus Lights the Lights he chose to "just tell a story." Where exactly does Foreman's "story-approach" to Faustus fit in with his other interests? In Foreman's productions, Faustus struggled with the uncertainty of amorphous moral and sexual boundaries. Girls sometimes played boys (a manifestation of the cross-gender "confusion" of early childhood). Mephistopheles was played by a sixteen year old girl (Anouk Grinberg) dressed in black, a personification of Temptation; The Little Boy was played by a pre-adolescent girl (Chloé Caillat) dressed in a sailor's outfit ("I thought she was so androgynous and weird"); The Little Boy's sailor outfit, Foreman told me, was inspired by a Salvador Dali painting which had a "kid" sitting at the ocean, and was "just one of those images which emerged

intuitively." Another girl (Valerie Nier) played a young boy and carried The (stuffed) Dog. The Viper was also stuffed and was used phallically. Although The Viper and The Dog were toys, they were also highly charged and erotic objects. Faustus (Maurice Bénichou) was costumed like a rabbinical student and wore an apron; he had a long beard, much like those of Hassidic Jews; The Man From Over the Seas (Marc Boisse) was also costumed like a rabbinical student; Marguerite Ida and Helena Annabell (Kate Manheim) wore horn-rimmed glasses with her hair braided on top of her head; she looked like a cross between a German schoolteacher and Little Red Riding Hood. In some scenes she carried a little basket -- a motif found in the text itself.

As the costuming for the actors suggests, Foreman's production of Dr. Faustus Lights the Lights melded the religious and the erotic. Foreman claims that the embarassment a child feels when encountering a sexual experience is similar to the anxieties produced by orthodox religion and the repressive and somewhat "embarrassing" practices of religious ritual. Hervé Gauville in his review in Variétés describes the effect of some of Foreman's choices thus: "[L]es amours inçestueuses de maman Stein et de son fils Foreman relèvent du drame oedipien et sont, à ce titre, redevables d'un

réglement de comptes plus analytique qu'ésthètique."[24]

Staging a version of the Faust story in a playground has Freudian connotations. Foreman would probably be among the first to acknowledge the Freudian and Oedipal referents in his productions. In one anecdote he describes his continual need to please doubting parents who challenged his identity as both writer and director; he says this theme reappears within the substructure of the works themselves.[25] In Foreman's production, representing the devil as a girl budding into womanhood and having a boy play a girl is about sexual confusion, rather than about the performance of gender, as cross-dressing usually is in contemporary theatre. If Faustus's struggle with good and evil and with power and impotence are seen, in the matrix of a child's world, as the struggle to develop moral foundations, then the playground slides are filled with fear, physically testing the boundaries between freedom and limitation.

Although Foreman told me that in Dr. Faustus Lights the Lights he chose to just tell a story as a way of both grounding Stein's text and finding a handle for it, it seems that Foreman's "story" was nevertheless infused with the kind of ontological anxiety found in his other works. By choosing a playground as the landscape for a Faust play and using it as an arena within

which to create a religious ritual where all of a child's anxiety, pleasure and fear are played out, Foreman demonstrated once again that he is interested in hidden meanings even while grappling with narrative. Foreman's is an hermetic world, the unravelling of which portends the danger of unravelling the stuff that binds the self. Since Foreman is interested in pushing things to the edge, his world is de-centered and he exposes its inner workings by looking beneath the story and showing the movement of the psyche. Even while expressing an interest in story, by paring the narrative structure down in Dr. Faustus Lights the Lights, he exposes an inner process shared by audience, actor, writer and director.

Foreman's "world" tends to be consistent, even within different textual contexts. Although Stein's play presented particular challenges to him because of its lack of resistance surfaces and given the similarity of their processes, the locus of his creative journey across her textual landscape was not very different from the anxiety-ridden psychic arena found in his other productions. Peter Sellars writes in his introduction to Unbalancing Acts, a collection of Foreman's plays and theatre manifestos:

> Foreman's productions are instantly recognizable...[and include the] presence of a series of well-established trademarks....The virtuosity is in Foreman's ability to

> remain accurate to the random and unhinged nature of the human mind within the context of an immense accretion of elaborately wrought detail, offered in torrents of sound, light, imagery, and endless words....There are messages written all over the set....The lights are flashing.[26]

Foreman's creative appropriation of Stein's experimentation spills into his stage space as nouns and verbs bounce across the stage like objects in action. Looking at a Foreman set is like looking into the primal chaos of uninterrupted and raw psychic matter.

Foreman always acts as composer as well as designer of his productions (sometimes co-composing with Stanley Silverman). He characteristically records tape loops, often mixing his own voice with a combination of sounds and music. In his early productions, the actors' lines were first recorded on tape and then repeated live by actors on stage.

> [A]ll the lines on tape [were] recorded by as many as four voices alternating word by word. During the performance, the tape was played back from loud speakers located in the four corners of the performance space, so each sentence of dialogue would seem to circle the audience....The actors would slowly and softly repeat the lines of the character they were playing counterpoint to the tape....they were soon overlapping each other as well as the tape.[27]

In the case of Dr. Faustus Lights the Lights, Foreman's tape loops were filled with operatic yodelling as well as with a portion of the climactic section of

the Brecht/Weill opera, The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny, which Foreman describes as "the sublime twentieth century music/theatre piece." While the music was playing, two actors crossed the stage and "kicked up a storm."

Foreman first "scans" the text and gets his ideas for the placement of the music or sound, "hearing it" as he goes along. He is influenced seventy-five percent by the music and twenty-five percent by the text" as he gets ideas for the production. He insists that although he uses literary material, he does not think at all in literary terms. His process is totally visceral. He chose the music for Dr. Faustus Lights the Lights after listening to a variety of selections and waiting for the "right vibes." Then he proceeded to make about forty loops and to start matching them up with the text. Overall, Foreman describes the music he chose for the production as "wistful -- more like Dvorak's New World Symphony than a work of Bach's." The wistfulness was particularly apparent in the sections with the Man from Over the Seas and during the death of The Dog.

Unlike Malina's world of abstract expressionism, Kornfeld's rustic Americana, or Wilson's icily static architecture (as will be seen in the next chapter), Foreman's world for Dr. Faustus Lights the Lights was vibrating

with energy -- as he describes it, it was "one long hum." One reviewer, impressed by the liveliness of the production, wrote:

> Richard Foreman, le metteur-en-scène, va finalement plus loin que Gertrude Stein. Il prend un cadre -- il en faut bien un: un décor de messe noire, chandeliers, immenses cartes suspendues, bazar d'ôbjets hétéroclites et paradoxaux (il y a même des toboggans); habiller ses personages avec une extrème décadence au point de leur donner un aspect presque animalier. Et il piège le texte en le mâitrisant avec une rigueur infernale. Conduit comme une choréographie (interpretée avec brio....) Son spectacle tourne tourne tourne, lui aussi mais sans jamais se departir d'un humour decapant. On sourit beaucoup, pendant ce Faust, et c'est là le grand mérite de la soirée.[28]

When Foreman decided to direct a play written by his "artistic mother," the person whom he once claimed as the greatest influence upon his work, it was, in a sense, like dancing hand-in-hand with mom. He was committing creative incest. And why does Foreman think he chose to do Dr. Faustus? "Pourquoi pas?" he told the Festival d'Automne:

> C'est une pièce que j'ai toujours pensé réaliser...beaucoup de thèmes, d'objets, d'images de mon propre travail tournaient autour de cette pièce, qui les éclairait. Mais...il y a aussi une part de hasard dans un tel choix. C'est la façon dont je travaille avec mon propre matériau. Quand je fais une pièce, j'accumule des tas de matériaux, les plus hétéroclites, une sorte de collage de matériaux fournis par le hasard de la vie, que je ramasse de la façon la plus cavalière. C'est important de ne pas trop sélectionner, de ne pas penser d'avance à ce que ça va donner, mais d'accepter

> ce qui se présente. Et ensuite, il ne s'agit pas d'utiliser tout ce materiau, mais de trouver, dans l'écriture et dans la mise-en-scène ce que ce materiau *est*. Comme une source à découvrir.[29]

If Faust is testing the boundaries of good and evil and Foreman testing the flow of his (artistic) mother's milk (Stein's), perhaps he's also testing the boundaries of how far he can go with mom by taking her on. But if he has to *resist* her playfulness and *resist* her language, where is the flow? Foreman claims there is always flow and says he "never work[s] in terms of an intellectual scheme that [he's] trying to fulfill. Never." He tries "not to think."

Foreman claims that he has now increasingly departed from Stein's influence, primarily because of his interest in showing what he calls "the total process" of writing and directing, "including its stress," something he felt Stein wasn't interested in. He writes:

> I think of myself as an artist who happens to be working in the theater, and I employ an impulsive poetic strategy in writing my plays rather than the calculated narrative strategy playwrights usually use. It was at the time of my first Ontological-Hysteric plays -- after functioning for ten years as a "normal" playwright -- that I stopped rewriting my texts. I no longer "corrected" what I had written because I thought rewrites would hide the true evidence of what was happening to me in the moment of composition. Anything other than true evidence of psychic reality seemed

> dishonest to me. Occasionally there'd be lines...that seemed especially juvenile, and I'd cut them. But when we went into rehearsal I'd miss them. I'd realize those lines were the strongest and most personal -- and I had to face up to the fact that they did come from my most genuine instincts.[30]

Later, he adds:

> At times I chose to write woodenly, to convey the heaviness of the word as the coagulation of habit. I'd pour out sentences that didn't finish, or stuttered and stumbled, to convey the stress of consciousness...that eliminated the alive roughness of that first impulse.[31]

He repeated the same sentiment to me:

> The one place that I always disagreed with Stein in my own work....Stein always said, as I recall, that it was not interesting when the writing showed the stress of trying to write; and I'm terribly interested in the writing showing the stress.

He writes further:

> [I] wanted my writing style to show my stupidity dancing hand-in-hand with my insight. This writing did exactly what Gertrude Stein advised against: in baroque fashion, it reflected the stress of the act of writing within the writing itself.[32]

Given that Stein's influence on Foreman was in large part attributable to their shared interest in phenomenology, it seems odd that he now expresses the view that Stein wanted to cover up her process. However, this is a characteristic example of Foreman's propensity to contradict himself.

Foreman claims that Dr. Faustus Lights the Lights was one of the most unsuccessful productions he ever directed and that it took a while for him to get a handle on the work.

> I've got to say also that this production gave me more trouble than any play I've ever done, to the extent that I think the only time in my life that after a week of rehearsals I told the actors, I don't know, go home. I'll call you....This is just awful, I've got to think. I had it staged very abstractly with funny sticks with objects coming out and being manipulated. And then I just thought, ugh, this is just getting in the way and I can't follow anything, and it's just pointless, and it seems cold, and then I came back and made it much simpler, much more in terms of what's going on between the people.

"What's going on between the people" in a Foreman production is a far cry from conventional narrative drama, however. If Foreman, in this instance, returned to "what's going on between the people," it's because Stein provided a framework for a search Foreman has been on for most of his artistic life, and he was able, in his production of Dr. Faustus Lights the Lights, to parallel Stein as well as (Oedipally speaking) to penetrate her.

Notes: Chapter 4

1. Kate Davy, Introduction to Richard Foreman, Plays and Manifestos, ed. Kate Davy (New York: New York University Press, 1976), p. ix.

2. Richard Foreman, interview with the author, New York, 15 August 1995. Unless otherwise noted, all direct quotations from Foreman come from this interview.

3. Elinor Fuchs, "The Death of Character," Theatre Communications Group Newsletter 5 (1983): 2.

4. Richard Foreman, Unbalancing Acts (NewYork: Pantheon Books, 1992), p. 15.

5. Richard Foreman, Reverberation Machines (Barrytown, NY: Station Hill Press, Inc., 1985), p. 215.

6. Stan Brakhage, Northern Lights, pp. 22-23, Clippings File, Ontological-Hysteric archive, n.d.

7. Foreman, Unbalancing Acts, p. 20.

8. Foreman, quoted in Kate Davy, "Foreman's Paint and Vertical Mobility," Drama Review 18:2 (June 1974): 33.

9. Kate Davy, "Kate Manheim as Foreman's Rhoda," Drama Review 20:3 (September 1976): 43.

10. Ibid.

11. Foreman, Unbalancing Acts, p. 36.

12. Ibid., p. 45.

13. Journal of the Festival d'Automne, p. 31, Clippings File, Ontological-Hysteric archives, n.d.

14. Ibid.

15. Foreman, Unbalancing Acts, p. 50.

16. Davy, Plays and Manifestos, p. xii.

17. Gertrude Stein, "Portraits" in Lectures in America (Boston: Beacon Press, 1935), pp.176-177.

18. Foreman, Unbalancing Acts, p. 23.

19. Guy Scarpetta, "Richard Foreman, Gertrude Stein et les Toboggans," interview with Foreman, Festival d'Automne, Clippings File, the Ontological-Hysteric archives, n.d.

20. Catherine Clement, "Faust ou la fête electrique de Gertrud [sic] Stein," Lettres/Arts, interview with Foreman, 6 October 1982, p.29, Clippings File, Ontological-Hysteric archives.

21. Fuchs, p. 4.

22. Foreman, Unbalancing Acts, p. 58.

23. Marvin Carlson, Performance: A Critical Introduction (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 197.

24. Hervé Gauville, "Foreman et la Mère Stein," Variétés, 9-10 October 1982, p. 24, Clippings File, Ontological-Hysteric archives.

25. In a panel discussion at the City University Graduate Center upon receipt of the Edwin Booth Award, 17 April 1997.

26. Peter Sellars, Foreward to Unbalancing Acts, p. ix.

27. Ibid.

28. "Edison Broie du Noir," Théâtre, 6 October 1982, Clippings File, Ontological-Hysteric archives.

29. Festival d'Automne, 31.

30. Foreman, Unbalancing Acts, p. 10.

31. Ibid., p. 13.

32. Ibid., p. 14.

Chapter 5: ROBERT WILSON: THE ENFANT OF IMAGES AND THE MOTHER OF INVENTION DR. FAUSTUS LIGHTS THE LIGHTS, 1992

Robert Wilson's work as a theatre director and visual artist has spanned more than thirty years. He has embodied and disseminated an image-based aesthetic, characteristic of the alternative theatre of the 80's and 90's in the United States. A painter before he began directing, Wilson brought his interest in color, light and space to bear on a theatre aesthetic previously defined primarily by narrative and language. Wilson has consistently emphasized the visual and choreographic elements of theatre over the spoken word. In a 1991 interview, he described his transition from painting to working in the theatre. "I stopped painting eight years ago. But I grew up with the image of myself as painted. I guess what I stopped doing on canvas, I started doing on stage."[1] In his preface to Robert Wilson's Vision Alan Shestack writes: "He has fused the roles of director and designer in a highly visual approach that gives formal independence to the elements of light, space and sound."[2]

Wilson is best known for mammoth spectacles such as The Life and Times of Sigmund Freud in 1969; the twelve-hour The Life and Times of

Joseph Stalin in 1972; the opera Einstein on the Beach, with music by Philip Glass, in 1976; the five part multi-national The Civil Wars in 1984; The Forest, derived from the Sumerian Gilgamesh myth, with music by David Byrne, in 1988; and Alice, at the Brooklyn Academy of Music in October, 1995, created in collaboration with songwriter Tom Waits. His production of Dr. Faustus Lights the Lights was true to the ambitious scale of his other productions -- particularly the later ones -- and, as one would expect of Wilson, ingenious in its spatial and visual realization of Stein's textual experiments.

In the 1960's Wilson founded the Byrd-Hoffman School for Byrds, named for a dance therapist who helped him to overcome a stutter by teaching him to align his breath with his body. Wilson's work on his stutter created an awareness that served to redefine the relationship between mind and body and to move him to view the two as complementary vehicles of expression and communication. His innovative and original way of perceiving data (he essentially re-prioritized the relationship of the parts of a production to the whole) contributed to a redefinition of the tools of theatrical expression and resulted in a painterly vocabulary which was to become Wilson's creative signature. This vocabulary included working with extensive

dance exercises and physical movements as part of the rehearsal process. Wilson never systematized these exercises but used movement improvisationally as a way of heightening perception. His own speech impediment played a significant part in his early aesthetic development as well, as did his work as a physical therapist and consultant to pre-schoolers and children with learning disabilities . The Byrd-Hoffman school was dissolved in the 1970's as Wilson's interest in working with written texts began to predominate over his earlier improvisational and associative way of developing a stage production. It was not until 1992 that Wilson decided to open another center for creative development, the Watermill Center in Long Island, a multi-disciplinary institute for the creation and development of new work in the arts.

A very early and seminal work he conceived and realized for the stage developed out of an association he had with an eleven-year old deaf-mute black child named Raymond Andrews whom Wilson worked with and adopted after seeing him brutalized by the police. As Trevor Fairbrother describes it, Wilson was convinced that Andrews thought in his own language of visual signs and symbols, and encouraged him to communicate through his drawings. In order to establish a vocabulary that wasn't literal in

its use of words as a system of communication, Wilson devised a series of exercises with the "Byrds," the members of his school who lived communally, based on Raymond's sounds and gestures. The result, Deafman Glance, took the form of a series of silent pictures and became Wilson's signature piece. Trevor Fairbrother writes about Deafman Glance:

> Wilson talks about Deafman Glance as the culmination of his approach to the major issues then confronting alternative theatre: a determination not to impose on either text or character the intentional resolution of the narrative tradition; a belief that words are not inherently more important than light, space and movement and that performances may be considered as compositional elements; and an attempt to topple distinctions between art and life by incorporating activities that happen as real events in real time.[3]

Richard Foreman, one of the first to write about Wilson's work when he reviewed The Life and Times of Sigmund Freud for the Village Voice in 1971, also comments on the originality of Wilson's perspective: "What is slowly developed is a profound sense of the true rhythm of life...(having the) whole spectrum of feeling awakened in us is the freedom-bestowing aim of art on the highest level."[4] John Perreault, also describing Freud in the same issue of the Village Voice, writes further: "I no longer know the difference between theatre and dance and art....(It) had so little obvious meaning that it contained all meanings....It was static yet full of activities. The arrangement

of the incidents was musical rather than literary."[5] In 1965 when Wilson choreographed a dance work inspired by Martha Graham he reiterated, in his own words, the sentiments of the critics: "Music and dance speak for themselves, play their own part, are closely integrated, yet independent....What I am doing are happenings....What happens just happens....[The] response is emotional instead of rational."[6]

The relationship among, and self-containment of, production elements, as described both by Wilson and by these other critics, is what has been informing Wilson's creative decisions in all of his productions, including Dr. Faustus Lights the Lights. Wilson composes images, fills the stage with color, and concerns himself with text last of all. He directs like a painter and does his own set design, often with collaborators. An interesting characteristic of all Wilson productions is that he almost always uses a proscenium stage, emphasizing the picture frame quality of his work and calling attention to its "painterliness." He creates "visual books" for his productions before beginning rehearsals, sketching each scene in black and white, thereby focussing on the geometrical patterns inherent in the set pieces. He eventually transforms these books into backdrops. The geometrical patterns define the territory within which an event is to take

place. One is struck by the fact of the mapping of the territory more than its particular delineations, as well as by the child-like nature of the drawings. Only after creating these visual pictures does he construct the text from diverse and eclectic sources.

Stein also made sketches in preparation for her work by diagramming sentences. Wendy Steiner explains this practice in Exact Resemblance to Exact Resemblance:

> For just as the cubists translated reality into geometric relations which were not only in harmony with the medium of their art but were also the principles governing that medium, Stein translated her subjects into grammatical categories with the same double relation to her medium, language. Groupings of characters were thought of as the elements of a sentence, and Stein actually plotted some of these interpersonal relations as sentence diagrams.[7]

Later, she continues:

> The importance of the sentence diagram in Stein's first phase cannot be overstated, for all her basic notions of composition derive from it. The diagram is first spatial and simultaneous, and secondly rule-governed, and the sentence or character grouping which it represents has these same qualities.[8]

About Stein's diagrams, Janet Flanner writes:

> These diagrams were something like diagrams which used to be used in American schools for parsing sentences in graphicized form, except that her diagrams were of people

> whose bottom or fundamental natures touched, if by ever so slight a line, and from there touched their friends [and] their friends' friends.'[9]

Stein herself writes:

> Sentences as they have for centuries been written were a balancing a complete inner balance...Sentences are contained within themselves and anything really contained within itself has no beginning or middle or ending, anyone can know this thing by knowing anything at any moment of their living, in short by knowing anything.[10]

Stein's view of the sentence is implicit in her interest in diagramming as a way of defining, as Steiner describes it, the "principles governing the medium."

Wilson's structural vocabulary mirrors Stein's. His basic notion of theatrical composition rests on very similar principles to the ones being described above in the way that he "diagrams" his "visual books," by breaking them down into geometrical patterns. Katherine Arens, in her article, "Robert Wilson: Is Postmodern Performance Possible?" extends an awareness of Wilson's practices by also comparing his way of acquiring texts to that of a minimalist musician: "[A]s a minimalist musician would, [he breaks] the text into units which he varies freely, as the phrases in...Glass's music are varied."[11] Arens also points out that Wilson treats words as objects

rather than meaning units.[12] Jane Bowers, making a similar point about Gertrude Stein's theatre writing, points out that Stein's language does not represent something else:

> It simply exhibits itself....[I]n performance, reference remains private and inconsequential. The metadramatic content of the written text is also not apparent in performance. What we have in performance is sound. We might try to draw meaning from the words, but our attention to them as signifiers would be distracted by our awareness of them as objects 'filling' the air of the theater as sound can fill a room.[13]

Bowers writes further that:

> [Stein's] characters seldom use language as an instrument of communication. Rather than responding to what the words mean, they simply respond to the words. They repeat them, or they repeat them with slight variations. They match the sounds of words already spoken with similar sounds, like poets completing each other's poems. They free-associate in a world where words suggest other words.[14]

This comment could well have been extracted from a review of Wilson's work.

In her writing Stein was able to isolate parts of grammar and to reintroduce those parts within a context which altered their meaning, (e.g. parts of speech shifted function, challenging and defying their conventionally

assigned positions within a sentence or paragraph.) As Wendy Steiner points out,

> [T]he first phase of Stein's writing, with its emphasis on James's "transitive" or relational words, was an attempt to eliminate representationality from its smallest independent unit, the word. The avoidance of nouns and adjectives and the abnormally frequent use of pronouns, copulars, adverbs and other shifters led to a purely relational word unit, the very relationality of which could be manipulated to create ambiguity.[15]

Similarly, Wilson shifted the function of the elements of stagecraft. His use of light and form shifts their assigned functions from elements subservient to a text to independent components of theatrical production. In a 1986 interview, Wilson articulated his view that the component parts of a production are autonomous and equal: "Usually what happens in the theatre is that everything serves the text. In my work, each element is a text by itself. Each piece has layers of things happening simultaneously."[16] Wilson's sense of the relationship of the parts of his work to the whole is similar to Gertrude Stein's, who said that she doesn't think of her work as comprising a whole, but rather comprised of a whole made up of its parts. Steiner writes:

> The medium of literature, language, is itself a system of signs, which combine to form higher-level signs. And the referent of the individual language sign is of course not identical to that of the higher-level sign, the sentence....But

> when Stein prevents her words from signifying on the sentence level, she is not allowing her medium to function normally.[17]

Stein's primary inspiration was nevertheless derived from the revolutionary breakdown of objects into geometric forms by the cubists, her revolutionary use of language, in turn, influenced Wilson's stage work, as seen in Dr. Faustus Lights the Lights. The iconic rather than signifying functions of stagecraft were emphasized.

Wilson, like Stein, has described many of his works as "operas." Since their "operas" do not resemble traditional opera, some critics have rejected their self-styled designations of their work. Many critics have, in fact, preferred to call Wilson's work "musical theatre." However, like Gertrude Stein, Wilson uses "operatic" to describe language itself as musical. Additionally, in 1975, Wilson gave a further explanation for why he calls his works operas:

> Their construction is musical. By that, I mean there's an architectural arrangement of sounds and words and movements. In a sense, they are also like ballet, in that they're constructed architecturally. I'm concerned with stage space -- where people appear or not, where scenery is or not. Themes appear and reappear like themes in music. I'm not interested so much in literary story-telling as in stories that are being told through themes.[18]

Because his vocabulary is less theatrical than it is choreographic, musical, and painterly, Wilson has aptly been called a "scenographer" rather than a playwright or director. As a "scenographer" he claims figures from art forms other than theatre as his artistic antecedents. These include Merce Cunningham, John Cage and George Balanchine. In fact, Wilson has claimed at various times that he doesn't like theatre and prefers ballet because it is "architectonic: I don't like the theater much. But I love the abstract, fluttering visual patterns of ballet, and I think that is basically what I've done in theater: architectural landscapes that are structured."[19] Stein, too, was less interested in and influenced by text-based theatre and more by dance and bullfights, for similar reasons, having to do with her interest in the architecture of form (language, space) and spectacle more than with "story-telling." Wilson recently echoed a sentiment he had expressed in the 1970's -- that like Stein's, his work is "not interpretive; it is an architectural arrangement in time and space of visual patterns. There is a similarity [between Stein and myself] in the architecture in its repetition and the nature of construction."[20]

Although Wilson's early work was developed without a pre-existing text and was focussed on images, he often wrote original material which he

included in the production. He described this early way of working in the Drama Review in 1977:

> I wrote a few pages of dialogue at a time in a large notebook with blank pages that I often draw in when working on a piece. The language I wrote was more a reflection of the way we think than of the way we normally speak. My head became like a television, switching from thought to thought (and in writing from phrase to phrase) like flipping a dial from channel to channel. I write when I am alone and work best when there are no interruptions. I sometimes keep a television on at low volume and incorporate phrases I hear into my text.[21]

Gertrude Stein, too, thought of her writing as a kind of thinking. About her writing, she claimed: "I had really written thinking."[22] Like Wilson, she did her writing/thinking in the midst of distractions. As she explains in The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas: "Gertrude Stein worked a great deal not as in the old days, night after night [the logically consistent habits of the nineteenth-century author], but anywhere, in between visits, in the automobile....She was much influenced by the sounds of the streets and the movement of the automobiles."[23] Ellen Berry describes Stein's "postmodernism" in terms similar to those used by Wilson to describe his own aesthetic:

> In a much more complex and extreme sense than Stein's car metaphor or its textual equivalent, television flow exposes

> the viewer to a continuous stream of images, pieces in an ongoing montage that robs each individual scene or show of any specificity, any enduring sense of discrete value. Each moment or show or indeed each individual work of mass culture becomes part of an intertextual panorama of gestures, images, styles, and cultures in a perpetual collage of disintegration and reintegration, a model of postmodern culture itself.[24]

Just as Foreman uses the stage to explore phenomenological questions, so, too, does Wilson stage states of mind in his productions. Wilson's language is associative rather than narrative. He creates meaning through following the phenomenology of the creative process rather than through a signifying product. Stein's theatre pieces, like Foreman's and Wilson's, are also records of phenomenological processes.

Although Stein is considered a quintessential modernist, she was also visionary in her foreshadowing of postmodernism, deconstruction, and other current theoretical postures which have been a major influence on contemporary culture and are reflected in Wilson's work. As Wendy Steiner writes in her introduction to Stein's Lectures in America:

> The contradictions between aesthetic closure and the audience's necessary intrusion into texts, between artistic history and readers' histories of art, between the dynamism of aesthetic repetition and the banality of mechanical reproduction: these oppositions and their constantly shifting hierarchies are the knowledge in Stein's unanswered

> questions. They tie her writing to American pragmatic epistemology and the concern with knowledge and inter-subjectivity in nineteenth-century American fiction. They also place her in international modernism and orient her forward toward postmodernism and post-structuralist thought[25]

Robert Brustein, in his review of Dr. Faustus Lights the Lights, also places Stein at the forefront of postmodernism:

> One cannot...deny Stein her place as a pioneer of postmodernism, which makes Wilson the perfect director for her plays. What Wilson does with Dr. Faustus Lights the Lights is integrate many of the traditions of the American postmodernist school from the prepared sounds of John Cage to the spasmodic choreography of Merce Cunningham to the Eastern-inspired minimalism of Philip Glass to the eerie compositions of Meredith Monk to the robotic technology of Laurie Anderson, mixing them all with his own genius for precision lighting, furniture design, and stage setting, and adding a hint of German expressionism for good measure.[26]

And Bonnie Marranca points out

> The aesthetics of the sixties had natural affinities with her [Stein's] own work, especially the emphasis on process and repetition, the attachment to the idea of the ordinary, the fascination with objects, an insistence on presence, and experiments with new formal vocabularies in all the arts.[27]

These comments point up Stein's foresightedness. If she is embraced by both modernists and postmodernists, the literary world and theatre practitioners, it is all the more credit to the oft-challenged substantiality of her output. Her

originality defies genre and can comfortably withstand time-bound theoretical conventions and the fashionable popularizing and prioritizing of one style over another.

Stein's theatrical landcape is as timeless and eclectic as her aesthetic. In her work she combines lists, descriptions, archetypes, actual people, literary figures, objects, nursery rhymes, ditties, nonsense, and very much sense. Wilson's theatrical landscape is as varied as Stein's. He traverses territories from the pre-symbolic to the civilizations of Ancient Egypt and Greece to abstract futurist habitats. Although essentially neutral, it is filled with iconic symbols bathed in washes of light, rather than with specific signifiers. In some of the works, there is an occasional use of actual props and scenery. Wilson's collages are generally created from a combination of memory, anxiety, and cultural history. As with Stein, Wilson's influences and sources are numerous. They are literary and visual, ancient and contemporary, theatrical and historical, singular and multiple, mythic and literal, cultural and organic.

Wilson always seems to be working towards a precise balance in which the scene is neither a mechanical performance of a superficial action nor a narrative filled with historical detail. He uses a lot of slow motion in

his productions, a way of slowing down the frames of his canvas into the minutiae that subtly alter the emotional texture of the experience without overlaying it with excess baggage. This slowing down results in an interesting theatrical dynamic, since it creates a contrast between a spare and essential moment and an environment that is filled with diverse iconography. Some of Wilson's works have straddled the line between substance and superficiality, embodying a form of cultural consumerism characterized by a gluttonous and indiscriminate mastication of images into barely familiar shreds of signification, something not uncharacteristic of the postmodern sensibility. But Wilson is at his most mesmerizingly powerful when the juxtaposition of the form and the content creates a dynamic tension, even if not necessarily a linear narrative.

The works of both Wilson and Stein have been labelled static, since creating a narrative is essential neither to Wilson's aesthetic interests nor to those of Stein; each one is more interested in the multiperspectival view of the continuous present, and their works "move" differently than narratives. They follow states of mind. Clive Barnes, in a review of a 1977 Wilson work, I was sitting on my patio this guy appeared I thought I was hallucinating, describes this seeming stasis: "Mr. Wilson concentrates on the

moment of time rather than the span of time. He offers us the boredom of the revolving second, he offers us the holding pattern of boredom, he offers us the almost ritualistic pain, passion and enthrallment of boredom."[28] Although Wilson's painterliness, like Stein's "literariness," occasionally threatens stasis and although his stage images are sometimes seemingly only flat canvases bereft of "drama," these images succeed in infusing an otherwise flat surface with dramatic contours through their motion in space. Wilson builds his vocabulary upon the physical *gestus,* rather than on psychological motivation. Rather than developing character through motivation, he builds a choreographic language which in itself communicates meaning. Gautam Dasgupta points out the correlation between the absence of psychology in Wilson's text and its absence in puppet theatre, in which the puppet is lifeless until set into motion. The motion itself creates the psychology.[29]

Wilson's rehearsal process reinforces the anti-psychological and phenomenological aspects of his productions. A telling example of this process was given to me by Priscilla Smith, who appeared as Frederick the Great in the German section of The Civil Wars at the American Repertory Theatre.[30] Smith's dialogue consisted of counting out from the center both

backwards and forwards, beginning with the number fifty. Counting, as a choreographic and rhythmic technique, has been described by other actors appearing in Wilson productions as one of his signature directing approaches. Wilson also added a specific image for Smith to work with: a moment in Frederick the Great's life where he had to shoot his own dog. (The dog in this production was played by an actor costumed in black to look like the Egyptian god Anubis with a human hand.)

No matter how slowly and precisely Smith counted and attempted to re-create the image Wilson had given her, it never seemed right to Wilson. Finally, one night she gathered up the courage to approach him and to ask what else she might try. He very, very reluctantly said, "touch that dog really, really slowly as if you want to touch his crotch but don't know how he'll react." It was not until much later that Smith understood Wilson's reluctance to root behavior within a psychological context. Because, as Smith describes it, a physical directive allowed both the actor and the audience's imagination to engage with the work, whereas a psychological directive created closure.

Smith also described the effect (on her) of Wilson's use of repetition. In the last scene in The Life and Times of Sigmund Freud, Freud's

grandchild lay at his feet, dying. The child moaned while Freud continued to write. This action was repeated and repeated and repeated: Freud wrote and the child moaned. After five minutes, the repetition seemed excessive, but after ten minutes, according to Smith, it was heart-rending. The repetition allowed for an emotional penetration into the essence of that unrelenting pain which could only emerge after all resistance to its outer form disappeared.

Wilson once gave an infamous twelve-hour press conference in Belgrade where, in response to each and every question, he repeated the word "dinosaur." The sheer repetition of it, he explained, conveyed shades and varieties of meanings, until finally, he said, the repetition itself created the meaning. As used by both Stein and Wilson, repetition provides the opportunity to re-experience a moment from multiple perspectives, and as Wendy Steiner points out, "repetition is a sameness in difference." Wilson's use of light can also be viewed as a form of repetition. By shifting the direction from which the lights illuminate the stage in any given scene, he draws attention to differing experiences of the same subject through varying perspective. A similar interest is found in the canvases of the impressionist painters whose painted light reflected cathedrals at different times of day to give different impressions of the same view. Wilson's repetition of language

parallels these shifts in perspective. Through repetition a moment is intensified but is subtly different each time. (In fact, this is a telling reflection of the experience of live theatre, in which each performance, while substantively the same, varies slightly from night to night, through the unpredictable shifts of energy.)

Stein's use of repetition has its counterpart in cinema. Marc Robinson points out that:

> Stein learned her technique [of repetition] from the cinema, then in its fledgling days....A film's collection of frames -- so many nearly identical yet crucially different -- is the clearest expression of the present tense in performance. Each frame announces the situation, the composition, the characters anew; the 'story' starts over each time, only when the parts are taken together and followed sequentially does the film move and seem to breathe. When Stein starts a play over an exhausting number of times...she's working to bring theater in line with cinema."[31]

Commenting on her own writing in the 1930's Stein wrote:

> I was making a continuous succession of the statement of what that person was until I had not many things but one thing....I of course did not think of [the insistent style] in terms of the cinema, in fact I doubt whether at that time I had ever seen a cinema but, I cannot repeat this too often any one is of one's period and this our period was undoubtedly the period of the cinema.[32]

Wendy Steiner describes the power of this repetition: "[I]n order to ensure presence, uniqueness, and immediacy one must represent a subject through repetitions, near-identical replications of one moment in the next."[33] In her introduction to Stein's Lectures in America, Steiner uses the repeated images in Andy Warhol's canvases as further examples of the power of repetition and of Stein's influence on contemporary aesthetics: "An image is presented over and over again in near-identical fashion to create a unified design whose every part is both an intensely immediate presence and an utterly banal copy."[34]

Over the years Wilson has become increasingly interested in a body of writings drawn from the world repertoire and is less inclined to create works which are entirely new. He has directed Heiner Müller's Hamletmachine, Wagner's opera Parsifal, Shakespeare's King Lear and Hamlet, Ibsen's When We Dead Awaken and Euripides' Alcestis. He has also directed an adaptation of Virginia Woolf's Orlando, Marguerite Duras' The Malady of Death, a version of the Don Juan legend, as well as Büchner's Danton's Death. In a way, Wilson's undertaking of Dr. Faustus Lights the Lights was itself a grappling with one of the pillars of literary tradition, the Faust legend. Stein provided him with an already deconstructed and re-examined version

of Faust to enter into and interact with.

Although Wilson works with pre-existing texts that have historical and mythic themes, Gautam Dasgupta points out that even when working with original material, "History has always been Wilson's pre-eminent subject."[35] However, Katherine Arens alerts us to the fact that Wilson's history is not necessarily "historical" or chronological: "Like postmodern architecture, Wilson's theater spectacles quote history out of context to shatter conventional narrative."[36] Arens makes the further point that:

> A modernist tries to forge a new style, freed from historical convention. For a postmodernist, any style necessarily is parody or pastiche since there is no 'real history' and since the 'signifying chain' of history has broken down its ideological weight. Modernist style is thus replaced by postmodernist collage.[37]

Dasgupta adds that "[Wilson's] work also addresses his own aesthetic history, his life in art and the place of art in his private sphere"[38]-- a striking similarity to Gertrude Stein's work as a history of her own aesthetic process within the continuous present. For Wilson and Stein the process of creation is central to the form of their works. Additionally, they were interested in incorporating the experience present in a given moment (its phenomenology) --whatever that happened to consist of -- into their works as well. This

seizing of the moment is in keeping with Wilson's engagement with a phenomeno- logical perspective and can be compared with his incorporation of the random phrases he heard on television into his early work. Every moment offers another creative possibility and every event or sensory experience is present as fodder for creative transformation.

A Letter for Queen Victoria was a turning point with regard to Wilson's growing attraction to the written word:

> I became interested in language -- in words, because I hadn't used many words before. I wanted to see what that experience would be. Frankly, I could never express myself in words....So in Queen Victoria I tried using words....Actually, I look at my speeches as singing. I'm interested in the natural sound of words. And I found that the way I hear words is not the way they actually are. For me words are like transparencies.[39]

According to Trevor Fairbrother, A Letter for Queen Victoria signalled a turning point in Wilson's visual aesthetic as well, wherein illusionistic backdrops gave way to spare and geometric scenic environments as words increasingly infused his productions.[40]

The use of an increasingly geometric vocabulary both visually and verbally is another striking similarity to Stein's literary cubism and is particularly apparent in works such as Einstein on the Beach and A Letter for

Queen Victoria, in which Wilson worked with an autistic child, Christopher Knowles, and after which he became increasingly interested in exploring language in a non-traditional way. Words subsequently became more conspicuous in his works and Gertrude Stein's influence more apparent. Wilson was as interested in the sound-value and function of words in-and-of-themselves, isolated outside of the structure and constriction of the conventional sentence, as he was in so-called "meaning." The sounds themselves "meant," and the content was embodied within the fracturing of textual components, so that each vowel and syllable was sometimes elongated and "sounded" separately, gaining meaning and weight through its assigned place within the entire production. The resulting episodic structure of Wilson's stage productions reflects Stein's structure, emphasizing framed moments rather than a story-line per se, although "story-lines" sometimes appear in both Stein's and Wilson's works. This type of structure was most apparent in his collaborations with Andrews and Knowles.

When Wilson took on Stein's text of Dr. Faustus Lights the Lights, the enfant of images and the mother of invention should have produced a masterpiece. It would seem that a more perfect marriage could not have been arranged than the wedding of Gertrude Stein's text with Robert Wilson's

directorial eye. Yet there were times when the visual and aural environment of the production obliterated, rather than complemented, the text. Nevertheless, the parallels between Stein's process and Wilson's remain startling.

Wilson first directed Dr. Faustus Lights the Lights in 1991 in Germany. It was the first but not the last Stein work he directed. Dr. Faustus Lights the Lights was subsequently produced at New York's Lincoln Center Festival in July, 1992. In April, 1996 the Houston Opera commissioned Four Saints in Three Acts with the original Virgil Thompson score written in 1934; Four Saints in Three Acts was produced by Lincoln Center in July of 1996. Wilson considers these two works to be part of a greater mosaic of work which he has outlined for himself over the next several years and which has already included Goethe and Shakespeare as well as Gertrude Stein. His next Stein work will be Saints and Singing.[41]

In his review of the New York production of Dr. Faustus Lights the Lights, John Simon writes that Stein's text was "shattered into fragments like the shards of a face in Analytic Cubism." [42] Stein's textual fragmentation was mirrored, certainly, in Wilson's fracturing of stage space. Stein and Wilson both quote visual sources in their work and build upon a

painter's vocabulary.

Wilson's production of Dr. Faustus Lights the Lights, which I saw at Lincoln Center in New York and again on video, took ninety minutes. The work was subsidized by the German government and was first developed at the Ernst Busch Theater School in East Berlin (and subsequently sponsored by the Hebbel Theatre in Munich before playing New York and Paris.) It used twelve actors, ten of whom were students and two of whom were professionals. The production's aesthetic owed as much to the pragmatics of the situation as to artistic foresight, as his assistant, Anne-Marie Rommen told me.[43] Wilson doubled and tripled the roles of Faustus, Mephistopheles and Marguerite Ida and Helena Annabel because he had that many actors to work with and needed to use them all. Nonetheless he came uncannily close to an ingenious spatial realization of Stein's textual experiments -- a further reflection of Wilson's interest in the phenomenology of experience, since what he has to work with is what he works with.

In contrast to the productions of the other three directors discussed in this study, Wilson's production was almost chilling in its austerity and emotionlessness. Actors in white-face, lacking individuality, moved robotically through the space. Wilson's production of Dr. Faustus Lights the

Lights had a single set, which David Savran described in Performing Arts Journal as: "...a thin, suspended black box with the bottom cut out, at least 25 feet in length, from which glows a white light at once prophetic and menacing."[44]

+The sombreness of Wilson's visual environment was striking when contrasted with the sinister playfulness of his aural environment. Although the music and sound-scape provided by Hans Peter Kuhn, a frequent collaborator of Wilson's, was a central component, Wilson was more concerned that the essence of the musicality be in the language itself. Kuhn served him well by supplying a soundscape which complemented and underscored the musicality of the words rather than overwhelming them. As Bonnie Marranca points out with regard to Wilson productions in general:

> Sound is used sculpturally, just as the actors are. Aural tableaux complement or work dialectically with visual tableaux....Because of the sophisticated sound equipment used in the productions of...Wilson...it is reasonable to conclude that the Theatre of Images would not exist without the benefit of advanced technology."[45]

As in other Wilson productions, the technology, as well as Kuhn's electronic music, was as powerful and important in the presentation as the text and the actors. Kuhn created his sound score before rehearsals began and served the important purpose, as John Rockwell pointed out, of helping

> The director in his efforts to free the actor's voice from the actor's body....The result was 15 cabaretlike ditties, sung by the actors at key points during the play....The effect evokes the whole German Romantic musical tradition....The brass chords were sampled from Beethoven's 'Fidelio' Overture...combined in a different sequence."[46]

Wilson's aural environment was infused with dissonant sounds made by an array of technological apparatuses, including a sampler, furthering the notion of a fractured contemporary consciousness. In the same way he conveyed the divisiveness of the characters by introducing two Faustuses, two Mephistopheleses and three Marguerite Ida and Helena Annabels, suggesting that tradition and classicism are no longer paradigms of action or creation and that if Goethe's model spoke for *its* age, Stein's was a pre-cursor to our own. The decadent music hall setting seemed almost fascistic to many. Ironically, it is naturalistic theatre that Wilson sees as fascistic: "My work is very formal. All the gestures are choreographed, like dance. I hate the naturalistic theatre. It's fascistic and boring. It disturbs me because it kills the mysteries."[47]

Wilson's production of Dr. Faustus Lights the Lights was framed behind a curtain which had the title of the play written all over it, interspersed with the words, "thank you," also written repeatedly. ("Thank

you" is spoken again and again by The Dog in the play. This is reminiscent of the curtained backdrop in A Letter for Queen Victoria which had "chitter chatter"written repeatedly on it -- as the actors did just that in front of it.) As the curtain was raised, a single image dominated the stage: an isolated bar of vertical light, described in Stein's text as the lintels of a door. This light framed one of the Dr. Faustuses who held a caliper to his head and made a menacing snipping gesture as the vertical bar of light shrank and shut, like the shutter of a camera. The lights faded and came up again on an essentially neutral stage within which bars of neon light descended and ascended. The scene was reminiscent of the starkly linear geometrical canvases of Mondrian; each of Wilson's framed tableaux explored the dimensions of time and space. Several unshaded electric light bulbs hung conspicuously and menacingly around the stage. One of the two Mephistopheleses appeared in a red jump suit from behind a red curtain stage right; he twirled around repeatedly while other characters hopped mechanically; shafts of light isolated other small areas of the space.

Since the actors in white face were German students, they spoke the English text with German accents which, together with Kuhn's music, had the effect of evoking a sinister post-World War I German Expressionist

cabaret. The robotic verticality of the three Faustuses, dressed in black collarless suit jackets minus shirts and ties, was in sharp contrast to the horizontal bars of light through which they wove.

A short while after the Mephistopheles in red appeared, one of the Faustuses sat upon another horizontal bar with four light bulbs with still another Faustus atop it. Three Marguerite Ida and Helena Annabels entered; one Faustus and one Marguerite Ida and Helena Annabel danced an intimate slow dance, while the Faustus on the horizontal bar watched. The other two Faustuses observed from different points on the stage. The Dog, played by a female dressed in a man's suit and a tie and wearing a pony tail, entered, saying "thank you" several times. The three Faustuses did a series of acrobatic movements. The words became increasingly disembodied. The Little Boy entered in white bermuda shorts and a white tee shirt.

The two Faustuses moved in different directions, seemingly in conflict with one another. The music alternated between occasional whimsicality and cabaret-like music hall numbers with different masters of ceremony presiding. At one point The Dog hopped onto the back of one of the Faustuses; this Faustus opened his jacket, revealing his naked chest. The figures seemed cold and soulless. It was often hard to differentiate between

one Faustus and another.

All three Marguerite Ida and Helena Annabels wore blue slip-like garments. As they introduced themselves, sometimes chorally, sometimes individually, Mephistopheles ran through the landscape while from offstage came the sound of a crash. The crash, often repeated, sometimes sounded like a toilet flushing and at other times like shattered glass. One Marguerite Ida and Helena Annabel cried out "I am here"; another Marguerite Ida and Helena Annabel cried, "I am not here, I am there." And she was. Not "here" (anymore.) But (now) there. By using multiple actors to play one character, Wilson could literalize Stein's text so that the words were not only metaphorical but reflected the actresses's positions in space. When Faustus passed by with Mr. Viper (a spiral pipe) in his hand, the three Marguerite Ida and Helena Annabels looked aghast, their mouths wide open in horror. The Woman with a Sickle was played by a man in drag on eight-foot stilts, wearing a long white gown and red fright wig. Several American critics pointed out that he was reminiscent of the performance artist Ethyl Eichelberger.

Through this use of multiple actors and their placement in space Wilson staged the conflict implicit in, and between, the characters, but never

"dramatized" by Stein. The multi-perspectival experience implicit in the words was realized spatially through the division of characters. The varied placement of the three actresses on the stage literalized Marguerite Ida and Helena Annabel's contradictions as well as the simultaneity of her different perspectives. Whereas a reading of the text alone suggests that she is the "complete" woman, embodying multiple aspects of womanhood, Wilson's staging suggested that these aspects were actually conflicted rather than unified. Rather than a whole woman, she was a woman divided.

The same was true of Faustus. Although Faustus's inner confict is more explicit from the text alone and from its mythic source, Wilson's representation of Faustus by two different actors physicalized and literalized his conflict as well. The doubling of Mephistopheles was suggestive of the fact that the devil appears in different guises. This motif is affirmed and repeated later in the play by the appearance of The Man from Over the Seas, who is also a manifestation of Mephisto. Identities and gender were blurred by multiplication of actors and division of characters and by costuming which hid rather than revealed; the white faces were yet another mask.

Electric light as a metaphor for spiritual enlightenment was literalized by both Stein and Wilson. David Savran said in his review of the production,

"In Stein's text Enlightenment is at once literalized and subtly degraded....The focus on "enlightenment" is emphasized in Wilson's production."[48]

Wilson paints with light, applying his canvas with a pallette that ranges from the minimal to the expressionistic. What could be more apt than an oft-described "post-modernist" manipulating his technological pallette through light as a metaphor of power and knowledge? Bars of light opened and closed, defining places in the environment from which characters entered and exited as well as the point at which they went through transformations. The meditative Faust sat under a single light bulb; the Woman with a Sickle appeared as if from another world through a shaft of light; the opening image defined light as a source of illumination or the lack thereof as ignorance; a vertical bar of red light flashing in the background signalled the devil at work.

Light represented knowledge; it also symbolized states of being; it was used as a frame; it was used as illumination, both literally and metaphorically. Wilson used light as his geometric divide, rather than planes (as in Malina's production), levels (as in Kornfeld's production), or railings (as in Foreman's production). This geometric use of light and space

emphasized the boundaries between one level of experience and another and the journey from one place to another. Light also signalled the transgression of boundaries (a central theme in Foreman's production as well). Wilson's message seemed to be that the emotional climate is unstable, characterized by shifting moods represented by the alternating hues of light. The world of the play was controlled by technology; the spiritual world always seemed to be on the other side of the light, which was blinding as well as illuminating. Electric light had superseded natural light as sovereign until Marguerite Ida was able to hold the candle up to herself and create her own light. She had a halo.

But she, too, was a divided character and was deceived by The Man From Over the Seas, who seduced her into a dance and then vampirically tried to suck her blood. He wore white -- often taken to be a symbol of purity -- but he was not pure. His costume was a disguise. For he, too, was the devil. He seemed like the man of her dreams, and yet the other two Marguerite Ida and Helena Annabels were aware it was all a sham. They watched from afar and saw what was invisible to the self being deceived.

Couples danced intimately in and out of this landscape; lights flashed in and out; passages (still represented by bars of light) appeared and

disappeared. Things were not what they seemed to be. The emotional landscape was filled with deception, division and doubt. Marguerite Ida and Helena Annabel's words, "You are not I, you are you," took on a new meaning as the divided selves responded to each other. Occasionally, Bossa Nova music played and served to further blur the specificity of the locale.

At first Wilson's literal multiplication of characters seemed to contradict and erase the playfulness of Stein's word puns. But by the doubling and tripling of characters, Wilson essentially freed the substructure of meaning from its verbal prison and physicalized these different levels of experience dramatically within the space. Wilson told me: "I saw the characters in a prism; they had different sides, colors and readings; it gave the work a density and dimension; it set my counterpoints so it was not flat."[49] Although the German students were familiar with Goethe's Faust, they had not encountered the work of Stein nor were they familiar with Wilson. They hadn't even heard of him, Anne-Marie Rommen told me.[50] There was an early attempt to translate the text into German but it was a fruitless endeavour; Stein was considered "untranslatable." Therefore Wilson's interest in the musicality of the words took on a new meaning, given that they were uttered by non-English speaking actors. This, of course,

was not the first time Wilson emphasized the musicality of the language rather than its meaning, even if it was the first time he did so with non-English speaking actors. Wilson's daring choice of material reflected both his long interest in Stein and his feeling that Stein was universal and part of the collective unconscious; she would therefore be a worthy experiment, he felt, to undertake with the students.

Unlike other theatre writers whose stage directions and actions are written explicitly into the text, Stein leaves a vast space for a director to inhabit and within which to invent. One of her appeals to Wilson's particular sensibility is this lack of limitations in the written text. Although Wilson is usually concerned with text only in so far as he can depart from it, he claims that he did not deviate at all from the text of Dr. Faustus Lights the Lights, feeling that this fidelity to Stein's words as they were written was necessary, since the words were the "bare bones of the work."[51] This still allowed for his free play with the words in space. Wilson doesn't feel that Stein is at all obscure. "After all," he said, "what is more concrete than 'a rose is a rose is a rose'?"[52]

Although Dr. Faustus Lights the Lights has a narrative of sorts, Wilson's production did not develop linearly. It was developed through the

repetition of images and the already-mentioned multiplication and division of characters to create a continuous present in a never-changing landscape through which the audience's (rather than the characters') attention must continually engage and re-engage with their own shifting focus. The production was like a landscape painting and was a reflection of Stein's project -- to merge past, present and future through the simultaneity of time, and to link the emotion of the audience with the moment of experience in the play. Although Wilson provided the view, it was up to the audience to look at it as they wished to at any given moment. The invited perspective was that of the totality of what was taking place, as one image replaced another -- not sequentially but in a continuous present. According to Wilson: "Often things go by one in theatre so fast I can't understand them...So in my own work, I try to be kind to the audience and give them time to reflect on an image, to daydream, consider, whatever. Theatre is meant to be pleasurable."[53] And Stein, similarly, wrote in her essay, "Plays:"

> Your sensation as one in the audience in relation to the play played before you your sensation I say your emotion concerning that play is always either behind or ahead of the play at which you are looking and to which you are listening. So your emotion as a member of the audience is never going on at the same time as the action of the play. This thing the fact that your emotional time as an audience

> is not the same as the emotional time of the play is what makes one endlessly troubled about a play, because not only is there a thing to know as to why this is so but also there is a thing to know why perhaps it does not need to be so.[54]

Wilson, the quintessential post-modernist, made his own pact with the devil, one could say, through the manipulation of technology and a turning away from psychology (the inner life) and "humanism." Wilson's multiplication of characters was not only a staging of the subtext but an eradication of psychology, since the conscious and subsconscious selves were both externalized. Like the other directors of Dr. Faustus Lights the Lights discussed in this study, he blurred the boundary between good and evil, between types of sexual identity, between right and wrong, as well as between genres of art, theatre, literature and dance. The crossing of boundaries is implicit in both the text and in his interpretive strategy.

Whereas Foreman's landscape was the highly-charged world of a child on the brink of discovery, Wilson's landscape provided the perspective of a child who has been betrayed by experience. If hell resided in the uncertainty of abstraction for Malina, in small-town America for Kornfeld, and in the contradictions of the subconscious for Foreman, for Wilson Hell resided in the decadent nether-land of uncertainty -- a cabaret where identities become

camouflaged and multiplied, divided and divisive, and where moral and gender boundaries become nebulous. David Savran points out that: "Like Stein, Wilson produces an elegy for a culture (whether pre-war or post-AIDS) that no longer believes in the heroic mythology of the past, in the power of rationalism or in the promise of enlightenment."[55]

All of the directors discussed in this study were forging a creative revolution that was a reflection of the disembodiment of, and split in, contemporary consciousness. Their productions reflect the contemporary social *zeitgeist* as well as the aesthetic shift that characterizes the continuing fracture within the contemporary psyche.

Notes: Chapter 5

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52. In a panel discussion at the Whitney Museum moderated by John Rockwell, in conjunction with Florine Stettheimer exhibit and forthcoming production of Four Saints in Three Acts, October, 1996.

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AFTERWORD

My long interest in Gertrude Stein's text, Dr. Faustus Lights the Lights, and in the Faust archetype, as well as my desire to penetrate the often hermetic and seemingly impenetrable vocabulary of alternative theatre directors, particularly as a director myself, are among the reasons that I initially undertook a study of the four productions of Dr. Faustus Lights the Lights discussed in the preceding pages. The genesis of this undertaking took place during a conversation I had with the eminent language poet, Bruce Andrews, another of Stein's progeny. We had both seen Wilson's production of Stein's opera but disagreed about the result. Andrews thought that it served Stein; I thought that it served Wilson and obliterated Stein's text. I decided to have a closer look at the production. I was not looking for an answer, but for an understanding, and thought that analyzing Wilson's production of Stein's work would also help me to understand Stein's "techniques" -- if such there are -- as well as Wilson's. Then I discovered that three other seminal American directors in the alternative theatre had also produced Dr. Faustus Light the Lights -- even before Wilson -- and they were, of course, Judith Malina, Lawrence Kornfeld and Richard Foreman. I

became increasingly aware of Stein's pervasive influence upon diverse groups of artists, particularly in the theatre, and began the journey to uncover what was behind that influence.

Gertrude Stein, I discovered, stands at the helm of a creative revolution that had a major impact on these seminal representatives of American alternative theatre production. It was she who forged the way for the new theatre vocabulary that has become the hallmark of theatre practitioners challenging the boundaries of convention. My study has examined the shifting concerns of American alternative theatre production from the point of view of the four directors of Stein's Dr. Faustus Lights the Lights as viewed through the lens of Stein's idiosyncratic creativity. These directors, as well as the newer generation of alternative theatre practitioners, are very much Stein's creative offspring, whether consciously or instinctively using a vocabulary that is part of their artistic inheritance. This vocabulary, as demonstrated in the above pages, is characterized by a shift in focus from product to process, in the self-containment of the parts of the work over the whole, in (prioritizing) phenomenology over semiology, by an interest in iconicity over story-line and by an emphasis on the (individual) frames of a theatrical canvas over its content. If Stein opened the doors for

these directors, each of them in turn has opened more doors for another generation of theatre practitioners who have evolved a unique theatrical form which is a reflection of the disembodiment of, and split in, contemporary consciousness. Additionally, Stein's use of the Faust motif seems to have tapped into a collective quest by these artists for new tools of both mastery and creation.

If the theatre vocabulary of these four directors seemed unavailable to me in the past, the opportunity to speak one on one with them about their working process, and to look closely at their diverse approaches to a single work which captured my own interest for many years, has provided me with the opportunity to clarify their methods and aesthetics. I am also particularly struck by the fact that although Stein influenced artists in diverse disciplines, she left her impact most markedly upon American avant-garde stage directors. The "stasis" one seemingly encounters in Stein's works seems to have found a new charge in stage productions which demonstrate parallel interests to the ones Stein demonstrates on the page. A new criterion for the organization of stage space, which values the component parts of a production as equal and self-contained, reflects Stein's recognition and validation of words as self-contained entities moving in space (as opposed to

being imprisoned within an arbitrary sentence structure.) Stein's theories and ideas find a vital counterpart in the phenomenological interests of contemporary stage practitioners.

Furthermore, the influence of cubism on Stein's writing resonates with experimental directors challenging conventions, and, as with all offspring, paved the way for each of them eventually to go even further than the mother of them all. Cross-pollination of disciplines, including literary pastiche and an increased use of technology, is quite commonplace on the stage now. Stein's interest in the techniques of cinema foreshadowed an increasing interest in using cinema techniques on the stage. Film, slides and videos are used on stage both iconically and interactively; actors on stage mirror actors on film gesturally, often at the same time as the film is playing. They frequently interact with film characters, speaking to them and inserting themselves into the film action.

Stein's ideas and techniques speak to a generation that recognizes the fragmentation of life and that no longer believes in the social myths perpetuated by their elders with regard to wholeness, consistency, or even taking themselves seriously. I am struck again and again by a generation of theatre audiences whose emotional response to almost any experience is to

deride it. As Kornfeld said, Stein may not have been "a camp" but her willingness to see the inherent absurdity in the mythologies behind so-called "high art" is something that strikes a chord in a whole generation of alternative theatre practitioners.

Since I undertook this study, two more productions of Dr. Faustus Lights the Lights have been produced by younger practitioners (in a Faust Festival at New York's NADA and by the Chicago-based Doorjka Company) with a forthcoming production by another seminal theatre company, The Wooster Group; the text has been reprinted twice -- in a new edition of Stein's Last Operas and Plays, edited by Bonnie Marranca, and in The Stein Reader, edited by the doyenne of Stein authorities, Ulla Dydo, a project undertaken to correct errors in previous editions of Stein's selected works, demonstrating the ongoing and renewed interest in this unusual work.

I not only gained insight into the text, but also renewed respect for the individual productions, even if they did not all "succeed" for me. Most of all, I myself gradually learned a new theatre vocabulary, realizing how anachronistic words like "success" or "failure", or "a realization of the text," were to the aims of these practitioners. That terminology, in fact, stands at the center of the shift in values in contemporary alternative theatre from

product to process. "Realizing" a text or "succeeding" are not goals in themselves; the goal is the experience of the journey and the discoveries along the way. Textual fidelity is itself a questionable notion, as reception theorists have alerted us. This shift characterizes, as I pointed out in my introduction to this study, one from "modernism" to "postmodernism," and, to quote from Marvin Carlson's Performance: A Critical Introduction once again, it is the "distinction between the work-in-itself, complete, finished, and unchanging [modern] and the work-in-progress, incomplete, contingent and fluid [postmodern]" that distinguishes the two.

Whether theatre practice after modernism is a conscious "movement", or, as scholar Frederick Karl suggests in his book Modern and Modernism, merely an invention of the critics for the convenience of describing a wide variety of practices that have come after modernism,[1] the nomenclature has certainly served the purpose of helping to distinguish between the types of work Hassan has described and creating a space for accepting a wider spectrum of theatre practices. If Stein paved the way for a revolution which has lasted for the last half of the twentieth century, undoubtedly, even more daring "isms" are yet to come, as we approach the next millennium.

The productions of Dr. Faustus Lights the Lights discussed in this study reflect the social zeitgeist of the time they were produced, as well as the continuing desire for mastery -- over life and over death. It would be an interesting irony if the next favorite "ism" indeed turns out to be "millenniumism" (as distinct from "millennialism") where theatre practice after modernism is no longer just about a fracture in the psyche, but about the absence of a psyche -- or about death itself, as already witnessed in plays such as Tony Kushner's Angels in America. How will it express itself from a director's point of view? Will there be actorless plays (not only the death of character, but the death of the actor)? Empty stages where nothing exists? Or empty theatres with neither actor nor audience present? Stein's presence loomed large over the most signficant revolution in American theatre practice. Whose presence will loom next? And what will be the result? Hopefully, we can look forward to it with happy anticipation rather than with terror -- a terror not unlike the ontological impotence felt in the Faust story and behind Marguerite Ida and Helena Annabell's quest for self-definition in Dr. Faustus Lights the Lights.

Notes: Afterword.

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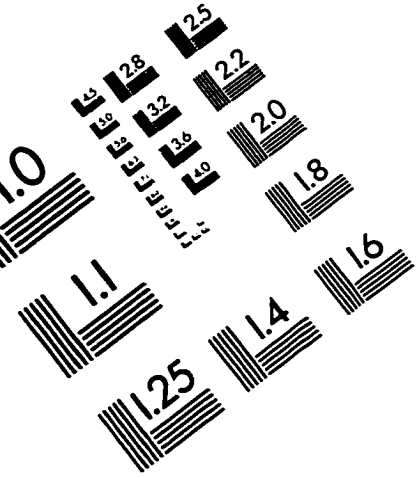

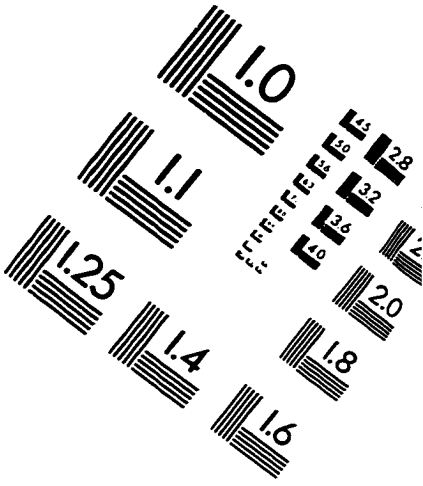

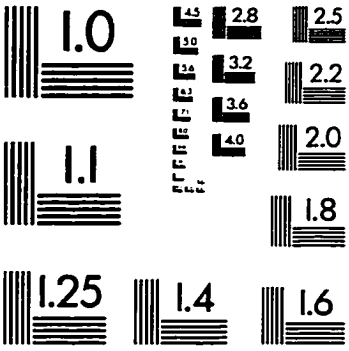

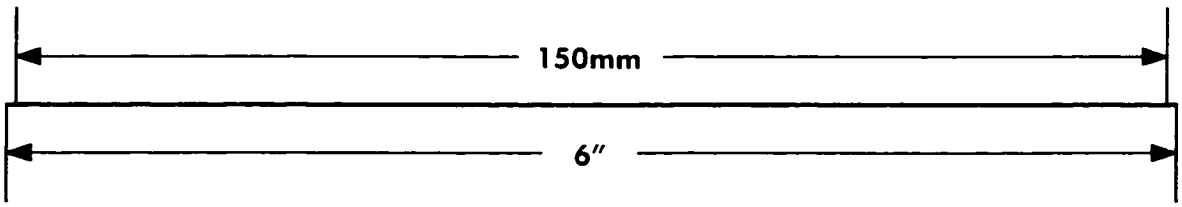

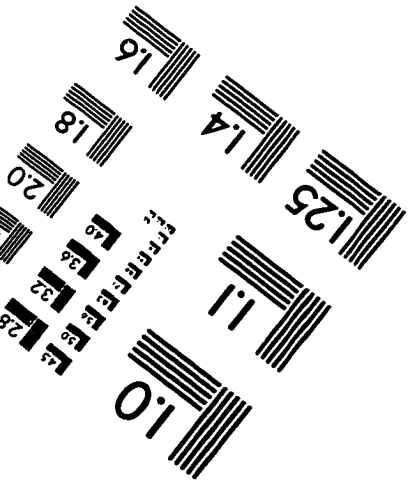

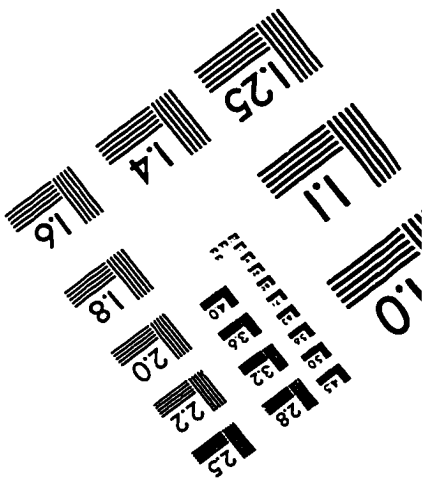

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