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Spectacular Drama in Urban Entertainment;  
the dramatisation of community in popular culture

David Christopher Chaney

ABSTRACT

This is a study of some of the many types of entertainment that have been called spectacular, of the cultural significance of certain conventions in ways of transforming space and identity. Forms of spectacular drama both require and celebrate urban social relations, they constitute essential parts of the popular cultural landscape. They display an idealisation of ways of picturing collective experience. Although I note continuities in forms of spectacular drama through different eras, it is differences in the ways in which our sense of collective life or community is experienced and expressed that provide for very different understandings of forms of spectacular display. I describe and discuss forms of spectacular drama in the fifteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries. I have chosen the fifteenth century as it was a period when there was a flourishing range of dramatic entertainment but no theatres. The principal features of the culture that I stress are the looseness of the dramatic frame. In contrast, the nineteenth century is a period of both urban expansion and theatrical supremacy. In the course of the century the population became urbanised and the growing cities became spectacular stages for new forms of social experience. I describe a broad framework of popular entertainment which provided many forms of spectacular experience, but concentrate upon the theatrical form of melodrama and forms of pictorial realism. In the chapter on the twentieth century I am principally concerned with the implications of processes of massification - both of society and culture. I argue that the democratic individualism of consumer culture and mass leisure has made the vocabulary of identity and community peculiarly problematic. The theme is that spectacular drama in contemporary culture has become more insistent and more public and yet our participation and response has been increasingly privatised.

SPECTACULAR DRAMA IN URBAN ENTERTAINMENT;

the dramatisation of community in popular culture

DAVID CHRISTOPHER CHANEY

Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirement for  
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, in the Department of  
Sociology and Social Policy, University of Durham

1985

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Above all else I want to acknowledge all the ways in which being with Sophie have made it worthwhile - and dedicate it to her.

None of the material contained in this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree in this or any other university. I am the sole author of all this thesis.

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CHAPTER ONE - Introduction: Spectacular Drama

'But it was wonderful only as a spectacle, since it meant nothing.'

(Bowles 1982 p.313)



In this thesis I will suggest some ways in which forms of popular culture, in particular forms of entertainment which contemporaries could describe as spectacular, relate to differences in the experience of membership of different types of social formation. In this chapter I will clarify what is involved in conceptualising the project in this way. I shall begin by picking out some terms that are central to my account.

A premise of my approach is that a major theme in human experience is the nature of the community to which individuals are primarily oriented. The web of personal relationships involving each individual can be unravelled through differences in degree and type of interlocking rights and obligations, but they also cohere through some sense of a world that is shared in common. The relationships between habitat and its inhabitants provide grounds for the cultural organisation and expression of collective identity. One example would be the ways in which we can read a landscape as an inscription of cumulative enterprise: 'A landscape is the most solid appearance in which a history can declare itself.....We read upon the face of the landscape the pasts which it has borne in order to create our present.' (Inglis 1977 p.489). A central theme in the following work will be differences in ways of dramatising cultural as well as physical landscapes, and the imagery of community through contrasts in social and physical horizons. The Gemeinschaft-Gesellschaft distinction is of course well established in the social-anthropological literature, and I do not intend to take any time exploring that original distinction or its later developments. I will, however, employ the moral sense of interdependence between types of experience of community and individuality postulated in that distinction to elucidate the presuppositions and rewards of dramatic representation.



An analogous theme, which has been privileged in Marxist perspectives, is that the organisation of productive relationships - the relationship between individual labour and the fruits of that labour - is of central significance in explaining human self-conception and structural relationships within a collectivity. I do not wish to pit this theme against my emphasis upon a sense of community and rank them in terms of significance, nor to suggest that they are the only two, but rather argue that sense of community is of particular significance in structuring images of desirable action. It is an integral part of this approach to argue that the language, in the widest possible sense, used to express the norms for and attitudes towards actions as members of communities is inherently political. This does not mean that the language must be associated with formally organised competing interest groups, and indeed may be associated with 'non-political' grounds for association such as religion, sex and age; but will be political in that it expresses competing views over possible tensions between the legitimate and the desirable. Of fundamental importance in patterning changes in the meaning of community has been the development of a distinction between public and private worlds, and this will be a persistent point of reference in my account.

A second premise of my approach is that it is through dramatisation that the community as shared experience is most commonly articulated. I have mentioned the importance of landscape as one form of record of collective activity, and one way of understanding dramatic force is to see it as a social transformation of space: 'The art in the caves of southwest Europe and the stories of the Aborigines about the landmarks in their range are means of transforming natural spaces into cultural places: ways of making theatres.' (Schechner 1976 p.43). It is in the self-consciousness of drama that the raw materials of personal experience are

framed in ways that make them available for communal understanding:

'Just as a farm is a field where edible foods are grown, so a theatre is a place where transformations of time, place, and persons (human and nonhuman) are accomplished.' (Schechner op. cit. p.49).

The medium of transformation is the notion of performance in which a distance between action and meaning is emphasised. Performance is a type of action which is understood to be of limited duration and which involves a felt distinction between the character presented and a sense of self of the performer. Drama turns on the possibility of constructing role(s) as something for which there is both identification of and to varying degrees identification with by performers and audience. The display of character and social identity is integral to the dramatic enterprise (c.f. Cockburn 1981 and Burns 1972 ).

It is necessary to make a distinction between social drama and aesthetic drama and to emphasise that in general I shall concentrate upon the latter in this study. Social drama is itself a very general category and it may be better to see it with Turner as: 'the experiential matrix from which the many genres of cultural performance ... have been generated.' (1982 p,78). Aesthetic drama, as one such genre, can be characterised through the organising force of a narrative governing the performance, through a commonly agreed sense of a distinction between performers and audience, and through a general recognition that the transformations in performance will be limited in important respects. This is not to say that aesthetic dramas can be confined to theatres, if by the latter we mean either commercial performance or a particular structure of interaction between participants. Drama works through display and partly because display involves overlooking and partly because the taking on of another character is always a dangerous enterprise, the setting for

dramatic performance is likely to be a physically and symbolically bounded space. Within this setting, whether it is a church, a pleasure-garden, an inn-courtyard, a purpose-built theatre or a private television receiver, space is transformed and the props of performance are given dramatic significance. Both modes of transformation, of performer and setting, mean that dramatic performance requires playing with forms of social experience. The community which grounds individuality is available for visualisation through dramatisation.

Thirdly, I begin from the argument that popular in this context cannot ~~cannot~~ be defined through features of the content of performances, that is whether they are vulgar or stereotyped etc., but rather is displayed through social relations of production which, whatever the characteristic organisational features of any cultural form, are: 'instances of the collective manufacture of unofficial public performances for anonymous audiences.' (Chaney 1979 p.10). Crucially, these relations of production develop and become dominant in urban society. Cities are a mode of human settlement where, because of the size of the resident population, individuals cannot be personally acquainted with all other residents. More positively, we can say that city life generates and normalises interaction with strangers; potentially incoherent and unreliable relationships have to be stabilised: 'City life was made possible by an "ordering" of the urban populace in terms of appearance and spatial location ... A potentially chaotic and meaningless world of strangers was transformed into a knowable and predictable world of strangers by the same mechanism human beings always use to make their worlds livable: it was ordered.' (Lofland 1973 p. 22). Another way of describing these processes of ordering relationships is to say that the ecology of the city was dramatised. Everyday urban life will involve elements of performance and important days and events in the urban calendar will be celebrated by

elaborate dramatic rituals and entertainments (c.f. Trexler 1980). In a variety of ways, differentiated by degrees of formal organisation, it can be said that the city is an implicit stage upon which the performers are its residents. Popular culture is intrinsically urban because the anonymous crowd, an inescapable feature of the politics of urban government, is a swirling, dispersing and reforming audience for entertainment: 'The anonymity and fluidity of urban society is therefore an extremely common subject of the narrative dramas of popular art but is itself a prerequisite before those dramas can be produced.' (Chaney 1979 p.10).

The interdependence of popular culture with urbanism is important because it helps to highlight certain features which are integral to the vulgarity of popular expression. For example, the importance of style for both performers and audiences as a mastery of a semiotic of expression which is frequently very detailed and finely nuanced; one should also mention the positive evaluation of variety in urban culture so that not only is there a wide range of entertainment to choose from but any individual could well encompass a number of different types of performance without seeing them as mutually exclusive. The exuberance of urban life is obviously part of its magnetic attraction to each wave of immigrants, but the sense of plenitude should not be left at the surface of self-satisfaction. Urban labourers do not only have their labour to sell, alienated from the creative potential of their work and often resident in very poor housing conditions: 'The culture of the oppressed, the excluded classes: this is the area to which the term "popular" refers us. And the opposite side to that... is, by definition, not another "whole" class, but that alliance of classes, strata, social forces which constitute what is not "the people" and not "the popular classes": the culture of the power-bloc.' (Hall 1982 p.238). It is

important that popular is not seen as just a typology, or as an aesthetic mode, it is a recurrent site for contests between representatives of groups with opposing material interests.

I have made some preliminary notes on the general orientations which underline my approach to the study of popular drama and need now to say something more specifically about spectacular imagery and spectacular entertainment. Why not give this type of entertainment the generic name of spectacles? One reason is the obvious possibility of a confusing pun; although it should be noted that in the sense of a pair of glasses spectacles function to enhance vision, a way of seeing better or looking more carefully, a usage which, as I shall argue, is quite appropriate for spectacles as dramatic entertainment. The second and more substantial reason is that although there is a deep connection between the spectacular and our notion of drama, the spectacular is not a theatrical genre. Promoters of shows, whether producers of pantomimes in the later nineteenth century or variety shows in seaside resorts in the twentieth century, may describe the performance as a spectacular - a self-evident, clearly-understood type of show. But in general the spectacular is a quality of entertainment. It may be the main rationale for attention or a more subordinate part of the performance, but the spectacular as a mode of presentation is inherent in every dramatic enterprise. A spectacular presentation is an attempt to get the attention of onlookers by forms of display which are sufficiently striking as to be impressive or even awe-inspiring.

The crucial point in the connection between the spectacular and drama is then that imagery is centrally important to our understanding of spectacular. The forms of display are visual enactments of events, actions or roles which are out of the ordinary experience of the audience.

It is because they are extraordinary that they can act as a pictorial language of metaphors and analogies for possible, often idealised, rather than actual experience. I think this is the point of connection to the popular rather derogatory usage of describing somebody as making a spectacle of themselves. In this case, the person, either through their actions, their deportment or their dress etc., has exhibited themselves as transgressing the boundaries of normal expectations. In the constraining world of conventional mores such excess is a source of disapproval, although certain figures, often entertainers, may be licensed to display extravagant even outrageous features with an amused tolerance.

The spectacular as an invitation to interest (the barker's way bringing in the punters) and as a characterisation is an opportunity to see something outside of the conventional constraints of everyday experience. It must therefore resemble its subject-matter, in a sense it runs counter to fantasy which gives the unimaginable concrete form. The spectacular is an opportunity to experience our imaginings, although in the looseness of popular associations we often describe the thrill of such experiences as fantastic. But the authenticity of what we are shown does not violate the realisation that the creation of effect which is the core of spectacular drama is necessarily artificial - our awe is induced by representation rather than reality. Although he is writing of theatricality as a particular mode of spectacle, Neale seems more generally correct when he says that: 'it is a mode which seems to involve an oscillating play between not only the exhibition of a visual illusion or effect as such, but also the exhibition of the means - the tricks - used to produce it.' (1979 p. 68). And therefore running alongside the use of spectacular to mean exciting and impressive is another usage in which

what is spectacular is specious, meretricious and unnecessarily contrived. Whether it is approved or condemned would seem to stem from the degree to which a commentator takes narrative plausibility as a prime consideration. In the twentieth century narrative plausibility has come to be dependent upon certain versions of psychological and/or social realism but these in turn stem from specific understandings of theatricality as I shall show in succeeding chapters.

Spectacular drama is therefore a mode of performance in which possible experience is visualised in order to impress an audience. The performance may be staged as a celebration, or in order to mobilise the audience for a cause, or to impress upon the audience a moral lesson, or merely to persuade an audience to part with its money in order to either see a daring and complicated stunt or to experience a thrill for themselves (as at a funfair). In each and every case the spectacular is literally extra-ordinary - the point is made through the force of performance rather than through rational reasoning. I have described what is displayed as possible experience because although it may be an actual event, through its presentation the experience is fictionalised as a representation. For example, the spectacle may recreate a military exploit from the past or it may present a panorama of an urban landscape that is only possible from a unique vantage-point such as the top of a spire of a cathedral, or it may show the moment of conception. The participation of the audience is in a representation of these experiences and, however dramatically effective their presentation, the audience knows that at some point they will be able to step back out of frame into normal life.

The point becomes clearer through the example of the spectacle of the monarch riding through a city in order to inaugurate a session of the legislature. For the crowds watching, whether on the street or through television, the procession is actual and real. But what is being paraded is less a particular individual than the institution of monarchy. The

possibility inherent in the experience is the capacity of the individual to symbolise an abstract role. The reason for staging the show is to create an aura of majesty which will be shared within a patriotic community. It is this strand of idealisation, which seems to me to be intrinsic to spectacular shows, which leads me to suggest that the imaginative vision in spectacular drama is (loosely) utopian rather than practical. And this it seems to me is the key to the difference between ritual and spectacle. The latter is staged for an audience and therefore the transformative power of ritual for its participants is here represented - it expresses an imaginative possibility. Civic ritual, secular ritual and ritual in secular society (such as an otherwise unremarkable wedding ceremony) may lack the crucial feature of liminality which expresses the transformative force of ritual (c.f. Turner 1982), but they only become spectacular when they are staged as performances of ritual (Chaney 1983A; 1985).

There are of course genres of performance which fall between the highly-structured, totalising performance of ritual drama and staged spectacular drama such as the several forms of festival. I do not think it necessary to pursue the complexities of constructing an adequate taxonomy of the various types of communal drama here, but in specifying some of the ambiguities of the use of a concept of spectacular drama it is relevant to note that when performances aspire to the cultural resonances of festival they take on different positive associations. For example, rock concerts are often described as spectacular entertainment and the use of spectacular effects derived from the traditions of nineteenth century illusionists and other forms of light-show are quite common. Sometimes concerts become festivals and this seems to be quite often associated with self-conscious attempts to see the entertainment as symbolising a way of life or a set of cultural values which are usually held to be in opposition to the dominant values of conventional society (c.f. Clarke 1982).



Similarly, the more spontaneous gatherings of athletes particularly at the closing of an Olympic Games is often contrasted as a festival with the more staged and organised spectacles of particular contests (MacAloon 1984). The validity of this type of distinction is not my immediate concern, rather to note that the transcendental extravagance of spectacle is in such circumstances used to assert a moral contrast to conventional experience. Frequently associated with counter-cultural withdrawals from the everyday world the drama here becomes a way of life rather than a framed performance - perhaps it is legitimate to see medieval pilgrimages as analogous to twentieth century peace camps or festivals in this respect. Spectacular drama can therefore be used as an expressive resource to articulate a sense of community which is profoundly disruptive of the conventional social order.

I have argued that spectacular drama is an attempt to construct an elaborate way of representing an occasion or an idea. What are the implications of a concept of representation? We can begin with the simplest form. When medieval knights engaged in a tourney which might take the form of two massed ranks of horsemen charging one another, or, in a more stylised form, two horsemen jousting in a confined space and according to an elaborate set of rules, then the battle is a representation of contemporary military conduct. The representation might be justified as a form of training, and thus function as a sort of rehearsal, but it could also be valued as an opportunity to bring out the virtues held to be implicit in military combat. In the latter sense the representation functioned as an occasion to display the more general values of a code of chivalrous conduct. This idea of a meaning and value to forms of action which are independent of their apparent purpose becomes clearer when we consider the revival of a tournament by Lord Eglington in 1838. This occasion was entirely about the values of chivalry and their supposed relevance to an entirely different social context. In fact it was so

divorced from any sense of functional utility that the occasion was threatened when two participants became so involved that they seemed to be fighting rather than jousting (Girouard 1981 especially Chapter 7). A representation is therefore a mimicry of social experience which is staged for reasons other than those we might impute to the participants if we saw it happening 'in real life'.

When representation becomes more stylised, as when a battle is performed on a stage, and when the medium of representation changes, so that the battle is painted or written about, then the performance is governed by the stylistic conventions of the medium. The viewer (or reader) may attend to the performance to get some vicarious sense of what real events of this sort might be like, but we must also say that the performance offers a pleasure in the exercise of conventions through which it is constructed. There may be many other rewards, such as moral lessons or sensual stimulation, to a performance, and necessarily the equal possibility of objectionable features, but at base our attention is secured through a willingness to collaborate in the conventions of performance. Although I have so far characterised the idea of representation through a contrast with real experience, the use of real should not imply a pejorative unreality to fictional expression. They are different ways of articulating social experience. The social is not another form of given, like the material universe, existing prior to human action. It is the ways in which consciousness is expressed and is therefore developed through form and occasion. There are a variety of ways of expressing a consciousness of self, other and community; fictional performances are a distinct type but not inferior to other types.

My general approach hinges on the thesis that fictional representations, however realistic their form, manner and intent, are not pictures, even when literally snapshots of a social reality but ways of conjuring social experience into tangible form: 'Pictures, it must be

remembered, are not representations or correspondences, with or of, reality. Rather, they constitute a "reality" of their own.' (Worth 1981 p.179). Representation tells us primarily about our ways of looking and narrating more than what is being seen or described, so that: 'Understanding that photographs and films are statements, rather than copies or reflections, enables us to look explicitly, as some of us are now doing, at the various ways we have developed of picturing the world.' (Worth op. cit. p.197; I have developed this approach more fully in Chaney 1979 Chapter 4). The tension in interpretation stems from the relative weight assigned to collective as opposed to individual factors, or what we might call social codes as opposed to personal associations. A playful use of signs and symbols is only possible through inter-subjective collaboration, and yet appreciation of any particular performance will partly draw upon personal modes of association. A sociological perspective does not preclude individual creativity, of the sort that has become enshrined in the autonomy that is attributed to the status of authorship in capitalist social formations, but the criteria of creativity however they are phrased do not explain the social significance of that which is created.

What ways, then, are most likely to be fruitful in attempting to get the social significance of changing fictional forms? A sociological approach must begin from the duality of performance. This is, first, that a performance is constructed through labour - collaborative action to produce an event or an object. Secondly, that performances are normative accounts which provide interpretive frames for experience.

To varying degrees the process of production will require the use of capital resources as well as the investment of human labour. There has therefore to be some form of exchange in which in return for the pleasure or inspiration that the performance provides, a group larger than those immediately engaged in production are willing to support the investment

of resources or reimburse them in some way. The enormous variety in forms of patronage need not be specified here, the important point is that the type of performance produced will be structured in significant ways by the organisation of production and the economic rationale of the productive process. I am using economic in a very general sense to include all forms of cultural as well as financial reward. To explore this approach one might particularly want to look at periods of innovation in cultural forms and see to what extent they are dependent upon shifts in the social organisation of production (e.g. Burke 1972).

The nature of performance as a normative account can be illustrated through the contrast with a process of making a map. A map is a set of notations which are used in conformity to a set of rules. Some are explicit - such as scale - and recorded on the text of a map, and some - such as those criteria which govern features deemed sufficiently significant to be recorded - are implicit, so that differences, usually through space but sometimes through time can be followed. This mode of representation can clearly be seen to be a normative account in that the complexity, even incoherence, of indigenous experience is translated into 'ways of seeing' designed to make possible a particular form of order. To describe fictional performances as being like a map is helpful in one way but ultimately inappropriate because the association is fundamentally metaphoric. A performance cannot really be like a map, its formal conventions are insufficiently precise and its purpose cannot be so precisely specified. Therefore the association between the terms is that both provide for a way of writing out or depicting our environment - one, a map, the physical environment, the second our cultural or public environment.

The idea of social space is a commonplace although this does not mean that it is used consistently. In one sense an individual's social space

is the degree of freedom of movement, either physical or social mobility. Associated with this usage is the idea that an intellectual environment constrained by either norms of caste or norms of poverty is cramped and confined so that access to new ideas is a 'broadening of horizons'.

Another way of talking about cultural space is to point to examples of the organisation of the physical environment to exemplify cultural categories. For example, in contemporary Western Europe the rules specifying access and department are entirely different for rooms labelled sleeping areas compared to rooms which are more public reception areas. There is in all these structures and metaphors of the physical organisation of cultural institutions a common distinction between experiences which are unique to each as individuals and experiences which are common as members of a community. Fictional performances are ways of negotiating, mediating in the sense of finding ways of making think-able, that distinction. They are, in this loose sense, 'maps' of the cultural geography of communal participation (again I have discussed these ideas more extensively in 1979 Chapter 2).

It seems to me that the distinctiveness of a sociological perspective, as opposed to a further critical re-interpretation, is that rather than offer an overview, by 'describing' the salient features of entertaining performances and thus obliterating the sense which grounds performances; the distinctive features of performance are taken as opportunity to explore 'the forms of life' within which that performance has become possible. The idea of working from performance to form of life and then back again can be read as an injunction to undertake ethnographies of popular entertainment. This does seem to me a valid injunction and one that could be followed more (as illustrations of two quite different but illuminating ethnographies of cultural forms see Baxandall 1972 and Peacock 1968). It is, however, insufficient because much of the lived world of popular

culture is inaccessible to us because it was transitory and anonymous (see the discussion of these problems in Davis 1975 and Burke 1978). More importantly, popular fiction helps to constitute its own ways of seeing and thus seeing itself; those ways of seeing are not created anew at each performance but are institutionalised through time and culture.

The concept of institutionalisation in this context suggests to me two analytic strategies which have tended in the practice of this thesis to overlap although their differences are important. The first would be to develop the pioneering <sup>it</sup> initiatives of Raymond Williams in the fields of historical and contemporary semantics, when in attempting to specify meanings we recognise the need to go beyond particular interlocutions to cultural accretions: 'a problem of vocabulary, in two senses: the available and developing meanings of known words, which needed to be set down; and the explicit but as often implicit connections which people were making, in what seemed to me, again and again, particular formations of meanings - ways not only of discussing but of seeing many of our central experiences.' (1976 p.13). I will argue that although much of what is and has been signified by spectacular drama remains constant in different epochs, the shifting resonances of dramatic performance have transformed the meaning of the terms.

The second strategy would be to recognise a difference between an interrogation of a vocabulary and a concern with the fields of force mobilised within a cultural form. I have for example studied the development of the department store as a form of retailing in Britain in the latter nineteenth century to explore the economic and social significance of new forms of interaction; the ecological significance of mass urbanisation; and the cultural significance of opportunities to create personal life-styles through impersonal consumption (1983 B). This particular example is concerned with the implications of a culture of

consumerism for our understanding of modernisation. In Chapter Four I take up another aspect of consumer culture, the dramatic imagery of advertising, to explore the spectacular dimensions of an iconography of sexuality in modern culture. In both cases the paradox of consumerism, that freedom is promised through a search for gratification which results in increasingly standardised and ubiquitous life-styles, is consistent with a more general contradiction of romantic individualism in modern culture in which: "'experience" can become a positive, sought-after value; and mere "coping" with the exigencies of one material and social situation is no longer enough. At the same time... more and more people find their lives split into separate enclaves of partial and specialized role-playing inside large and often impersonal institutional structures.'

(Martin 1981 p.16; see also Campbell 1983). The consequential resonances of a search for social meaning in private spheres are obviously fundamental for any explication of public drama in modern culture (Sennett 1976).

The meanings of modernity are therefore an essential framework for any account of changing forms of popular drama. A possible ambiguity in such an approach derives from the several uses of modern in relation to cultural forms. Modernism is usually thought of as a movement in the 'high' arts which has little to do with popular culture - an ideology of authorship and representation which masks significant continuities. Summarising a complex argument brutally: in the course of the nineteenth century as the majority of the population came to live in large urban centres, and as the country became a nation in that class replaced region as central political focus and a metropolitan elite was able to establish effective hegemony over a centralised state, and as technological innovations meant that communication and entertainment increasingly rapidly became massified, the forms and framework of popular culture became the dominant cultural experience for the majority of the population. But it was also against precisely the same background and in response to the same factors trans-

forming the experiential grounds of space and time (what Banham has called the first machine age 1960), that the modernist innovations took off in the high arts. Innovations which were principally focussed on changes in the narrative organisation of representation (MacFarlane and Bradbury 1976). A utopian nostalgia for communalism in popular culture (see below) is the other side of the coin of a modernistic search for selfhood in an inauthentic society.

More generally, we can say that it was the conjunction of structural changes in dominant social institutions, allied with very radical changes in the framework of conventional individual experience, allied with developments in new facilities for fictional representation, that have led to a general consensus over calling the last century for Britain, the modern era. In this thesis I will use a theme of the nature of spectacular drama as an occasion to explore the ways in which popular culture has been changed in the modern era. In some ways spectacular drama is a very apt way of interrogating modernity because it seems both highly inappropriate and very appropriate for a sense of 'this day and age'. Inappropriate because the spectacular is one of the oldest and often least sophisticated forms of popular entertainment and might be expected to die in a culture of universal literacy, technological sophistication and world-weary cynicism. Appropriate because so much of our everyday gadgetry seems designed to facilitate the transcendence of space and time with which spectacular entertainment was used to impress audiences in supposedly more gullible times. Therefore, some have argued that ours is a paradigmatic culture of the spectacle. The bulk of the thesis will locate the various modes of spectacular drama within the forms of life as an urbanising culture in the course of the nineteenth century changed into a culture of mass entertainment of the twentieth.



There is, as a contrast to provide a starting point, a briefer account of the forms and functions of spectacular drama in the entertainment and ceremonial life in British culture before the emergence of commercial theatres.

I have recognised at several points that spectacular drama is often condemned as vulgar display lacking any meaningful depths. One reason for this attitude is that the spectacular, perhaps because of its extra-ordinariness, frequently interrupts narrative development. In a culture in which individual authorship is taken to be a pre-requisite for artistic worth and in which narrative complexity is prized as a display of authorship, the collective tableau characteristics of spectacle seem crude and unsophisticated. The spectacular satiates our senses with illusions and in ways that do not encourage critical reflection: 'And spectacle - the spectator confronted by an image which is so fascinating that it seems complete; no longer the desire to move on, no longer the sense of something lacking; voyeurism blocked in a moment of fetishism.' (Higson 1984 p.3; see also Neale 1979). I shall of course try to argue that these attitudes depend upon specific aesthetic prejudices about the form and function of drama in general; but even in relation to unpretentious entertainment peremptory dismissiveness will lead to interesting complexity being ignored. A recent discussion of film musicals, a genre in which spectacular is frequently used in publicising self-descriptions and a genre in which extravagant entertainment is celebrated above all else, has used narrative organisation as a central device in interpreting the genre in ways that can help me develop a more coherent account of the nature of spectacular drama (Feuer 1982).

It is symptomatic of the self-absorption of spectacular entertainment, that it so often seems to be only a celebration of its own extravagance, that so many film musicals are about the staging of musical shows. The

obvious reason for this story-line is that it legitimates characters breaking into song and dance. The peculiarity of the show or film within the film format is that it disrupts the effortlessness that entertainers usually present, the business of making a show is shown to be productive labour: 'The musical appears to be constantly breaking through its own glossy surface, more like a modernist film is supposed to do.' (Feuer op. cit. p.47). The contrast immediately raises the question of why there is a stress on disruption in modernist drama, because: "'Distanciation", "estrangement", and "alienation effect" refer to techniques whereby the spectator is lifted out of her transparent identification with the story and forced to concentrate instead on the artifice through which the play or film has been made.' (op. cit. p.35). Feuer uses the example of Godard as someone who deliberately disrupts the seamlessness of Hollywood narratives in order to rupture the hegemony of consumerist consciousness. While Hollywood musicals will not, possibly with very rare exceptions, have been made with this purpose narrative complexity in these films must serve a different purpose. Feuer argues that the layering of narratives in musicals is designed to celebrate entertainment rather than discredit it. First through an illusion of live performance and more fundamentally through an illusion of shared community between performers and audiences.

The reason that an illusion of live performance is sought is partly because vitality is as we shall see a highly prized feature of the utopian world of the musical, and partly because to the extent that the cinema audience can be persuaded into a vicarious identification with the fictional audience in the film then the more the film becomes a shared experience: 'We are, as it were, lifted out of the audience we actually belong to (the cinema audience) and transported into another audience, one at once more alive and more ghostly.' (op. cit. p. 28). This fantasy identification is strengthened because the film also takes us backstage -

we see things through the eyes of the performers as well as the eyes of their putative audience. And not only do we share the performers' point of view but often the story turns around threats to the show that they are trying to mount so that their eventual success becomes our success in transcending the difficulties of an obdurate world. In one sense then this narrative organisation provides an opportunity for escapism for a mass audience, but also, almost paradoxically, it also provides a way of denying the very mass-ness of that audience. That is it seeks to overcome the alienation inherent in the viewing situation by providing a surrogate community for the anonymous crowd: 'the creation of community within the films cancels out the loss of community between Hollywood and its audience.' (op. cit. p.15). The community that has been lost is the stable integration of folk art, something that is produced and consumed within a shared social world: 'In basing its value system on community, the producing and consuming functions severed by the passage of musical entertainment from folk to popular to mass status are rejoined through the genre's rhetoric.' (op. cit. p.3).

I think that perhaps Feuer is guilty of some extent of taking this rhetoric too literally. It may be true that there is a strong theme in twentieth century discussion of musical authenticity to run together ideas of folk and populist nostalgia and the rhetoric of entertainment is certainly riddled with retropective sentimentalism, but, as Feuer goes on to make clear, the folkiness of the Hollywood musical is not often guilty of archaicism. Rather than idealise the values of small-town provincialism, as for example in contemporary films by Capra, the folk music of the musical offers youth, gaiety, spontaneity and above all glamour. Feuer notes how colour was first used in 1929 to heighten the extravagant feel of musical entertainment, and the genre was obviously dependent upon the introduction of sound; colour as a display of

fantasy was used in many early films as coloured sequences framing musical numbers. The community envisaged in the musical was to some extent then a harking back to the stability of real entertainment but it was more that through entertainment we can discover a transcendent community: 'The numbers in such films seem part of the real world, so that when the dream is finally realized and both worlds are united, we feel the thrill of the possibilities for Utopian solutions to the problems of ordinary life.' (op. cit. p.80).

The 'solutions' of commercial entertainment are ultimately illusory, however, in that they are unable to encompass the material constraints of socio-structural relationships. In Higson's study of spectacular townscape shots in British social realist films, which fascinatingly complements Feuer's account of musicals, he argues that such versions of place conjure a social history, a wealth of clichés about regionalism and communalism in British social formation in which: 'The city, apparently a place of poverty and squalor, becomes photogenic and dramatic. In becoming the spectacular object of a diegetic and spectatorial gaze - something precisely "to-be-looked-at" - it is emptied of socio-historical signification in a process of romanticisation, aestheticisation (even humanisation).' (1984 p.16). An internal tension between an emphasis upon 'kitchen-sink' authenticity as a prerequisite of social realism and an unwillingness to offend the consensualist norms of commercial cinema is resolved through an individualising poetic realism: 'It is only from a class position outside the city that the city can appear beautiful. ...To its inhabitants, however, the city can only be a problem: for the victim who desires to escape there can be no other view. ...the city as problem and the city as spectacle: it is only in the discourse of poetic realism that the difference can be held together.' (Higson op. cit. p.18). In the world of musicals the solutions are comparable in important respects except that the poetry of entertainment can offer

us nothing other than its own vision of itself: 'The Hollywood version of Utopia is entirely solipsistic. In its endless reflexivity the musical can offer only itself, only entertainment as its picture of Utopia.' (Feuer op. cit. p.84).

I have chosen to describe Feuer's account in some detail for two reasons. The first is that through her very careful discussion of Hollywood musicals she opens up some important questions about relationships between utopian representations and a sense of community. A danger in using utopian in this context is that it might suggest either or both carefully delineated dreams of superior realities and a promise of future possibility. Neither need be the case, the utopian promise can remain vague even nostalgic, an assertion of the imagination of possibility and thus a reminder that our social reality is not irredeemably constrained by the here-and-now. The utopianism of entertainment is a celebration of pleasure, an integration of the parts into the whole through the suppression of social tension and conflict - and as such points to an idealisation of community, an emphasis upon reconciliation and consensus. Which is why of course the spectacular is so closely linked with ceremonialisation, and particularly those ceremonies which are staged in order to legitimate the power and authority of elite groups. These more solemn forms of public drama open up such an enormous field that, unfortunately, I have very largely had to exclude them from my study of more self-consciously entertaining forms of spectacle.

The second reason for discussing a genre of spectacular cinema in the introduction is to acknowledge the intrinsic interest of the genre, while clarifying my reasons for not making the cultural form central to my overall account. The commercial cinema has more often than any other cultural form in the twentieth century used spectacular as a publicising gimmick, and would probably be the example most frequently cited by individuals in the street if they could be asked to give instances of

spectacular entertainment. One could expect then that the cinema would constitute a central resource for the thesis, and yet it is mainly discussed as a development of pictorial realism in nineteenth century theatre and the significant genres of commercial cinema in its heyday are not returned to in any detail. The reason for this is partly structural - I am not trying to provide a chronology of forms of spectacular drama, more contrasting paradigms, and therefore Chapter Three covers the nineteenth century while in Chapter Four I discuss a culture of mass entertainment largely developed since 1945. The intervening decades were really the period of the cinema's greatest popularity, when 'the cathedrals of the movies' were temples of popular culture (Atwell 1980). More importantly, though, it seems to me that the cultural form of the commercial cinema is an important bridge in the institutionalisation of mass culture. It links the theatricality of spectacular drama in the nineteenth century to the individualistic homogeneity of a de-centered mass culture.

The spectacular cinema was, as I have indicated, at its peak in the era of dream palaces (Richards 1984). These were sites for public fantasy, they were literally imaginative aberrations in a mundane environment. Although their era has passed there are other analogous sites for contemporary spectacle such as sports stadia, the elaborate hyperbole and theatrical imagery of rock concerts and particularly the decade of festivals, the imaginative excess of periodic exhibitions, trade fairs and other types of commercial festival, leisure shows as varied as son-et-lumiere dramatisations and theme parks, and the assertive grandeur of urban architecture whether commercial buildings or the trappings of state power. These are spectacular sites in contemporary culture but although new instances are still emerging (the recently opened garden park in Liverpool - perhaps with deliberate symbolism a

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transformation of a derelict industrial site into a leisure zone - has been hailed as a spectacular achievement), such sites are both survivors of earlier cultural forms uncomfortably anomalous in relation to their suburban hinterland, and also transformed in their relation to audiences in that they are now primarily significant through the vicarious participation of television. There are still spectacular films being made (as for example in the Star Wars series where almost deliberately archaic narratives are modernised through technological excess), but they are domesticated fantasies. Except for a few badly trimmed city centre 'entertainment centres' the commercial cinema has shrunk to little more than large living rooms. When television technology, which actually already exists but needs an international management structure, is able to improve the picture quality of domestic receivers so that picture size can stand enlargement, then the last rationale for a public cinema will have disappeared. All that will remain will be specialist circuits having more in common with chamber music societies than popular culture.

I have referred several times to the distinctiveness of a culture of mass entertainment. If I can anticipate the themes of Chapter Four, I am working towards a view of mass culture as a fictionalisation of public life. The logic of consumerism, in conjunction with successive advances in technologies of distribution which have meant that performances in all media are increasingly accessible through private ownership, and the ideology of popular democracy in which intermittent choices by a mass of individuals are the symbol of substance of a rhetoric of freedom, have all combined to evacuate community of any meaning and to elevate a privatisation of social experience. This is not the moral individualism of classical liberalism let alone existentialism, but the self-obsessed egocentricity of atomised fragments lacking a common ground to relate one to another. This is not a privatisation which, working from a critique of the necessary authoritarianism of the State, conceives an anarchic

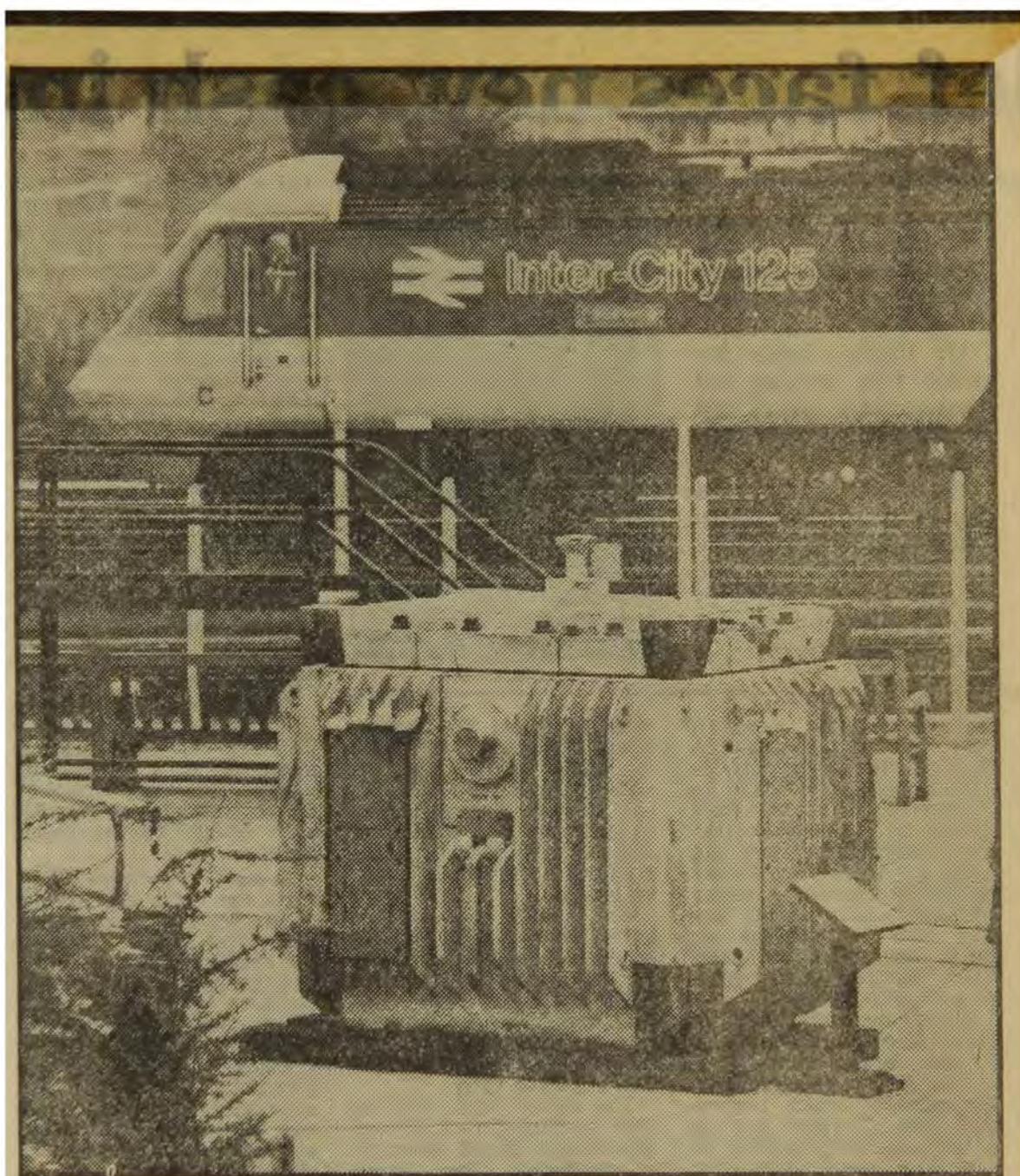
individualism; but a fragmentation of public life which paradoxically depends upon and contributes towards enormous and persistent increases in the power of metropolitan agencies. The middle ground which makes sense of the illusions of public concern, and which generates suburban conformity through a rhetoric of self-exploration and personal gratification, is the public drama of news and entertainment in which shared tastes and common interests provide illusions of collective identity as something more than marketing strategies.

In this perspective it is not so much that the fictions of mass culture are hegemonic in mystifying capitalist exploitation, but that the imagery of taste publics legitimates an overriding concern with the stability of national bureaucracies. I use the general term of national bureaucracies because it does not seem to matter very much about the differences between government departments, indirect agencies of State power such as the BBC, or commercial corporate organisations which may be either national concerns or local branches of multi-national corporations. The stability of the bureaucratic order (which is not the same as efficiency) of national organisations has become the end rather than the means, and in that sense the power elite is an interlocking managerial structure - an oligarchy of meritocracy and inheritance. In a culture in which the technology of change is used to mask the absence of change the rhetoric of politics becomes the management of imagery. Political leadership is marketed as any other consumer choice. The community is represented in innumerable forms, but always as imaginative display. The contrasts between dramatisation in a culture of mass entertainment and the theatricality of public life in the nineteenth century form a major theme in my account.

In discussing the spectacular style of the Hollywood musical I argue that the commercial cinema, as an important home for spectacular drama in the twentieth century, acted in some ways as a bridge between the

popular culture of industrial cities and the mass culture of metropolitan society. This sense of a means and manner of representation changing through different cultural contexts might suggest that the spectacular is merely a convenient label for what audiences in different eras find extraordinary. Are there recurrent features to the many ways of displaying the extraordinary which allow us to recognise continuities between changing cultural forms? Once again in part anticipating the substantive accounts in succeeding chapters, and in part explaining the selection of material in those chapters, I think there are certain features which are important guides to the topic. In order to ground the discussion I will use a particular example, which like all illustrations suffers from the disadvantage of being arguably unrepresentative, but does focus the points. The example is a train crash staged by Central Electricity Generating Board when a locomotive was deliberately crashed into a stationary goods train containing a container of radioactive waste. It might be argued that the example is inappropriate because it was not staged to be entertaining but to reassure the public about the strength of the packaging used by the CEGB. (There is, however, an intriguing echo in this case of a briefly popular form of spectacular entertainment at the end of the nineteenth century when trains were deliberately crashed together, see Moy 1978). Despite its informational function, however, the crash was uniformly reported in the press and on broadcasts as a spectacular sight and/or spectacular show and therefore seems to qualify as grist to the mill.

The train crash was a media event in that it was something staged to be filmed and reported. It was a very crude exemplification of the adage that 'seeing is believing'; but more generally it conforms to my point made at the beginning of the chapter that the spectacular is primarily a visual display. It is though more a display abstracted from context. What the viewers saw on their television screens was the last



**MUSEUM PIECE:** The nuclear flask which survived being hit by a 140-ton locomotive travelling at 100 mph in July in a spectacular display of its strength, has been put on display at the National Railway Museum at York.

few seconds when the train impacted on its target. There was no attempt to provide a dramatic narrative to make sense of why this train should have been on the same line as its target and why the crash was not prevented. It was I know a worst possible scenario and therefore there was no need for a framing narrative. The point, however, is that the moments leading up and including impact take on the quality of a tableau. It is an elaborately staged piece of dramatic business, something frozen almost in its own space and time. The tableau perspective is important because it links back to so much else that we can think of as dramatic spectacle such as firework displays on State occasions, elaborate processions and the tableaux of the melodramatic stage. The purpose of the tableau perspective in spectacular entertainment is the privilege that it confers on the onlooker; the spectator is given a way of seeing what could otherwise not be visualised. The audience is flattered and entertained by its privileged access, the visual excess is stunning it doesn't need to be explained. Another aspect of the audience's privilege in their perspective is that the spectacular is necessarily a public staging. It is not an intimate mode such as the novel's development from the diary and the letter, the show is necessarily indiscriminate in its appeal. Which links to another aspect which might be thought to run counter to the idea of privilege in access. This is that only to a limited degree can the audience be structured in terms of status. The scale of the display means that all who are members of the audience will have more or less equivalently good views; this is obviously true when the spectacle becomes accessible through television but is equally true of an urban festival. The idea that the audience is a community of equals is perhaps why the staging of spectacles has frequently been a device to distract the common people, the mob, from their dissatisfactions. It has been seen as a circus for the unsophisticated, which is of course what many thought of the reassurance supposedly

offered by the CEGB crash.

There are other features to spectacular imagery which flow from what I have called the tableau perspective. These all relate to the very immediate impact of the performance, what we might call its visceral appeal. There is something morbid and self-questioning about the ease with which disasters can acquire an audience. Whether it is to visit a site where tragedy has occurred, or to see somebody at a moment of extreme crisis such as photographs of people jumping from a building or at the moment of being shot, or to watch television film of the wreckage of disaster. There seem to be a mixture of emotions which fascinate - what must the exceptional be like? , how would I behave - would I be up to it?, and how must they have felt when they realised that they were no longer spectators but participants in tragedy? Of course this vicarious excitement is not restricted to disasters but can also operate for successful accomplishments. Whatever the emotion the spectacle very often offers some way into the heart of the mixture of fascination and fear. The complexity of response is, however, not often addressed in the display. Instead ambiguities are ironed out - participants in the drama are given simple characterisations and the morality is resolved with clarity and finality. Such a prescriptive morality may work at a number of levels so that it becomes a complex set of associations. For example, behind the simple reassurance offered by the train crash lay a more general reassurance that the State and more particularly its technological divisions, in this case the CEGB, has our best interests as its central concern. Not only does it know best it has anticipated our worries before we've even thought of them. More generally still we can see this type of display as a mythological re-working of technocratic optimism whose critics are sentimental traditionalists (c.f. Barthes 1972 for myths' enshrinement in specific images). In addition

then we can say that spectacular imagery works through its verisimilitude - we have to believe that this in important respect is what it looked like. I have said that narrative is usually subordinate in this type of display and another way of putting this is to say that the narrative works through iconic representation; lacking the freedom of extrapolation through metaphor or more symbolic imagery, the force of spectacular narratives is concentrated in highly charged images which seem almost transparent in their directness.

Spectacular drama can only work in these ways through presuppositions about what the audience can accept and understand. This in one sense is true of all fictional performances but the force, immediacy and scale of spectacular forms mean that they trade upon what the community takes for granted about itself. Spectacular discourse is therefore a display of the community, it is populist in that it speaks to the heart of collective identity. And this I think is why spectacles are so often dismissed as meretricious and illusory. They run counter to the authorial mode in high art in West European culture, a set of values in which individualism, reflection and complexity are highly prized. Spectacular drama is vulgar because it speaks to the core of communal 'we-ness' and thus challenges the foundations of conventional aesthetics. In the chapters which follow I shall try to give some sense of the ways in which spectacular drama has provided a distinctive fictional frame for representing social experience.



APPENDIX - CHAPTER ONE

When commencing work on this study I collected every instance of the use of either spectacular or spectacle that I came across for a couple of weeks. I could not then or now write a list of the meaning of the words that this variety of usages showed me, but I believe these instances generated trains of thought which have influenced what I have gone on to write. I therefore thought it might be helpful to reproduce these instances - emphasising their arbitrariness.

'But Cup Match is more than a spectacular sports event, Attended by some 10,000 persons - a third of the black population - it is the occasion, in the words of one informant: "when we eat everything in Bermuda, and spend everything in Bermuda".' (F.E. Manning: Cup Match and Carnival in S.F. Moore and B.G. Myerhoff (eds) (1977): Secular Ritual Van Gorcum, Amsterdam p.266)

'Hibernians current attempt at signing up the wayward genius of George Best, who occupied a seat in the directors' box at Easter Road., still does not disguise the most spectacular derailment of the season thus far, that of the Edinburgh club itself.' (Observer newspaper 11/11/79 p.32)

'Three minutes later Henry made spectacular amends as City sent the blue scarves among the 50,000 crowd into ecstasies with a goal.' (Observer newspaper 11/11/79 p.32)

'This is where the anarchical state of science in general comes from, a state that has been noted not without exaggeration, but which is particularly true of these specific sciences. They offer the spectacle of an aggregate of disjointed parts which do not concur.' (E. Durkheim (1964): The Division of Labour Free Press of Glencoe, Illinois p.368)

'Pageantry is public drama of the civitas, and the ideological heart of the Santa Fe Fiesta is the De Vargas Entrada, a re-enactment of the events of 1692. The Entrada is a pageant, a public spectacle, in which the relations between various symbols are enacted in a dramatic process;'

(R.L. Grimes (1976): Symbol and Conquest p.152

'the ethos of public drama is spectacular and thus more akin to Hollywood in its staging than to either folk or artistic drama.' (R.L. Grimes op. cit. pp.152-3)

'In his remarkable book The Warriors, J. Glenn Gray has described a military man's delight in war as a spectacle, in the energy of danger, in the pleasure of watching destruction, and in the virtue of self-sacrifice for the group.' (A. Sinclair in Sight and Sound Autumn 1979 p.234).

'My notes give an exactness to the definition of routine home entertainment. cocktail parties and spectaculars that in most cases is there. Although there are ambiguously defined social events in the gay community most are clearly patterned and understood. A spectacular may be mixed but it is always large, lavish and unusual; a cocktail party is sizable, relatively unusual, and spans a short time period. Both are announced by invitation. A routine home entertainment is much more frequent.' (C. Warren (1974): Identity and Community in the Gay World Wiley, New York p.55)

'The most spectacular aspect of the explorer's role was not in simply examining and writing about the lives of the poor, but becoming temporarily one of them.' (P.J. Keating (1976): Introduction to Into Unknown England 1866-1913 p.16)

'What is the meaning behind the late 1970's media wave of spectacular fairy-tale films such as The Lord of the Rings, Superman and Watership Down?'

(J. Zipes (1979): Breaking the Magic Spell Heinemann, London p.121)

'Anyone who's ever scowled at the inclusion of Manet in a book on Impressionism or wondered where Van Gogh ends and expressionism begins will be heartened by the spectacle of scholarly card-houses tumbling down around their builders' feet.' (W. Januszczak in Guardian 17/11/79)

'Thursday's 2-0 victory over a moribund Bulgarian team at Wembley was competent rather than spectacular, Hoddle's goal notwithstanding.'  
(D. Lacey in Guardian 24/11/79)

'They (gin places) were, as Dickens noted, "invariably numerous and splendid in precise proportion to the dirt and poverty of the surrounding neighbourhood". But in that they were vast as well as spectacular they offered some solution to the problem of the spatial as well as the social limitations of town life. (P. Bailey (1978): Leisure and Class in Victorian England Routledge and Kegan Paul, London p.16).

'When you get up high and can really see these views (in the Lake District) they're really spectacular.' (Gerry Peacock 1/2/79)

'The Aesthetic movement was itself manifold, with a utilitarian wing concerned to redeem everyday life and its instruments through applied art, and a spectacular autotelic wing, proclaiming art independent of ordinary life and moral utility.' (M. Meisel (1978): The Aesthetic Dialogue in Pre-Raphaelite Painting in U.C. Knoepflmacher and G.B. Tennyson (eds): Nature and the Victorian Imagination California University Press)

'It might be said that in the closing number ...the sound is just a little too resonant, but the sense of spectacle throughout this recording is something to marvel at.' (Penguin Stereo Record Guide 2nd. ed. p.820)

'Also they (public executions) were held at dawn instead of in the afternoons. Various reasons were given by the authorities for these changes, but

the general idea seems to have been to make the death of a criminal a sordid, degrading, surreptitious event, as opposed to a public spectacle which conferred a certain status on the victim.' (G. Day (1979): The Camera Against the Paris Commune in Photography/Politics One p.26).

'Now on BBC 1 the glamour and spectacle of Holiday on Ice - our annual skating spectacular.' (BBC announcer 5/1/80)

'Skiing in Summit Country. Alistair Horne goes to the spectacular slopes of Colorado' (Headlines in Observer magazine 6/1/80 p.49)

'The initially spectacular avalanche aside, Ronald Neame comes close to convincing that ...a new Ice Age is at hand.' (John Pym in Monthly Film Bulletin 1980 p.9)

'Spectacular First Year for Sacriston Colliery Bank - 1979 was a year to remember for Sacriston Colliery Band'(Headline in Durham Advertiser 18/1/80)

'Greek Fire and Furies - A Euripidean Spectacular opens at the Aldwych. Michael Coveney reports overleaf.' (Observer magazine 3/2/80 p.29)

'Whoopee! Frankie Stein Holiday Special TIME TRAVEL SPECTACULAR! Includes 4 long pic-stories starring the mirth-quaking monster himself as a great timetraveller! It must be the freakiest fun special ever!' (Buster and Monster Fun 12/5/79)

'Olympic Grandstand - Men's Downhill, Thursday 6.45 BBC 1. Fast and spectacular, the Men's Downhill opens the Winter Olympic Alpine competitions.' (Radio Times 9-15 Feb. 1980 p.80)

'Steel Strikers' "Spectacular" Blow to Industry - Mr. John Biffen, one of the cabinet's leading monetarist hawks, last night accused the striking steel workers of causing "spectacular de-industrialisation".' (The Guardian 16/2/80 p.3)

'We can now return to the meaning of youth subcultures, for the emergence of such groups has signalled in a spectacular fashion the breakdown of consensus in the post-war period.' (R. Hebdige (1979): Subculture Methuen, London, p.17)

'When I was in Italy I soon realized that here was a country with a remarkable theatre, a theatre endowed with an astonishing "director", a theatre on which masses of money are lavished, a theatre of extraordinary power, a theatre of impressive ceremony, a theatre with a unique flavour. No theatre can hope to compete against such odds; hungry for spectacle, the population greedily snaps up the bait dangled before it. I say the "population" intentionally, implying the mass of the people without any social distinction. The Pope, that theatre manager and artistic director in the Vatican, occasionally puts on a show of such opulence, and staged with such theatrical skill that even the most confirmed atheist comes running to see it. I mean the ceremonial appearance of the Pope, the religious processions, the gradiose illuminations and firework displays; I mean all those barriers erected to control both the masses straining to kiss the hand of the Pope and the masses straining anxiously to keep as far away from him as possible. In one such day everybody is caught up in the sensational spectacle, rather like the very rare occasions here - perhaps once in two or three years and then, for some reason, only in Leningrad - when a mass performance is organised in which not only the actors but the masses, too, are direct participants. In Rome the crowds are drawn irresistibly to the Pope's spectacles, to see in motion a machine which is controlled by masters of the theatre who understand the power of spectacle.' (V. Meyerhold in E. Braun (ed) (1979): Meyerhold on Theatre Methuen, London p.261).

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CHAPTER TWO

Spectacular Dramaturgy in a Culture Without Theatres

The first definition of the term spectacle in the Oxford English Dictionary is: 'A specially prepared or arranged display of a more or less public nature (esp. one on a large scale), forming an impressive or interesting show or entertainment for those viewing it.' The first two illustrations of usage are taken from fourteenth century sources: 'Hoppygne & daunceygne of tumblers and herlotis, and other spectakils' (1340), and 'In comygen spectacle there me stood to beholde playes & some newe thinges' (1387). The concept of spectacle is closely bound up with the conventions of theatricality but is not entirely subsumed within those conventions. I have chosen to discuss spectacular dramaturgy in later medieval England because there were no buildings designed and solely used as theatres at that time. I hope that a very general discussion of dramatic forms in a culture without theatres will help to clarify some aspects of the nature of spectacular drama.

I have labelled the period to be described as later medieval and mean by that roughly the fifteenth century. In an overwhelmingly rural society social change is considerably more gradual than in urban-industrial society, and I have therefore felt justified in taking some illustrative material from earlier than 1400, and recognise that many of the features I shall point to persisted well after 1500. I have, however, concentrated on the fifteenth century as there was a more sophisticated and more flourishing range of popular drama then than earlier, and at the same time it precedes the emergence of an occupational category of identifiable writers earning their living writing theatrical dramas. The latter development reaching a peak with the era of extraordinary creativity in the commercial theatre of later Elizabethan and early Stuart dramatists.

Such were the achievements of these playwrights, and the fact that their theatrical conventions were substantially considerably more 'modern' than their predecessors, that it has been conventional to consider later medieval drama as a necessary stage in evolutionary development. Speaking of this type of perspective Davenport asserts that it: 'always looked phony and it is a relief to be able to discard it and to accept the more plausible modern view that the English mystery cycles were created by educated, literary men in the later fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries out of a combination of existing traditions of drama and religious material in sermons, instruction-books, scriptural summaries and paraphrases, commentaries and lyrics.' (1982 p.1).

The drama of the fifteenth century was not exclusively religious in content, however, although I will recurrently stress the dramatic indeed secular aspects of religious rites and the centrality of religious imagery in secular narratives and entertainments. In addition to the dramatisation of Biblical narratives other dramatic forms which were central to the culture were traditions of popular entertainment, ceremonials and celebrations marking significant points in the communal calendar and what can be described as the magnificence of power - the importance in feudal society of displays of wealth and power as dramatised metaphors for the virtues of social order. As an example of a powerful dramatic metaphor we can note the chivalric ethos of the tournament: 'it has been claimed that the tournament was the source of much dramatic imagery employed in court and street theatre presentations.... Although chivalric conflict could become a deadly earnest affair, the lists became a natural setting for symbolic games of make-believe, to which allegorical scenic devices, inscriptions, costumes, action, impersonation, and even dialogue contributed.' (Tydeman 1978 p. 87). A central theme in this chapter will be that this was a particularly dramatic culture in that relationships

between the sexes, between social castes and between the living and the universe of spiritual life were continually enacted through heightened self-conscious stylisations which dramatised the grounds of everyday experience.

Drama in a culture without theatres has different significance from what has become conventional in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The essence of the difference is a transformation of the dramatic metaphor, an inversion of dramatic perspective in which social and physical forms are employed to different purposes. In a theatrical culture we associate dramatic entertainment with specific buildings usually designed and built for this purpose, drama is something encapsulated within a specific site or mode of presentation. In late medieval Britain, although a relatively complex society still sharing more with other tribal and agrarian cultures than modern society, the dramatic was not something contained within a particular setting but adapted settings as resources for a more general perspective. A perspective within which the security of communal bonds could ground various forms of play: 'There is a play of symbol-vehicles, leading to the construction of bizarre masks and costumes from elements of mundane life now conjoined in fantastic ways. There is a play of meanings, involving the reversal of hierarchical orderings of values and social statuses. There is a play with words resulting in the generation of secret initiatory languages, as well as joyful or serious punning.' (Turner 1982 p.85). One way of describing the difference in perspective is to say that instead of being something looked in upon drama was a way of looking out at fundamental truths and values.

The difference in dramatic metaphors is the main reason why it would be inappropriate to draw clear distinctions between religious and

secular dramas and/or settings. The church as a celebration of faith was itself a spectacular dramatisation of communal beliefs. The medieval church should be seen as a site in which every feature is functional for the meaning of the faith. The church was a setting in which the architecture, carvings, paintings and speech as well as ritual ceremonies, were all designed to display the mysteries of the stories used as explanations of experience (Anderson 1963). The church did more than merely adapt items of everyday secular experience to show a deeper meaning otherwise hidden, it provided a dramatic organisation for the transformation of reality within a perspectival frame in which every constitutive element was part of a more inclusive dramatic narrative than its immediate referent. Dramatic performances of those stories was not therefore confined to a particular area of experience; and thus the vulgarity of vernacular entertainment was neither confined to secular narratives nor inappropriate in a religious drama: 'It should be added that so long as the feast of Corpus Christi continued to exert any influence on the cycles represented, the terms "religious" as opposed to "secular" are meaningless.' (Kahrl 1974 p.43). But perhaps more importantly, the dramatic mode of religious experience was, even if heightened, not a qualitatively different form of instruction through display than other institutionalised values, and religious celebrations remained at the core of what developed into quite secular festivities.

Another way in which the Church structured everyday experience was through its forms of temporal order. That is the succession of services during the day, and festivals across the Church calendar, as well as the dramatic structure of any particular service (performance): 'the liturgy of the medieval Church provided for the daily singing of no less than seven "offices" or canonical "hours", ...These services, chanted by officiating priests, cantors, and choir, offered many features outwardly

resembling those of dramatic presentation. The church building provided an enclosed space with entrance-ways and fixed structures such as the altar. Clerical robes were often colorful and symbolic. Processions gave opportunity for pageant-like movement with musical accompaniment. Chanting was often antiphonal - that is, with one voice or group of voices answering one another in an exchange somewhat resembling dialogue. The words that were chanted often came from biblical narrative, providing a potential element of plot.' (Bevington 1975 p.3). The Church was therefore more than a stage it was a form of narrative which dramatised everyday experience and incorporated it in the domain of myth. It is in an analogous sense that I do not think it far-fetched to see the organisation of village and urban calendars, through festivals celebrating the changing seasons and patron saints of guilds and districts etc., as a narrative structure. Through the symbols manipulated, the rites performed, the elements of social structure played with, in all these ways fundamental relationships between community and habitat were being dramatised.

The difference in dramatic metaphor between medieval and contemporary culture also underlies the complexity of realism in dramatic representation. It has frequently been noted that there was a seemingly indiscriminate mixture of tones or registers within late medieval drama. Scenes of very vulgar naturalistic conversation between Biblical characters were placed within an idealising religious narrative, and/or scenes of farce and buffoonery were mixed with depictions of moments of great symbolic significance. An example is the Crucifixion from the York cycle when the soldiers who have been assigned the task of nailing Jesus to the Cross are shown going about their work in a very naturalistic manner. To the point of having to solve the macabre problem that the holes previously set in the Cross are too far apart for Jesus' body and

therefore his limbs have to be stretched to accommodate them. One might have recourse to the type of evolutionary perspective mentioned earlier and see these characteristics as the uncertainties and crudities of an emergent cultural form which would reach maturity in late Elizabethan drama. Not only is this idea of development inadequate to account for the different types of drama that have survived, it also mistakes the significance of realistic elements. Naturalistic portrayals of Biblical characters, such as a conversation between a hen-pecked Noah and his wife, were a bridge for the audience across which they could move from personal experience to a grasp of abstract truths: 'The appropriate test for dramatic verisimilitude is not whether it is or is not like the idealised forms of the High Gothic, or whether it represents accurately everyday medieval life. Rather the test is whether or not that verisimilitude, no matter how shocking, serves a purpose in the play one is considering.' (Kahrl 1974 p.89; in general see Chapters 4 and 5). The purpose of medieval drama was to build upon a world known in common and which displayed communal certainties in order to invest everyday experience with symbolic significance.

Drama in medieval culture was not therefore less sophisticated than twentieth century drama - the relationships between characters and narrative and setting were framed and organised differently. The audience in appreciating these relationships had to work with different conventions of representation, which were themselves governed by the purpose of communal reassurance rather than individual empathy. This does not mean that there was no concern with identification in dramatic performance: 'Both the Corpus Christi plays and the moral interludes seek to involve the spectator in the life of the play as far as possible, to provide opportunities for him to identify with the characters of the play so that he may more fully grasp the nature of the doctrinal message

purveyed, the "sentence" as well as the "solace".' (Kahrl op. cit. p.103); but the dramatic universe opened up by the performance was not a bounded sphere clearly distinct from everyday experience - it was indissolubly intertwined with the order of social normality and was part of the apprehension and understanding of that reality. It was in this sense that the boundaries of the theatrical were not clearly marked off from but interspersed with other man-made structures of the urban community. For example the mode of presentation which Tydeman calls 'mansion-staging' and Kahrl 'place and scaffold' involved sophisticated appreciation of a number of narrative strands held together by audience appreciation: 'Its essential feature is the simultaneous appearance on the playing-site of a number of juxtaposed scenic locations... grouped around or across an open playing-area... frequently but not inevitably on its periphery, and remaining in view throughout the action, during which several locations might be in use concurrently.' (Tydeman op. cit. p.57). One way in which this structure might be affected is to have a number of raised platforms surrounding a playing area from which characters either spoke or descended to the main area. Further enhancing the complexity of these arrangements is the evidence that spectators might share such platforms with performers, presumably falling quiet when their stage was 'in action'.

The indeterminate framing of dramatic performance that is obvious from the description of place and scaffold staging is not peculiar to that type of staging. In the same way that place and scaffold staging often took place in either church yards or abutting onto church doorways so that performers and the performance could quite naturally spill back into a more precisely defined religious environment, other types of staging bled into and adapted normal uses of their settings. For example the wandering bands of jugglers, minstrels, acrobats and mummers etc., could quickly take



over a town square or village street as a site to attract an audience. And when they had an opportunity to entertain a more noble audience their performance had to be easily adaptable to the limitations of the particular baronial hall or banqueting room in which they were to perform. The other main type of staging that more nearly corresponds to our understanding of dramatic performance, what Kahrl calls 'station-to-station', again took place in the street but this time on wheeled pageants and the performance developed from a tradition of tableaux vivants rather than dramatisation of the liturgy: 'At Whitsun, and especially on Corpus Christi day, plays from a religious cycle would be allotted individually to particular trade guilds... One the day of the festival, performances would begin in the early morning, with the first play of the cycle being performed on a pageant at the first of a number of known stations in the streets. ...the place in front of the pageant - usually the open street or the square - would also be used for important parts of the action.' (Williams 1972 pp.38-9). Logistical problems have led Kahrl to suggest that not all of the plays in the cycle could have been presented at each station, and perhaps not more than twice on a particular day: 'The result of such a procedure would be that everyone would be able to enjoy the colour and excitement of the elaborate pageant wagons; they would see all the scenes in the cycle, and perceive as much of the conception as they would from stained-glass windows, or wall paintings, except that these representations would more often than not be tableaux vivants.' (1974 p.46)

The cultural form of the procession was of central importance in late medieval dramaturgy. The most spectacular processions, those of Royal entries to important cities, were the most extravagant and often involved a mixture of triumphal arches, pageant stages and elaborately engineered temporary structures laden with symbolic devices. I shall discuss these

entries more fully below in relation to the politics of spectacle in this culture, but extravagance was not limited to royal occasions. The idea of a procession as a ritual celebration could also be exploited to proclaim the discomfiture of enemies as for example: 'at the execution of Farrell, a follower of Robert the Bruce, who was led through Cheapside in mockery, dressed as a Summer Lord, with a garland of leaves on his head, to his death beside the Tower;' (Bradbrook 1962 p.26). The religious parallels in this type of procession were probably not explicit but to the extent that they were implied, a solemnity was added together with association of ritual and sacrifice.

The processional form could also be used for more pragmatic purposes. For example, there are numerous reports which have survived of tableaux and impromptu staged performances lining the routes of nobility in order to articulate specific grievances - such as the decline in fortunes of a town or the exodus of mercantile capital and skilled artisans. A narrator was often present commenting on and interpreting the performed scenes with a suitably dignified rhetorical mode, so that the performers and their sponsors could rely upon him to point the moral and interpret the symbolism of their more secular complaints. At whatever level of moral and political purpose the procession with its accompanying street furniture and different modes of performance, and whether the sponsoring patron was aristocratic or bourgeois, an intrinsic feature of the occasion was expressed through conspicuous expenditure on staging, costumes, music and decorations etc. Referring to the English Corpus Christi cycles Bevington concludes that, although it seems that productions varied between communities and over the years: 'Whatever the mode of production, cycle drama was a splendid affair. The Church offered a store of rich vestments, and the craft guilds supplied special costuming needs such as white leather tights for Adam and Eve or a gilded face for God. The actors were often

professional and were well paid for their services. ...The riding of the "banns" or proclamations giving advance publicity, was an ornately festive occasion. .. Although rehearsals were few in number owing to the familiarity of the play, costs were generally lavish.' (1975 p.239).

The most spectacular processions of medieval culture were not those that traversed the known terrain of a particular town or city, but those that mobilised a community of believers to embark upon a pilgrimage. Those to the Holy Land had a very characteristic mixture of military and religious goals. Pilgrimages such as the Crusades were clearly dramatic occasions when a huge cast was assembled journeying to the wonder and terror of spectators (a justified terror as all the Crusades wreaked more havoc on Christian peasantry than the infidels), and staging intermittent climatic performances such as beseiging towns and castles. Some Crusades seem to have been conceived by theatrical showmen only concerned with spectacular panache, as for example the doomed voyage by thousands of German virgins. The experience of pilgrimage was on a smaller scale than that in that it was undertaken in small groups who would not themselves have attracted much attention. The dramatic resonance of the pilgrimage lies in its relationship with the structures of everyday experience. The pilgrim abstracts his/herself from normal constraints in order to become accessible to purification, to display suitability for re-admittance, and to affirm values held in common throughout Europe above the cultural specificities of each community.

The pilgrim is therefore dramatically displaying the core concerns of their culture; they are articulating a root metaphor in order that the community which grounds a social structure can be perceived and celebrated (c.f. Turner 1974 Chapter 5 and Turner and Turner 1978). Thus although the pilgrimage represents a period of licensed freedom, a space for alternative identity outside conventional constraints and obligations,

the redemptive power of the achievement is not just for the individual but acts for the community which sanctions the sacrifice: 'the health and integrality of the individual is indissoluble from the peace and harmony of the community; solitude and society cease to be antithetical.' (Turner op. cit. p.203). In this context it is unsurprising that the pilgrimage or journey becomes such a powerful organising metaphor for experience in medieval culture. In one form as a narrative structure as in Chaucer, in another as the basis for seemingly autonomous activities such as towns and fairs set up at specific points on routes and at special points in religious calendars. Turner suggests that pilgrimages threw up a communications net that made developments in capitalism possible and viable. It would, however, be a mistake to see the dramatic form of the pilgrimage as a source of cultural innovation. Although it is outside conventional social arrangements the primary thrust of the pilgrimage is to defend known verities against the rationalising scepticism of individualism, it is an assertion of the community over the fragmentation of individual consciousness.

I have described this as a dramatic culture for two reasons: first, that drama was inherent in the modes of organisation of communal life; and secondly, because different forms of drama were not clearly bounded from everyday experience but an unquestioned extension of that experience. Appreciation of drama did not depend then on a clear and unbridgeable distinction between performer and audience, nor on a straightforward subordination of the performer to the dramatic identity of their role. One consequence of the salience of drama for this culture was that, almost paradoxically, the idea of a play - that is as a representation of an almost autonomous piece of social reality which could be overheard - only emerged with the development of professional dramatists (c.f. Righter 1982; and

Bethell 1944).

In order to appreciate the dynamics of drama in this type of culture we have to bear in mind that it was predominantly a non-literate culture. There are of course recurrent debates about the extent of functional literacy by the sixteenth century - for example, one might point to the requirement by guilds of literacy before admission to apprenticeship or the extent of the market for printed literature (Wright 1935) - but in practice the form of the social world was still largely sustained by customs and traditions orally handed down (Coleman 1981 especially Chapter 4). Hawkes has vigorously argued that it is a prejudice of our own literate biases that has led to a search to try and find literacy ever earlier to describe a culture as illiterate is to condemn it to primitivism. We should instead appreciate the positive features of an oral culture: 'In terms of the present argument, non-literacy and "way of life" are coterminous; the one is not a lack whose necessities impose on the other. Non-literacy is rather the fully sufficient mode of an ancient way of life for whose participants no alternative could have been conceivable.' (Hawkes 1973 pp.44-5). If Shakespeare's audience: 'retained, as we have not, what Walter J. Ong calls an "oral set of mind"; a response to the world very different from that which we would regard as normal.' (op. cit. p.49), how much more would this be true of popular appreciation of fifteenth-century drama.

In medieval drama the audience was not only part of the performance as we have seen, but the performers quite naturally 'broke frame' in the sense of directly addressing the audience and it was also common for performers to improvise in their parts. Davison argues that this looseness of dramatic frame was not peculiar to medieval drama but is a recurrent feature of popular drama and constitutes one end of a continuum of dramatic experience, at the other end of which is the dream world of suspended

disbelief: 'two kinds of dramatic experience which might be called, in different contexts, legitimate and illegitimate, overheard and direct address; theatre de boulevard and music hall; scripted drama and what Falstaff calls "a play extempore"' (1982 p.2). Davison goes on to argue that the complexity of framing for dialogue and action characteristic of popular drama, did not disappear from the theatrical stage with the restoration of theatre in 1660. It only became confined to popular entertainment with the abolition of the Patent Theatre Monopoly in 1843: 'the legitimate theatre becoming a middleclass institution, in style, if not wholly in make-up' (op. cit. p.11). I will discuss this second point more directly in the next chapter, the reason for emphasising the complexity of response demanded by medieval drama is that it has implications for relationships between role and identity and thereby the different forms of dramatisation in different eras of spectacular imagery.

In his account of the historical significance of the development of codes of conduct clustered around the concept of manners, Elias has argued that it depended upon an individualism which articulated the possibility of a distinction between role and identity - performance and the person (1978). Prior to an individualistic ethos dramatic imagery could be personified through masks as icons of identity and occasions given significance through elaborate ceremonialisation. Tydeman quotes some remarks of Huizinga's to good effect in this context: 'it was not merely the great facts of birth, marriage and death which, by the sacredness of the sacrament, were raised to the rank of mysteries: incidents of less importance, like a journey, a task, a visit, were equally attended by a thousand formalities: benedictions, ceremonies, formulas.' (1978 p.86). It seems that in more communal societies the grounds of social order were continually re-emphasised through elaborate codes of interpersonal interaction. These codes provided for

a spectacular dramatisation of the relationship and its legitimating norms. A dramatisation in which there does not seem to have been a possible distinction between role, actor and private individual.

In the use of masks and ceremonial formulae the force of the imagery was motivated by allegory in which the particular exemplifies the general. Allegory was of central significance as the intellectual form through which the meaning of spectacle could be explicated - in the moral dramas of the pageant stage as well as the more elaborate entertainments of the ruling elite. In early court entertainments the re-staging of famous historical occasions such as the taking of Jerusalem was largely spectacle for its own sake. In later pageants the narrative was more often taken from mythical fables than historical occasions and the characters depicted were abstractions of virtues and vices largely taken from classical mythology and literature. Allegory was both a mode of dramatisation for abstract concepts whether religious or philosophical, and a mode of argumentation. Through the use of allegorical figures complicated arguments could be expressed in an extended metaphor often itself based on a further metaphor of the extended journey or conflict. It is relatively short step from using allegory as a dramatic form for moral enquiry to exploiting that form as a way of satirising opponents or propagandising the virtues of a particular cause. This type of moral drama could be performed at the table of a great lord, at a gathering of nobles and intellectuals, in a guildhall, or in a courtyard of an inn. A tradition of mumming continued alongside these staged debates which provided opportunities for trouble-making through being rowdy, undisciplined and possibly blasphemous: 'in 1414 Sir John Oldcastle and the Lollards were accused of using a mumming at Eltham "to have destryste the Kynge and Hooly Churche",' (Tydeman 1978 p.75).

In such dramatisations of enquiry the spectacle gradually became subordinate to the text.

The illuminating power of allegory could also be detected in medieval culture in the dramatic potential of social context. In addition to the formalisation of everyday experience, the environment and particularly the city were imbued with dramatic force. Not only was the scale of numbers of people greater than a peasant could believe, the range of buildings and the possibilities for extravagance were so enormous that the city itself became a stage open to be exploited by charismatic figures able to ride the willingness of the mob to sublimate itself in spectacle. Sennett has discussed the brief career of the Florentine preacher Savonarola in a way that is relevant to this theme. He suggests that initial power of the preacher lay in urging: 'his audience to treat the city as a stage on which, with great pomp and ceremony, Florentines could engage in acts which would symbolise their goodness. The most famous of these acts was the burning of "vanities".' (1975 p.174). Having mobilised the power of dramatic spectacle Savonarola had to sustain the performance. When challenged by jealous rivals he agreed to take part in a trial by ordeal from which his challengers ultimately fled. The frustrated crowd did not draw the rational moral but turned on Savonarola and ritually degraded and tortured him because what the charismatic leader: 'gives them is not just his person, but a situation in which they can act consistently.' (op. cit. p.178). If this situation cannot be sustained then the nature of dramatic spectacle is called into question and the form of the social order has to be ritually re-enacted.

I have described some of the main forms of drama in late medieval culture and introduced some aspects of their cultural significance. In order to clarify what I see to be the significance of spectacular imagery in these forms of drama I shall now briefly describe aspects of spectacular forms in four areas of institutionalised activity - religious teaching and



celebration; commercial entertainment; political, largely monarchical, displays; and folk festivals and celebrations.

Before doing so it is necessary to briefly amplify two points made earlier. The first is that we impose our own cultural preconceptions that the theatre can be segregated from everyday life as a form of literature, and thus see dramatic forms as vehicles for the polemics of faction or interest groups. In late medieval culture social institutions and their constitutive web of relationships were concretised through dramatic imagery: 'a predominantly oral culture enacted its own "shape" through a drama which constituted a formal realisation of its own language. In that drama, the unity of language and way of life was both manifested and reinforced by dramatic argument.' (Hawkes 1973 p.216). This is not to say that the culture was immutably stable. There were processes of change and as I shall attempt to demonstrate the transformation of dramatic responsibility: 'with the demise of the minstrel, whose role was virtually obsolete because social and artistic values could be transmitted directly to the reader, came the development of concern for the author,' (Coleman 1981 p.203), was a harbinger of a thoroughgoing transformation of the relationship between social formation and individual member.

The second point is that if drama, often amounting to ritualised performance, was the grounds of communal consciousness - the ways in which a sense of collectivity was recognised to be a common concern - then we draw too precise distinctions by separating one institutional area, say religion, from another, say aristocratic rule. Dramatic forms overlapped and imagery might be used relatively indiscriminately for different purposes. I have already mentioned the development of interludes which provided opportunities for staging of polemical debates. This tradition of mime and dumb show became increasingly elaborate through time and the visits of

mummers became arranged events when the performers used the resources of spectacle to stage dramatic narratives. The use of elaborate contrivance was in part a display of wealth through the cost of the spectacle, but it was also an aid to verisimilitude and as such had classical authority: 'the mere fact that Aristotle mentioned spectacle as a means of rousing pity and terror gave grounds for justifying the thunder and tolling bells of the drama as well as its ghosts and murders'. (Campbell 1960 p.67). Part of the pressure indicating commercial support for an elaborate public theatre seems to have been a demand for involvement through stage engineering. A taste which may have been belittled by playwrights and critics but the artifice excited the emotions of the audience through the imagination of terrible and wonderful phenomena beyond the ken of everyday experience. Bradbrook reports that: 'a foreigner, von Wedel, describes a show at the Theatre in 1584, in which bear-bating, horse-bating and bull-baiting led up to an interlude, which was followed by a fireworks display, when a huge rose opened to shower fireworks, white bread, pears and apples on the spectators who scrambled for the prizes.' (1962 p.97).

Spectacular imagery was used in religious dramas in order to give scriptural narratives force and to translate the ritual power of services in Latin into the recognisably everyday world of a very harsh and brutal reality. Spectacular elaboration took place in relation to the use of light, the portrayal of mobility, dramatic moments of action, all supported by music. Particularly inside churches where light had already been used for dramatic effect it seemed natural to heighten these effects at crucial moments. One example is the practice of crawling to the foot of the Cross in an artificially darkened church on Good Friday. It was an equivalent development in presentation to introduce the light of the star that supposedly guided pilgrims to the birth-place of Jesus: 'The stage directions specify that the Star shall be above the Stable, probably fixed

to the roof as we see it on the Norwich bosses and, as we know that the Lincoln Cordwainers had three great stars with glasses (either to protect, or reflect, the flame within), the York star could easily have been the stage source of the miraculous light.' (Anderson 1963 p.135). Other sources talk about stage effects using light such as the use of fireworks particularly in depicting hellish and horrifying creatures.

Even within churches, which as I have argued had a dramatic structure as a principle of their architecture, and even more when religious narratives were performed outside, the lack of a clear physical frame for the drama meant that mobility between different geographical or cosmological realms could only be schematically represented. Thus it was particularly difficult to represent divine intervention such as movement between heaven and earth and below to hell. There were also certain practical problems in representing the Resurrection with tact and dignity so that Jesus could emerge in a way that would inspire awe. Reporting attempts to tackle the same sort of problems Tydeman describes the use of fabricated clouds both as a scenic effect in itself and as a way of representing movement between realities: 'Contributing more to the spectators' sense of the marvellous was the employment of clouds to mask the machinery necessary for ascents and descents, simulating flight or translation from one sphere to another. It seems to have been common for scenic clouds to be suspended on wires or strings from some suitable high point, and then lowered to very effective purpose by means of a pulley at certain important junctures in the action.' (1978 p.171).

A third area for elaborate artifice in the performance of religious narratives was the representation of peaks of dramatic action which might call for the physical maltreatment of individuals or require accents of authentic likemess through the use of unexpectedly real elements. For example, real animals might be used as props in depicting the Nativity or a real child used to impersonate the baby or young Jesus. As very young

actors could not be relied upon to observe rules of stagecraft this might explain why in some depictions of Biblical characters the children are shown as big as their parents. Many religious stories concern acts of sacrifice and suffering for the faith, performance producers would wish to stimulate the imaginations of their audience but not destroy their cast and thus: 'dummies were fashioned to be thrown through the air, tossed into the flames of Hell, decapitated, burnt in ovens, torn limb from limb, or carved up.' (Tydeman 1978 p.177). There are many more examples I could cite of realistic devices used to add force to the moral point. Another example of the intensification of dramatic effect is the use of music to attract attention, to heighten tension and to indicate shifts in mood such as the musical soundtracks of contemporary films do. In all these ways religious dramas could attempt to remain sincerely felt rituals while utilising the resources of stage-management to awe-inspire the credulous and persuade the cynical.

The desire to enhance the dramatic force of scriptural narratives through spectacular imagery in part came from pragmatic considerations over making the message of the performance as easily available as possible. In part also it came from a strong tradition in medieval thought that held that it was to the greater glory of God if his earthly representations - setting, ritual and performance - were as magnificent as possible. There was, however, an equivalently strong tradition that held that forms of physical display, such as costly jewels and precious metals in vestments and physical artefacts, were temptations of the Devil. And therefore the religious life should be as ascetic as possible and that the sacraments should be celebrated with humility rather than earthly pomp (the broader context of this conflict and its implications for religious architecture are set out in Duby 1981 esp. Part II). The desire to employ resources

of dramatic stagecraft in presenting scriptural narratives was not therefore universally held and there was persistent conflict over the legitimacy of such dramatisations. It was feared of course that as performances became more complicated, elaborate and humanised that the religious import of the stories became secularised and vulgarised. Fears which were accentuated by reports such as that cited by Nicoll: 'A medieval story tells of two monks who went out into an open field and saw "a huge crowd of people gathered together, who now remained silent, now shouting applause, now bursting with laughter." That crowd was witnessing a miracle or mystery play.' (1931 p.179). Elaborate contrivances working to portray the mouth of Hell and graphically illustrate the torments of those consigned within may have made a spectacular impression upon a credulous audience but their dramatic veracity depended upon an allegorical perspective in all modes of representation. A perspective which depended upon a unified sense of community and ultimately it was changes in the political organisation of the community which undercut and transformed the force of a tradition of spectacular drama.

My general argument is that the development of a professional theatre is inseparable from a broader concern with appropriate forms for religious life, more precisely that the creation of a secular, vernacular theatre was part of the institutional differentiation we generally loosely refer to as the Reformation (c.f. Luckman 1967). In practice because: 'The Reformation had swept away many important Catholic feast days, above all Corpus Christi, which had been the occasion of spectacular processions and pageants organised by civic and guild authorities.' (Strong 1958 p.91), although the impetus for this iconoclasm derived from the destruction of a sense of the relationship between community and imagery. I have emphasised that within the attitudes and forms of life of the 'medieval

fabric': 'The sacred uses of the arts were endless and legends soon became interwoven with the fabric of daily life. For the miraculous was not understood to be far removed from this earth and present time, but rather to be dwelling continually in the present and future. The ever-increasing number of saints and images of saints bridges all gaps of temporal and spatial existence, revealing the divine in the utmost immediacy.' (Phillips 1973 p.10). The fracturing of this interdependence of imagery, thought and belief was not casual, but depended upon radically different conceptions of individual responsibility for moral action and a radical separation between religious and secular spheres. The iconoclastic current was motivated by a feeling that entrusting images with the task of portraying the dynamic force of infinite grace within everyday experience, was an abrogation of individual responsibility. Dramatic representations were prime objects of suspicion because of their implicit claims to mediate understanding.

My argument is then that the perceived dangers to religious orthodoxy, which increasing sophistication in dramatic structure and representational forms presented, were eventually solved by secularising patronage and focussing interest on the complexities of adequate government as well as norms of interpersonal relationships. As Kahrl puts it: 'the civic religious drama of medieval England survived with considerable vigour until the early years Elizabeth's reign, to be systematically put down for political reasons rather than dying of its own weight.' (1974 p.121). The force of the Reformation paradoxically and intermittently opened an increased space for an autonomous secular theatre. It was because changing forms of drama and imagery articulated shifting senses of community: 'All of the political plays considered in this study take their inspiration from the concept of community, whether its potential is figured in the sacred congregation of the saved, as in the moralities, or in the secular polity, as in the Tudor prodigal son and historical plays.'

(Hertzbach 1978 pp.280-1), that religious controversy inevitably spilt into secular government: 'Heresy was understood as being caused by the possession of vernacular books and the ability to read them, so that the very term "heresy" extended beyond heterodox religious beliefs to encompass the political.' (Coleman 1981 p.211).

Studies of the development of popular culture are continually faced with the problem that the great majority of popular entertainments are transitory and are rarely considered worthy of record by contemporaries. This is particularly true in a non-literate culture when entertainment was oral performance and transmitted through word of mouth and personal apprenticeship.

There are three reasons for noting the lost vitality of popular entertainment. First, to reiterate a point made previously - distinctions between dramatic forms and between 'levels' of entertainment were not drawn as clearly then as they have later become in a society with a different form of stratification. Thus entertainment forms such as juggling, miming, acrobatics, puppetry, masking and simple dramatic interludes which were frequently bawdy and extravagant in performance were not confined to street shows and visits to villages by itinerant troupes. They would have been an element in entertainments for the nobility and urban burghesses as well as the unlettered crowd, elements were also included in religious dramas and other didactic moralities and they were an essential element in urban celebrations and the public drama of the community. This vigorous, informal and above all rude humour (for some notes on the transformation of laughter with the destruction of the medieval community see Thomas 1977), was therefore an essential part of the dramatic culture of the era - although its vulgarity was frequently deplored in clerical observations. As a subterranean tradition of peasant vulgarity there are interesting claims for its continuity, for example

Nicoll summarises evidence on secular play as : 'A continuance of "imitation" (the mime idea), a continuance of a fool tradition, with certain definite costume peculiarities, and the continuity in the use of masks - all of these lead us to believe that at least some of the myriads of jongleurs with whom the Middle Ages are filled inherited part of the ancient mimic tradition.' (op. cit. p.165), and Kahrl has claimed a continuity to the present day: 'the Three Stooges and the comics of the pantomimes are part of a venerable native tradition stretching back beyond the moral interludes to the mimes, joculatores and homines ludentes about whose reportories we know so little.' (op. cit. p.120).

The second reason for attending to this realm of popular entertainment is that it was a commercial popular culture. It is too easy, faced with the predominantly agricultural character of the medieval economy, to characterise contemporary popular culture as folk culture - performances produced by amateurs for the entertainment of themselves and their peers. Although folk elements as I shall discuss below were an important dimension of the dramatic culture, and I have emphasised the looseness of boundaries between performers and audiences, it is equally important to recognise the numbers and significance of those who earned their living as itinerant jugglers, acrobats, minstrels, puppeteers and dramatic entertainers in this culture. Of course they are virtually anonymous to us now but they survive through town records, through disapproving commentaries and fragmentary references in diaries, memoirs and family recollections: 'Who the actors were, or where they came from, we cannot be sure. Possibly minstrels adapted to the new roles, but most authorities doubt this, considering the survival of minstrels clearly identified as musicians and tellers of tales until late in the fifteenth century.' (Kahrl op. cit. p.15). This web of visiting performers must have formed a significant network through which towns dominated their rural hinterland and which gave



a sense of common interests to a very rudimentary consciousness of national identity. Indeed the withering of the feudal social order with its very particularistic chains of affiliation and communication was facilitated and articulated through adaptation of popular dramatic forms to the marketplace of secular and commercial urbanism: 'The early Tudor dramatists, in drawing upon important popular conventions, employed them in the service of new secular and social meanings. But it was precisely because they did not ignore the practical experience of the popular theatre that the originality of their contribution in its turn promoted the development of a more national theatre.' (Weimann 1978 p.103).

Thirdly, this culture of popular entertainment was spectacular in its appeal. In part because its vulgarity and commercialism, other reasons cited for our interest, meant that it had to have a direct appeal to unsophisticated audiences. If the spectacular is as Wickham says, trying to define its significance in medieval drama: 'the essential visual element of drama' (1959 p.xxxii), then in the makeshift conditions of street entertainment these entertainers had to have an immediate impact to generate an audience. Of course in part the tricks, the bawdiness and the overall virtuosity of strangers arriving in the local community made their acts spectacular in the sense of extraordinary achievement. But their props and devices would of necessity have been rudimentary and might only have impressed an ignorant peasantry. Their performances were spectacular in the way they transcended variations in dialect, language and regional culture etc. They helped to constitute and define communal celebrations and festivities and bridged the parochialism of a very constrained experience.

The other main form of secular drama in late medieval culture was provided by ceremonials focussed on the symbolic importance of the nobility

and in particular the monarch. There were two main types of ceremonial, the tournament and the procession, although they shared many forms of spectacular presentation in common and also utilised a common symbolic language and allegorical perspective. I have noted at the beginning of this chapter the force of the tournament as dramatic metaphor and it may seem misleading to refer to such a dangerous exercise in the language of drama and spectacle. The reason is that although tournaments were initiated as a form of training and exercise for a warrior caste they developed various dramatic forms and narrative imagery which subordinated effective victory to the display of associated skills such as horsemanship. The earliest tournaments were effectively rehearsals for battles between groups of knights in which the risk of injury or death was as great as in a real battle. There were attempts to modify the barbarousness of this sport by religious leaders and some monarchs but the fighting did not really become controlled until the organisation of the tournaments and the sequence of actions became governed by the dramatic language of chivalry. This allowed the allegorical perspective familiar in other dramatic forms to enhance the purpose and meaning of the performance, so that: 'By the middle of the fifteenth century it is not too much to say that a Tournament has become a mimed heroic drama presented in the open air to a formally organized audience who were kept informed of the drama's significance in part by the Herald-presenter and in part by what they deduced themselves from symbolic costume and scenic background.' (Wickham op. cit. p.50).

There were several types of tourney but one of the more elaborate and popular was a contrivance in which a temporary structure was erected in an open space. Such a structure could symbolically represent a place or an idea and a particular champion would take it upon himself to defend it against attackers. In so doing he, and often his companions, would pay elaborate tribute to the lady or ladies whose champions they were and who

would figure in a narrative which informed the dramatic action. Towards the end of the era as performance and decoration became more elaborate combatants would arrive on a pageant wagon or under a canopy which would be designed with symbolic significance and be accompanied by a herald who would announce in elaborate verse the narrative rubric which the lord was personifying. Such complex presentations are self-evidently spectacular in the sense of cost and contrivance but they might be thought to be merely instances of conspicuous display by an aristocratic elite that had no more general social significance. In fact their significance is that the performances encapsulate several characteristics of drama in late medieval culture and focussed a powerful imagery for a much wider social audience than their aristocratic participants. Tournaments provided a dramatic form in which allegory, mime and spectacle could be used to display the miraculous in immediately visible experience. They also depended upon a shared culture and community of interest which transcended national boundaries: 'For throughout the Middle Ages the Tournament is second only to religion in uniting responsible men of all nationalities on matters of cultural thought and its artistic expression.' (Wickham op. cit. p.15).

To the extent that a tournament was a stylised representation of battle it was quite naturally staged in open countryside outside the city. But as ~~it~~<sup>they</sup> became more dramatically elaborate tournaments were increasingly staged in city streets. This required different sorts of skills from participants but it was more convenient for associated festivities, and particularly for the ladies in whose honour the performance was staged, and obviously increased the audience for the dramatic spectacle. The other main form of urban drama, beside the quasi-theatrical stagings discussed earlier, was the procession. Although his concerns are really quite different from those in this study, Trexler, in his account of ritual in republican Florence, illustrates the formal significance of ceremonials in late-medieval cities: 'The amount of money spent by families, confraternities,

religious bodies, and governments is nothing short of astounding. The time that merchants and bureaucrats, common workers, and rulers expended in almost endless rounds of processions staggers the imagination. ... Why did Florentines expend such energy in a form of behaviour that moderns tend to dismiss as mere spectacle?' (1980 p. 213). Trexler's answer to his own question is that in such public drama contemporaries believed: 'they witnessed the political process at work.' (ibid). Spectacular displays dramatised the urban community and the dynamic relationships of significant groups within that setting. Writing of a ruler's ceremonial entry into a city Strong makes much the same point: 'By the close of the fifteenth century, however, the entree had developed into a ritual which embraced the whole of the society concerned together with its institutions. It incorporated in one gigantic spectacle its judicial, economic, political, religious and aesthetic aspects in a format which reflected vividly not only the rise to prominence of the urban classes but also the increasing power of the prince.' (1984 p. 7; see also Pythian-Adams 1976).

As an illustration I will quote Barbara Tuchman's summary of the celebrations that attended the ceremonial entry into Paris of Isabeau of Bavaria for her coronation as Queen to Charles VI in 1389: 'Entering Paris through the Porte St. Denis, the procession passed under a heavenly sky of cloth stretched over the gate, filled with stars, beneath which children were dressed as angels sang sweetly. Next on the way was a fountain spouting red and white wines, served by melodiously singing maidens with golden cups; then a stage erected in front of the Church of Ste. Trinite on which was performed the Pas Saladin, a drama of the Third Crusade; then another firmament full of stars 'with the figure of God seated in majesty'; then "a gate of Paradise" from which descended two angels with a crown of gold and jewels which they placed on the head of the Queen with appropriate songs; then a curtained enclosure in front of St. Jacques within which men played organ music. At the Chatelet a marvelous mock castle

and field of trees had been erected as the scene of a play dramatising the "Bed of Justice". Its theme was the popular belief that the King was invested with royalty in order to maintain justice in favor of the small against the great. Amid a flurry of birds and beasts, twelve maidens with naked swords defended the White Hart from the Lion and the Eagle. So many wonders were to be seen and admired that it was evening before the procession crossed the bridge leading to the Notre Dame and the climatic display. High on a tightrope slanting down from the tower of Notre Dame to the roof of the tallest house on the Pont St. Michel, an acrobat was poised with two lighted candles in his hands. "Singing, he went upon the cord all along the great street so that all who saw him had marvel how it might be.' (1978 p.456).

Amongst the many reasons for aristocratic entries to cities becoming significant cultural occasions we could mention the opportunity for conspicuous display to impress other nobles and the citizenry, the opportunity for a powerful figure to personalise their influence or rule particularly in a culture where the monarch's body literally embodied their power, and an opportunity for leading citizens in the city to assert their own wealth, autonomy and value to the visitor. In the course of the fifteenth century it became more common for the citizens to elaborate the reception by a welcoming party consisting of clergy, town officers, important members of the local bourgeoisie with street pageants usually organised by the guilds. Although these might be generally religious in theme it was an opportunity for special pleading in relation to local interests. For example, Anglo describes the welcome given by the city of York to Henry VII when he was making a triumphal progress through the North in 1486 after his successful seizure of the crown from Richard III. Not only had Richard's base been largely northern and thus the loyalties of the citizens of York were particularly suspect, but civic dignitaries had recently opposed the election of Royal nominees to Recorder and other offices and thus might have seemed

particularly intransigent (Anglo 1969 pp.21-46).

Pageantry in the streets, particularly when it was sponsored by the local elite rather than a noble patron, would have provided an occasion for airing local grievances, either conflict within the city or in relation to external authority, as well celebrating local accomplishments and praising distinguished visitors. The elements of local concerns do not seem to have greatly affected the dramatic form of the progression or the iconography of display which seem to have been fairly uniform: 'and everywhere (in Western Europe) in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries we encounter the same archways across city streets, assemblages of peasant castles, genealogical trees, tabernacles, mountains, fountains, and gardens and the same groups of allegorical personages' (Anglo op. cit. p.6). Although the form may have been fairly standardised this does not mean that quite complex themes could not be expressed. Another example described in detail by Anglo concerns Katherine of Aragon's arrival in London in 1501 when the pageants devised on behalf of the City of London were: 'the most original and complex essay in the pageant medium ever presented in England.' (op.cit. p.58).

The idea that the symbolism of these spectacular displays could be used to express complicated political and religious arguments suggests two lines of development, both of which fall outside the fifteenth century as the focus of this chapter. They are that an individual who is recognised to be particularly skilled in using this symbolic language will take responsibility for the whole pageant rather than a particular stage, that is become a specialist author, and secondly that the complexity of expression will require a controlled environment for expression, that is purpose-built stage or theatre. Both developments are fundamental to the transformation of the dramatic metaphor from the medieval community to the elaborate spectacles of the Stuart court, and as such are relevant to elucidating medieval spectacle. The change can be crystallised through the political form of

the Tudor dynasty, the first series of nationalistic rather than feudal monarchs, who inaugurated a new phase of political imagery expressed in public ceremony and spectacle. Essentially this imagery was designed to the greater glory of the monarch who: 'gradually became adulated as the sole guarantor of peace and order within the Stage.' (Strong 1973 p.19). In the staging of tournaments: 'The growth in theatricality ... must not be taken as evidence of decline or decadence. ... The new theatrical element reflected rather the ability of the form to respond both to the evolution of the aristocrat as courtier and to the demands of nationalistic chivalries, which focussed the loyalties of knights on the ruling dynasty, be it Valois, Habsburg or Tudor.' (Strong 1984 p.12). While in the Court theatre of the seventeenth century: 'Jones's stage subtly changed the character of both plays and masques by transforming audiences into spectators, fixing the viewer, and directing the theatrical experience towards the single point in the hall from which the perspective achieved its fullest effect, the royal throne.' (Orgel 1970 p.378).

Although this shift in the relative importance of the monarchy in relation to feudal nobility took place throughout Europe, in England the process was inextricably intertwined with the institutional differentiation and cultural secularization of the Reformation. The founding of a national Church was relevant to Royal ceremonials in two ways. First, it was perceived that not only did the calendar of the Catholic church have to be largely abolished, so that medieval saints' days were swept aside with much of Catholic liturgical spectacle, but also that new more appropriate festivals should be substituted. Thus Strong in his study of the celebrations which became an annual event on the Accession Day of Elizabeth I, suggests that these festivities were an adaptation of an old Catholic festival -that of St. Hugh of Lincoln - to the ethos of Protestantism. Practices which had been associated with Popery such as bell-ringing could now be revived as a traditional form with a new content. Such a cultural revolution in public

drama was not done completely naively Strong cites a treatise published during the reign of Henry VIII in which it was argued that: 'anti-papal plays ought to be substituted for the traditional folk mummings, for he shrewdly remarked 'Into the common people tynges sooner enter by the eies, then by the eares: remembryng more better that they see then that they heere.'" (1958 p.87). Secondly, as the traditional rationales for spectacular displays lost their importance simple displays of moral truths, almost literal personifications, became seen to be too crude and were gradually replaced with a more abstract classicism more appropriate for a secular monarch: 'This change in form included, in general, a shift from tableaux vivants and street theatres to classical triumphal arches covered with mute emblems and allegories in paint and sculpture.' (Strong 1973 p.36).

The extent to which the moral inclusiveness of 'the medieval fabric legitimated the loose framing of dramatic performance can also be seen in the shift of perspective, literally, of the dramatic metaphor. When the moral certainties of the medieval community gradually gave way to a more secular individualism, dramatic performances became more tightly framed and representations were looked into as more internally coherent illusions: 'The central development to occur under princely auspices during the sixteenth century is the emergence of the illusionistic stage. As the century draws to its close the preference is more and more for indoor spectacles where visual effects can be more easily controlled, where the eyes of the spectator can be almost forced to look at things in a certain way.' (Strong 1973 p.73). The creation of public theatres meant more than new commercial relationships between performers and audience, or even that their common presence in one enclosed space meant new social habits of attentiveness, decorum and respect (there is plenty of evidence that these habits have only been reluctantly acquired over the centuries and amongst some audiences such as football crowds are still a



source of contention), but that a public theatre was part of new political relationships: 'In the common theatre, the audience gradually realised that the offering was addressed to them all; that each was a Chief Spectator.' (Bradbrook 1962 p.100). It is in this sense that the development of the author, as someone responsible for a text to be acted by others he might not know, is indissolubly bound up with the emergence of the public as a political entity. In making this point I do not want to imply too clean a break between pre- and post-Elizabethan theatre for as Bradbrook emphasises: 'The theatre of the Elizabethans, in its social atmosphere, was less like the modern theatre than it was like a funfair.' (op. cit. p.97). But if we can see that developments in the practice of medieval drama were not solely due to innovations by sophisticated performers but also derived from transformations in social structure then I think we have <sup>a</sup> more powerful view-<sub>^</sub>point from which to discuss and evaluate the significance of spectacular drama.

The relationship between communal morality and dramatic form can also be observed at the other end of the late medieval cultural spectrum (remembering that the idea of cultural levels in the sense of high as opposed to folk makes very much less sense in this context). Although folk entertainment shared many of the qualities of more sophisticated performances, its folk character lay in the roughness of the participants, the resources used and the coarse symbolism of the modelling of social reality. Such entertainments are probably better described as games or rough play: 'Popular playing was seasonal and festive; it involved disguise, impersonation and boisterous activity, rather than the representation of a story. It was linked to the major feasts of the Roman Catholic year ... and often took the form of licensed misrule.' (Axton 1977 p.2). Folk customs were based upon a deep sense of the relationship between a rural society and the land and its seasons, but this sense of stability and

persistence in human culture was intertwined with inarticulate resentment at the social organisation of use of the land - perhaps most clearly shown in rituals of social inversion - what Weimann has called topsy-turvydom: 'the processional topsy-turvydom and the attitudes of festive release were not at all incompatible with some sort of communal consciousness and some elements of social criticism. In fact, the traditions of popular myth, ritual and disguise seemed to provide a favourable vehicle for a naively rebellious expression of the common man's sense of the world and his position in it.' (1978 p.24).

Popular festivals dramatised the boundaries and structures of the community through playing with order and constraint, the extraordinary and supernatural. The ostensibly innocuous medium for fundamental explorations of rules for everyday reality was a carnival as an occasion for festivities which would include dramas, games and impersonations: 'Carnival was, in short, a time of institutionalised disorder, a set of rituals of reversal.' (Burke 1978 p.190). Carnavalesque as a spirit was infused through all public rituals such as hangings, burials and even elections and saints' days. Because such occasions were collective celebrations in which many constraints were suspended, either in the form of heavy drinking and 'immodesty', or through more ritualised inversions of social order in which women did men's tasks or inferiors humiliated superiors, they tended to become disorderly in more serious ways such as riots against taxes and/or officials (Ladurie's account of the carnival at Romans as an occasion for social conflict is very illuminating in this respect (1980)). Although it is true that these occasions provided necessary functional release, allowing a repressive social order to persist relatively unchallenged, Burke makes the important point that the symbols used in carnival plays were very condensed: 'What is clear is that Carnival was polysemous, meaning different things to different people. Christian meanings were superimposed on pagan ones without obliterating them, and the results have to read as a palimpsest. The rituals convey simultaneous messages

about food and sex, religion and politics.' (op. cit. p.191).

In order to approach the relationship between the dramatisation of disorder and social stability and change we have to consider the logic of rituals. I have already mentioned the importance of formalisation in medieval culture, the ways in which so many aspects of life were structured by pre-ordained dramatic forms governing individual conduct. The rituals of carnival were consistent with this context both through the use of abstract types as heroes and villains such as St. George, the Turkish Knight and a Fool to act as basic units of story-telling. Apart from the vitality of participation the point of dramatic rituals was to re-inforce well-known values and to punish deviance. As well as punishing the individual deviant, as for example in the mockery of a spinster or the ridicule of a domineering wife, the ritual served as a reward for the conformists. They had the pleasure of laughing at the misfortune of others and the entertainment of releasing constraints otherwise repressed. A deeper sense of the ways in which ritual is functional for the stability of social hierarchy is the idea that the engrossing structure of ritual leads to a greater sense of the community which grounds any social order. Natalie Davis is adapting this idea from Turner when she writes that: 'licence was not rebellious. It was very much in the service of the village community, dramatizing the differences between different stages of life, clarifying the responsibilities that the youth would have when they were married men and fathers, helping to maintain proper order within marriage and to sustain the biological continuity of the village.' (1975. p.107).

In his study of reports of scandalous carnivalesque events in the context of religious turmoil in early sixteenth century Germany, Scribner argues that the logic of inversion, the freedom of vulgarity and ritual mockery was an effective medium of communication through which the many

could observe and apprehend the repressive order of feudal society:

'Carnival was another popular form of observability. The cult of the Church was removed from its position of mystery and placed in the common gaze in ridiculous terms. Similarly, tournaments, the transfer of feudal rights, the initiation of knights, justice, rule itself were deprived of their mystery and reduced to the level of grotesque realism.' (1978 p. 323). The spectacular style of carnival and other folk entertainments was therefore a traditional vocabulary for the silent and invisible in the medieval social order, and consistently based upon an allegorical perspective. Although the disorder of folk culture was persistently viewed with suspicion by established authorities this did not mean, however, that the use of spectacle was endorsed by apostles of individualism. Calvinists objected to the disorderliness of folk entertainment both because it sanctioned vulgarity and: 'It was part of a deeper hostility to the whole psychology of two worlds, of two levels upon which life could be lived.' (Davis 1975 p.120). The secularisation of the Reformation involved bringing meaning into the structure and practice of everyday experience, a rigorous acceptance of individual responsibility. Spectacular forms were too smeared with the superstition and communalism of traditional society; this type of dramatic imagery was a way of transcending cultural constraints not envisaging an emergent political order.

In conclusion I would like to briefly review what seem to to be the major implications of this account of dramatic forms and themes in late medieval England for our understanding of the cultural significance of spectacular drama. I have tried to show that the type of representation involved in spectacular displays was fundamental to why I have described this as a dramatic culture. It is precisely because there were no theatres as we understand that concept that the staging of dramatic performances was inherent in every form of public life and forms of extravagant show were the ways in which the community placed itself between dependence upon

unpredictable natural resources and unreliable metaphysical cosmos. To participate in and to respond to others' use of the resources of public drama a member of medieval society would have had to collaborate in the use of elementary disguises and props in order to simulate the various settings and progressions of complex dramatic narratives. Complex because in part as the dramatic was not clearly marked off from the real of normal social experience, so events and relationships were not clearly sequentially ordered. Narratives were dense with simultaneous illusion so that time and space were compressed into a dramatic coherence which had to be lived within rather than contemplated from without. It seems to me that the role of the spectacular was often to act as a bridge between the given reality of individuals they often knew or could easily detect within the part of the symbolic universe within which the story was set. The alternative reality envisaged in drama was not an escape from dominant reality of everyday experience but a crystallisation of dangers, temptations and menaces that might be masked in a world taken for granted. The imaginary creatures of medieval mythology and the efforts expended to give them spectacular form were therefore fictional only to the extent that they symbolised features of normal reality. The ritual of much of medieval life was a deliberate enactment of the several layers of meanings in all experience and spectacular images were a way of escaping conventional constraints on understanding and sympathetic identification.

In order to be slightly more concrete about the constitutive significance of spectacular imagery for dramatic performance three points can be briefly made. The first requires us to remember that this was not a literate culture. Hawkes has argued that because the Elizabethan popular audience was essentially non-literate their: 'world have been literally a "dramatic" one, with the "language" of its everyday interaction extremely close in mode to the "language" of its stage.' (1973 p.51). Everyday language in all its forms was a dramatic performance and so: 'those plays

which depend least on words and most on shapes, symbols, costumes, symbolic appearance, music, dance, and the representation of ideas through figures and emblems are often creative and imaginative.' (Davenport 1982, p.105). The second point is an extension of this in that the forms of spectacular display were consistent with what I have called the allegorical perspective - concretising abstractions through personalisation and universalising qualities of individual acts. This perspective allows what I would like to call an implicitly utopian sense of the possibility of coherence in the messiness and partiality of everyday experience. This is the third point about the importance of spectacular imagery for medieval dramaturgy - that it facilitated a transcendence of empirical perception to a utopian dimension superior to individual consciousness.

A second major theme that can be derived from the material in this chapter is that despite these points about the significance of the spectacular mode, when the dramatic forms of the culture began to be subverted or suppressed or succumbed to exhaustion spectacular drama did not disappear. Rather it began to serve different purposes and a transformed significance. To make the point more clearly I would have to do a detailed comparison of late medieval with early modern dramaturgy. Instead in the next chapter on the nineteenth century I hope I can show how spectacular forms while equally salient can work to very different effects. The purpose of concentrating upon the late-medieval era has been to illustrate the third major theme that the dramatic imagery of this culture derived from a particular sense of community. It was when the feudal community after a very extended period of decline ceased to be a central organising focus for cultural experience that new dramatic forms and relations of dramatic production both emerged and were called into being. Of course cultural eras do not finish and begin at particular points in time, there are long periods of overlap and differential degrees of change in different forms

of expression. Spectacular forms as often the most ephemeral of dramatic arts were both very susceptible to changing environments and in other contexts very persistent. There is not therefore a clear end to an era of popular drama but changes in the social and economic organisation of dramatic production and performance articulated a new sense of the individual in relation to social context, a relationship that did not have the density of the late medieval community.

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Chapter Three:     The City Triumphant: The Nineteenth as a spectacular century

'the city is a theater containing within itself other theaters,  
professional or amateur, indoor or outdoor.'

(Fisher 1975 p.384)

P A R T O N E

In this chapter I shall discuss some of the forms and suggest the significance of spectacular drama in the nineteenth century. I cannot hope to survey the range of different genres in which forms of spectacle were important public attractions and I will therefore concentrate upon popular entertainment and in particular the several types of theatrical entertainment. In a century of such marked and multi-faceted social change as the nineteenth any generalisations about the relationships between forms of spectacular entertainment and sense of community are necessarily simplistic and partial. I shall try to show, however, that styles of dramatic entertainment evolved as ways of picturing and thereby seeing new forms of urban experience. If, as Inglis suggests: 'The end of the eighteenth century was a time peculiarly available to a creative imagination. One way of thought - one ideological system, with its data, percepts, and social institutions - was giving way to another.' (1977 p.493); then the aspect of the new way of thought that I shall concentrate upon is the various ways of representing a world shared in common, a sense of collective values. One way of concretising the complex expressions of shifting social structure which so dominated contemporary social consciousness is by reference to the ideological baggage of the ways in which distinctions between public and private space - the city and the home - were constructed in the course of the century. The key metaphor which begins to make sense for me of connections between community, space and drama is that: 'besides its single sites, the public exists as a shared social horizon for the members of a society.' (Bommes and Wright 1982 p.260). As the city with its overwhelming intensity of social experience allied with personal estrangement came to dominate everyday experience I shall show how images and eventually illusions of participation in a collective drama became the principal mode

of imaginative engagement. In a commercial popular culture the panoply of collective display is first theatricalised, that is made into an entertainment based upon the manufacture of images of public behaviour, and then absorbed into a dramatisation of everyday experience through the infinite spread of mass forms of entertainment.

A key element in the changing world of English towns as the eighteenth century drew to its close was the gradual breaking up of traditional culture: 'The latter was a corpus of beliefs, customs, recreations and festivals, concerned with local rather than national affairs, rooted in magic rather than reason, employing oral and visual rather than literary forms of expression, located in public rather than private space, and intimately tied to the seasonal and Christian calendars.' (Borsay 1984 p.246). In its general forms this traditional culture was not restricted to towns but it provided a base and a framework for a flourishing body of urban ritual and ceremony, essentially presented in spectacular forms, which make it appropriate to speak of the theatricality of urban culture - the ways in which the town acted as a stage for dramas of collective life. The multivarious types of public rituals and ceremonies are grouped by Borsay into three main categories of civic, elite and popular. In general they can be said to dramatise matters important to the community such as the stability of urban administration, celebrations of important visits and events, the terms of social order and the reassuring predictability of seasonal festivals. The integrative force of public ceremonies could also act to contain sources of social conflict through dramatisations of threats: 'So there developed a series of ritual theatres, many located in the town, in which men and women, competing individuals, neighbouring parishes and counties, Whigs and Tories, gentry and popular society, paraded their differences before each other.' (op. cit. p.243).

I have described this culture with its dramatic forms of ritual and ceremony as gradually breaking up and the signs can be described as: an increasing polarisation between polite and popular culture most vividly exemplified through segregation and restriction of urban space into increasingly privatised zones; 'the mutation of traditional into popular culture' (p.252), with all that that meant in terms of commercialisation; and the development of a national political culture to which communal concerns were adapted and subordinated. Once again it is important to emphasise that there was not a clear and uniform break between traditional and modern urban culture, but in the rapidly changing urban worlds of the nineteenth century spectacular cultural forms were forced into theatres almost because the towns in which they had previously been performed were now fractured rather than shared.

I have said that I will focus upon theatrical entertainment in this chapter. This is not because public drama in the sense of ceremonial pomp dramatising grief and celebration on behalf of ruling elites ceased to be performed, the changing forms of political ritual are an important and neglected area for research. I have limited the range of my account though because the topic is already too large, because the dramaturgy of collective life was increasingly shifted from public space to specialised sites for performance, and because a potential vacuum in popular entertainment in the rapidly expanding cities of an urbanising society was filled by the theatre: 'In many respects the Victorian theatre - incidentally, the last time when when England had a truly popular theatre - was the closest of all art forms to the mass of the public.' (Stephens 1980 p.2). A further reason for concentrating upon spectacular forms in theatrical entertainment, broadly interpreted, is that the presuppositions of dramatic representation changed in the course of the century; that is, not only did the dramaturgy of collective life change but also the dramaturgy of theatrical performance.

One way of characterising this change is to say that theatrical performance became more self enclosed and more self-sufficient. In roughly the first half of the century. 'in a theatre in which the lighting of stage and auditorium was not too dissimilar, and in which an audience was likely to be, shall I say, "participant", awareness of the theatrical experience was constantly being drawn to the attention of audiences.' (Davison 1982 p.110). in the second half awareness was subordinated to an emphasis upon the suspension of disbelief by the audience as spectators. In these several ways then we can say that drama became more sharply marked off from 'normal' life, although there was a greater emphasis upon accuracy and authenticity within the drama, so that drama took on a style of hermetic realism - a style which reached its apogee in the commercial cinema and has become the predominant aesthetic in the domestic naturalism of television. Precisely because we take the presuppositions of this style as natural it is hard to think through the implications of what this style takes for granted about relationships between drama and community. The salience of spectacle in nineteenth century theatricality should help to clarify those relationships

I have already referred several times to the phenomenal growth of towns and it is necessary now to be slightly more specific about what was seen then to be the most marked change in social life. In the first fifty years of the century the total population roughly doubled and although the rate of increase was slightly slower in the second half by the end of the century the population was roughly three and a half times as big as it had been at the beginning. More relevantly, however, it was not just that the population grew but that it was increasingly concentrated in towns. A third of the population were urban residents in 1801, by the year of the Great Exhibition this had risen to one in two and by the end of the century around eighty per cent were town dwellers. There are of course problems with what is to count as a town, but if we ignore the niceties of formal definitions and recognise that the character of towns will vary greatly, there is a clear

trend of a concentration of the populace in towns and an increasing proportion of those in larger towns 'in 1851 30.6% of the population of England and Wales inhabited towns of over 50,000 people and, using the same town boundaries, about 45% in 1901. Using the revised boundaries current in 1901, we find the tendency to agglomerate in towns of over 50,000 people stronger still, for then the proportion was 51.1%' (Waller 1983 pp.8-9). It is important to note the types of town which grew particularly fast as it corrects a mistaken tendency to equate industrialisation and urbanisation. They were: residential suburbs or satellite towns, 'nodal points of the changing industrial economy' (op.cit. p.3), and seaside and pleasure resorts.

The statistics show therefore that England became urbanised during the nineteenth century, and that the urban population was increasingly concentrated in enormous cities - preeminently London, the largest city in the world and within whose shifting boundaries roughly a fifth of the urban population lived. The concept of urbanisation is, however, problematic because two distinct social processes tend to be elided under the single heading. The first is the physical location of people with all that that implies for the nature of their work and associated economic activities. The second is whether: 'there developed among the English people an unmistakable 'urban identity'', an identity forged partly by the unavoidable and capricious accidents of town life and partly by the conscious responses of individuals and groups to the difficulties of the urban environment.' (Walvin 1984 p.2). It may be that some form of urban identity is a necessary consequence of city life but the acquisition of such an identity may take more than a generation and be acquired more quickly amongst some urban groups than others, as Pahl et. al. say: 'The switching of reference groups and the restructuring of normative behaviour to the large-scale society should be the essential focus of a sociological approach to urbanisation.' (1983 p.35). They go on to argue that Edwardian cities: 'were



made up of a mosaic of little worlds, between the railway tracks, with their own norms of behaviour and social structures' although 'The extreme localism of working class culture was already beginning to be broken down in this period by industrial change, the suburban growth of cities and the growth of working class politics' (op. cit. p.36). This observation, partly based on memoirs and autobiographies, is relevant because the sense of community which I hold to be the ground of popular cultural forms is obviously transformed in both senses of urbanisation. It is important to stress the persistence of variety within and between Victorian cities, and similarly not to stress too sharply the speed of the break between a pre dominately rural and predominately urban culture.

It may be that it is fruitless to attempt to resolve the problem of urbanisation by searching for evidence of a shared urban identity. Rather than the town or the city becoming the focus for cultural forms, as opposed to a face-to-face community, the real change that the massive urban growth of the nineteenth century generated was a conviction amongst contemporaries that the country had effectively shrank. A sense of nation with a shared culture and a common outlook had become widespread by the end of the century. Thus, although local variety was still strongly evident, the forms and sources of variation were set within a context of national, and by which one means largely metropolitan, styles: 'Village life, country-town life and city life intermingled more than before. Though fanciful, it is not fantastic to write about the emergence of a national life at this time. The rural urban continuum was unbroken from metropolis to hamlet.' (Waller op. cit. p.239). In this sense of urbanisation it is not so much where people live as how their affiliations are organised that grounds cultural change, as Briggs has concluded: 'it is not strange that studies which begin with the Victorian city end with the twentieth-century state.' (1973 p.97). A full account of nationalisation has to include the development of commercial bureaucracies supplying standardised goods nation-wide, and industry-wide,

trades unions who could organise disputes on a national scale, as well as new forms of urban government working with more professionalised national bureaucracies. The city as a marketing and distributive as well as a productive centre was essential for the emergence of a national culture and it is for this reason that I shall use the experience of the city as a way of accounting for some elements in dramatic imagery.

London's pre-eminence as the city which dwarfed all others poses problems for historical reconstruction as much as it did for contemporary commentators. It is unrepresentative of urban experience, both because it was bigger and more heterogeneous than other cities, but it generated metropolitan cultural forms which gradually diffused through the regions and for this and other reasons was often taken to be a model for what all city life would eventually become. London's rate of growth was certainly phenomenal throughout the century. Initially: 'From the Thames a 2-mile journey, either north or south, would bring one to the periphery of built-up London.' (Wohl 1971 p.15), and this had increased to 18 miles in total by the end. The population grew at a comparable rate roughly sextupling in a hundred years and increasing in the last three decades by on average 85,000 people a year. But London was not a conventional industrial city: 'The factory never became the dominant unit of production in the capital and skilled craftsmen remained very important in such small-scale industries as clock-making, shoe-making, furniture-making, coach-building and silk-weaving.' (Judd 1983 p.14). Consequently, and bearing in mind that London was consistently the most powerful magnet for immigrants not only from all parts of the country but to succeeding waves of refugees and migrants from overseas, London was considerably more varied than other leading cities. This might help to explain why the response to the city, which was so often a response to London, tended to be one of confusion at the extraordinary range of sensations and social mixtures urban life provided.

Although the problems of providing adequate housing were common to all rapidly growing cities these problems were exacerbated in London. First, the predominant smallness of the economic enterprise and the fact that so many were bound up with the provision of services meant that transport facilities were crucial. The lack of cheap transport until late in the century led to huge densities of people being concentrated in central urban districts forcing up rents which in turn led to characteristic multi-occupancy and general immiseration. Secondly, the very commercial and political successes of the capital city led to enormous programmes of re-building and re-structuring. New thoroughfares, new commercial districts, new sewers and sanitary facilities and regulations, the demolition of the worst rookeries and overwhelmingly the destruction occasioned by new railway lines and termini all re-shaped the bottle of the city into which a constantly increasing population was being poured. The characteristic mixture of public improvement and commercial exploitation did not, however, improve the lot of the overcrowded poor: 'The immediate result of this wholesale demolition and eviction was not the broad dispersion throughout London of the working classes, so much hoped for by reformers, but (due largely to the need to live near their work) increased crowding together in adjoining areas.' (Wohl op. cit. p.19). In consequence, the rhetoric of the slum which was an important element in urban imagery was bound up with metaphors of profusion, confusion and ultimately subordination of the individual to an incomprehensible social mass (a loss of scale) so that by the end of the century: 'the capital city had grown and spread to the point of virtual amorphousness, unorganized and unorganizable.' (Waller op. cit. p.67).

There was a spectacular dimension to urban alienation and the fascination of poverty breeding crime remained a dramatic resource throughout the century (and was indeed far more likely to be a subject for theatrical censorship than sexual immorality c.f. Stephens 1980), but the city, and London in particular, was not perceived purely as a corruption or a menace (c.f.

Coleman 1973). London was after all the trend-setter nationally, and in many respects internationally, and the sophistication, even if suspected decadence, of London society made it equally as fascinating as its festering slum. There are therefore insuperable problems in attempting to capture the significance of the city in nineteenth century cultural consciousness. As city life became the norm, the mixture of attraction and revulsion in representations of that life persisted. It is true that those who were impressed with the spectacular scale of London were often forced into a panoramic apprehension which in important respects negates the excitement of the city. In relation to Wordsworth's sonnet on Westminster Bridge Fisher points out that: 'The city is significantly asleep, still, not itself, and the observed, in order to frame the scene does not stand within it at all but in midair, on a bridge outside and over against it as a whole. ...By negation the archaic mind finds peace, the inverse of the characteristic noise of the city, composition the inverse of the fragmentation and disorder, flow and heart, the inverse of the shock and heartlessness that usually characterize the city's tone.' (1975 p.372). This remained an important strand in the pictorialism which dominated representations of city life, although later in the century both literature and drama attempted to cope with new modes of social life the city engendered. It must, after all, have been the quality of social relations in the city, the vitality of persistent novelty, as much as material incentives which engendered the constant drift of migrants.

The process of urbanisation was therefore a complex mixture of adaptation and creation of forms of life to changing material and physical circumstances in which the ways of talking about the city, cultural representations, were an essential ingredient in the language of adjustment. I have said that the sense of the city as a public place was a root metaphor for the meaning of urbanisation and in elucidating this point we have to attend to the almost paradoxical retreat from the city which was a necessary

feature of city growth. One way of understanding the growth of the suburbs - a process of population dispersion continuing throughout the century but gathering pace in later years with the development of mass suburbs - is that a revulsion at the moral and physical pollution of the city gradually filtered down the social hierarchy. It is true that an emphasis upon respectability and a desire for an improved standard of living motivated suburban development, but I shall argue that the cultural significance of suburbanism lies more in what it implies about the re-writing of public and private places as social constructions and the increasing segregation of communities by social class. The suburban impetus was a physical expression of a concern with order and forms of control that operated at a number of levels: 'Control of the social, and thus also, spatial landscape was the very essence of suburban design.' (Davidoff 1973 p.74).

Two examples of the ways in which new norms of order were associated with suburban life are differentiation of room function within the home and segregation of home from the world of work. Such has been the success of the norm that a house is the home of a single family that: 'It is difficult to imagine today what life was like in the urban houses of pre-industrial Britain. There was a far greater mixture of people and activities: the extended family, friends, servants, apprentices; private sphere, work, recreation, the care of the sick: all co-existed and overlapped.' (Muthesius 1982 p.39). The change was gradual and involved a whole series of changes in physical layout both within the house and between the relative significance of the front and back of the house, and particularly the salience of a garden as private space. Paralleling the segregation of families within homes an increasingly firm distinction was drawn between the sphere of public life which: 'coincided with the world of productive work, of politics and of men; and the private with the world of home, of women, children and servants.' (Davidoff and Hall 1983 p.327). A major preoccupation in house design was to clearly demarcate public rooms

where members of the outside world could be entertained, from more private areas typically under the control of women. The suburb was a place to retreat to from the alienation of public life: '... the essential qualification of a suburb is domesticity,' (Olmsted, American landscape architect, quoted in Clark 1976 p.41). So firm did the distinction become that houses lost value not only by being near a place of work but even, by the end of the century, by being in a street which contained shops. The home was abstracted as a place of privatised leisure.

In conventional histories of suburban growth, improvements in transport facilities, making it possible for an increasingly large proportion of the population to live at a distance from their work (Burnett 1978 and Thorns 1972 Chap. 3), and a natural desire amongst all classes to escape a situation where: 'Descriptions of working-class housing in the early part of Victoria's reign are uniform in their portrayal of filth, stench and inadequate water and sanitary facilities.' (Wohl 1971 p.21), are emphasised. It can seem that suburbanism was a fashion, much like indoor toilets, which filtered through social classes as public facilities, private affluence, the activities of speculative builders and the influence of local public bureaucracies made possible. It was, however, more than a process in which the new urban masses aped their social betters as and when they could. The forms of working-class community were changing in ways that were consistent with the norms of suburbanism: 'The forms of working class districts (changed) in the early and mid-Victorian years from a cellular and promiscuous to an open and encapsulated residential style.' (Daunton 1983 p.214). What this meant in practice was: 'change from inward-looking dead ends turning their backs on the public thoroughfares to outward-looking streets; and from a pooling of space between houses to a definite allocation of space to each house. The threshold between the public and private spheres had been redrawn and made much less ambiguous.' (op cit. p.215).

This process was integral to the new forms of social control developing in the cities so that by mid-century the English had become a considerably more governable people, accustomed to new forms of social discipline and codes of conduct. It was not, however, simply a discipline imposed from above but was valued within working class culture as fundamental to norms of respectability, partly as a defence against an uncertain environment and partly as a celebration of personal achievements.

Suburbanism is important for the emerging urban culture because it enshrined the twin strands of class segregation and domestic isolation both of which fractured the city as community. House values were increasingly determined by exclusivity, not just that the upper and middle classes wished to be distanced from the contaminating presence of lower orders but increasingly fine discriminations were made so that each social fraction could live in a socially homogeneous street if not neighbourhood. Of course such exclusivity implied a high degree of mobility as the class character of districts changed and as individual families' circumstances improved or deteriorated. It also required an elaborate vocabulary of physical distinctions to display the appropriate status of each household (c.f. Muthesius 1982 esp. Chap. 17) a language of class which has persisted as a practical mapping of urban life. Perhaps more importantly the 'selfishness' of 'the suburban dream' (Waller 1983 p.145), meant a devaluation of communal territory: 'The space in the city between buildings, the interstices of the urban form, tended to become socially neutral, rather than social arenas in their own right.' (Daunton 1983 p.218). Thus the more public an area the less socially desirable, to live near entertainment centres, thoroughfares - both road and rail, or even suburban shopping enclaves, made people more observable (in a distorted sense less autonomous except of course that the discipline of neighbours' observations is more profound than the anonymous freedom of low status) so that house size

later in the century is positively correlated with exclusivity. The vacuum of what had previously been a shared communal drama was filled with the sponsored encapsulated dramas of government and commerce: 'The pattern of the late Victorian city was that people could assemble, but in a passive rather than a participatory role, always under the control of a definite regulatory agency.' (Daunton op.cit. p.219).

I have emphasised the importance attached to social segregation in English city life, an emphasis upon social distinction that was a defining characteristic of the new social order: 'The most profound and far-reaching consequence of the Industrial Revolution was the birth of a new class society.' (Perkin 1983 p.165). I do not want to suggest of course that pre-urban England was not a strongly hierarchical society or that the divisions within the social formation were of less importance. The novelty of the nineteenth century is that men and women began to use the language of class to describe and explain the social order; social classes implied both new modes of production to generate distinctive types of social identity and new forms of association, solidarity and conflict within and between social levels. The difficulty about adequately comprehending the significance of a new language of class in a changing social order is not that contemporaries were unaware of or minimised the phenomenon, Walvin concludes his study of English urban life up to the mid-century with: 'At almost every turn the English divided up their social and economic life by class; at work, at home, on the trains, in their cemeteries, and even in the ideology that was embedded in a great deal of contemporary literature. The English had come to view social class as normal and proper.' (1984 p. 195). The difficulty is rather that in this, what is still frequently described as a, society obsessed with class: 'the word "class" has acted as a congested point of intersection between many competing, overlapping or simply differing forms of discourse - political, economic, religious and cultural - right across of political spectrum.' (Jones 1983 p.2). In any



account which attempts to interpret the social significance of cultural forms it is hard to avoid the conviction that the formation of a class society should be the dominant framework within which forms of entertainment must be situated. It is precisely because the language of class saturated every aspect of life that the ways in which stratification was expressed sustained and contested are central to understanding cultural phenomena at this time. But such ubiquity does not entail that social classes, then or now, were clearly identifiable phenomena which have distinct and specifiable implications for their members.

The development of a class society involves more than a new terminology for social distinction. The moral economy of a society still largely governed by local traditions of customary obligations gradually disintegrated in face of the pressures from new conditions of labour and new urban conditions. An important way of understanding these changes is to see them as essentially privatising - the wage-earners relationship to their work was individualised and a basic social unit was the nuclear rather than extended family or community. In this perspective the stability of communal order was replaced by the aggregates of class affiliation, which is the point of course when serious difficulties arise. If the concept of class was purely a description of those who share common social and/or economic circumstances then it could not explain a great deal; it is because the shared life-world of members of a class is usually taken to generate a shared outlook, a shared moral and political perspective, that class denotes new modes of social solidarity. This sense of common interests can generate a consciousness of class identity which recognises the necessity of antagonistic relations with other classes and a reformed social order in which present inequalities would be repaired. It is this concern with the nature of new forms of social solidarity that makes the development of a class society important. I cannot contribute to the debate over the appropriateness of using class

consciousness as an explanation of social conflict, particularly in the first half of the century (some recent contributions are Calhoun 1982; Jones 1983; and Neale 1981). It seems clear, however, that the divisions between the classes became more stabilised, more minutely observed and more profoundly related to differences in forms of life as the century progressed.

What, then, are the reasons for not using class culture as the main analytic resource in interpreting cultural forms? There seem to me to be three. First, the power of class as an explanation of a form of life rests ultimately on an account of social relationships engendered by a mode of production. Industrial capitalism created a class society, but only slowly and with marked local variations: 'The industrial capitalist mode of production did not become dominant in England until the second half of the nineteenth century - uneven economic development remained a major characteristic of the economy.' (Neale 1983 p.279). Secondly, differences in dominant modes of production between localities meant that cities differed in their degrees and styles of hostility and segregation between social groups, so that we have to recognise that: 'there were significant divisions inside what were coventionally regarded as classes, and these divisions were often more significant than divisions between the classes.' (Briggs 1983 p.26). Thirdly, that to privilege class as explanatory variable above all others would be to mistake an effect for a cause. Jones has argued that the concept of class is necessarily constructed in discourse and that we have to understand its signification in different discourses rather than assume that it is used to refer to a commonly agreed and clearly identifiable social reality (1983). For all these reasons we can accept that the language of class became an increasingly important social vocabulary in the nineteenth century, but we do not have to accept that the meaning and significance of this language was agreed and shared throughout the society or even remained constant through time. The languages of class were themselves being constructed through different forms of social experience as

were other modes of dramatising identity. The several modes of representation of course interpenetrated each other and took on distinctive cultural styles, and those styles were significant in framing and formulating: 'the production of interest, identification, grievance and aspiration' (Jones 1983 p.22). The representations of collective experience take many forms and have to be studied as ingredients in the constitution of that experience.

Part of the shock of class was that to contemporaries it transformed the endemic disorderliness of both rural and urban life into a more serious and sustained rejection of established social order: 'If revolution grows from the convergence of sustained and serious challenges to the existing structure of power - whether or not each individual challenger has joined with others in a self-consciously revolutionary program - the Britain surely approached revolution in the 1830s.' (Tilly 1981 p.178). Within little more than a decade this peak of insurrectionary potential had passed, and although Britain remained in some respects a disorderly society: 'Wherever crowds gathered, whether for political or religious reasons, public hangings, evictions, or sporting events, there was a serious threat to public order which required appropriate police response.' (Richter 1981 p.163), criticisms of the political and economic order were for the remainder of the century predominately reformist rather than revolutionary. This might provide an explanation of changes in the public display of punishments such as pillorying, torture, execution and display of corpses; that is their gradual elimination might be explained by a combination of stabilising social order and more civilised sensibilities, except that: 'The transformation of repression was a far from sudden transition, which began in the middle of the eighteenth century and ended towards the close of the nineteenth century.' (Spiereburg 1984 p.183). Public repression was a deliberate spectacle in which the power of social order and the awful consequences of transgression were deliberately displayed



The language of spectacle was used to explain and justify public celebrations of pain and degradation, and yet it was abandoned in favour of a different mode of repression. The reasons for a move away from a spectacular dramaturgy help to illuminate the nature of social order in an urbanised society.

The main point about the transformation of repression is that it was not inspired by humanitarianism. Certain individuals were revolted by the sight of suffering and wished it abolished partly to preserve their own sensibilities and because they feared it brutalised the masses; in general, however, the abolition of public punishments meant that they were cloaked in institutional walls not that the punishments ceased: 'The privatization of repression meant first and foremost the removal from public view of a spectacle that was becoming intolerable.' (Spierenburg 1984 p.184). It was feared that as an instrument of policy public punishments could have deleterious consequences because the audience might take the part of the victim, or that the associated celebrations of a public event could in themselves become disorderly occasions: 'Executions were a form of public carnival, and like all such carivals they posed a persistent danger of spilling beyond the bounds of control.' (Walvin 1984 p.145). The rationalisation of punishment behind the citadel walls of the new prisons which sprouted in the middle of the nineteenth century can be seen therefore as part of a more general climate to rationalise public occasions and proletarian leisure - an impetus to contain, reform and civilise the British masses.

Situating the change from public to private punishment of offenders within a broader context of the suppression of communal celebrations in favour of more individualised rational recreation is also consistent with changing sensibilities about other forms of personal experience. Sexuality and death were increasingly segregated from everyday experience and confined to specialised settings and increasingly elaborate euphemisms

in public discourse. In this respect the number of new cemeteries, at first commercial and later municipal enterprises, founded on the edges of Victorian cities is an interesting record of both new forms of ritualisation and segregation of social spheres. Of course these cemeteries were to some extent generated by the pressures of greatly increasing urban populations and by the toll exacted by inadequate health and sanitary arrangements, but they also mark changing attitudes from an almost casual intermingling of everyday life and artefacts of the dead in eighteenth century churchyards to solemnised segregation in rational individualised order. It was because the moral order of the pre-industrial city had gradually fractured in adapting to new forms of civic society that the legitimacy of public punishment was called into question. The rationality of the prison spoke to a more abstract sense of social order, the bureaucratisation of government and ultimately the egalitarianism of the nation-state.

The prison, along with other new public buildings of the emerging social order such as town halls, hospitals, asylums, workhouses and factories, also symbolised another aspect of the changing city: 'Such buildings towered over the landscape, as large and visible as the church or great house which previously had been the dominant man-made feature of people's daily lives.' (Davidoff and Hall 1983 p.340). Nineteenth century cities were innovations in their colossal physical as well as social variety and in their impact on their dwarfed inhabitants it is not too extreme to describe them as spectacular displays in their own right. What we can call the aesthetics of city life are an integral element in shaping and structuring the forms of drama which represented social experience to contemporaries. In addition to what were often grossly overcrowded living conditions the atmosphere would have been dominated by noise, dirt and smell in ways that are now hard to imagine - in part because their sources have now disappeared, a telling detail for example, is that horse droppings in the Strand sometimes reached a depth of six inches. If the concept of aesthetic is recaptured from discrimination

in art to a broader sense of sensual stimulation then we can develop a more complex sense of the pleasures of the urban environment: 'The simple division of the constructional work of the period into industrial (hence ugly) buildings and structures, and buildings of other kinds associated with the public weal obscures the fact that utilitarian aims could produce bridges, viaducts and dams in which the scale of the construction, impressive enough in itself, was emphasised by the judicious use of Classic or Egyptian details.' (Jones 1968 p.181).

Cities promoted new vistas, tunnels, gateways and entrances - a jumble of built environments that were not being swept away by the rationalisation of new urban centres, such as that of Newcastle in the 1830s and 1840s, and the impacts of new services such as train lines. These 'improvements' added to the *grādeur* of the city and did not really affect the social pathways of commerce and entertainment. The intricacy of the urban landscape was of course integral to the excitement and stimulus of new forms of experience: 'a consciousness of the city as terra incognita, a man-made wilderness more daunting than tropical forests, more inscrutable than the Sahara.' (Dyos 1973 p.191). Exploring the city was then a form of cultural appreciation more visceral than trekking from one tourist highlight to the next - everyday life was a display of social activity and potential mystery. The two strands of the city as a source of wonder and of it as a social environment crucially estranged from the individual are interwoven in the city as a tourist attraction. Around the time of the Great Exhibition publicists, hoteliers, railway companies and others began to cater for visitors to London who needed guides, maps and all sorts of information about the constantly changing metropolis. The metaphor of exploration is one

to which I shall return. For now, the important point is that the city as spectacle required a different form of appreciation. The public buildings and spaces, the social heterogeneity of entertainment and instruction, the sheer variety of life-styles all constituted a different cultural order. It is in negotiating that order that I believe we can find a key to the development of more artfully staged spectacular forms. I will attempt to describe that key more fully beginning by noting some other aspects of the implicit spectacle of city life.

Amongst the problems posed by the new and expanding cities of the nineteenth century some of the most serious concerned the legitimacy and effectiveness of the government and discipline of urban society. I think it would be too great a digression to explore the development of local government in any detail; but the wave of town halls which were built throughout the century as a consequence of the recognition of new and expanded civic units does provide a heritage of public building which is intrinsically interesting. It may be, as Rolt says, that the main-line city termini of the railways provide: 'An architectural adventure of the greatest daring and skill, the soaring span of the Victorian train shed speaks for the nineteenth century and for no other.' (1974 p.48), but: 'the rituals of the new urban government found a home - a physical expression - in the gothic town halls that dominated the skyline of the late Victorian city centre.' (Walvin 1984 p.162). Town halls were built to display local pride, to express the ambition of local influentials, to provide a focus for civic identity for municipalities whose boundaries and character were often amorphous, to provide a centre for the social rituals and spectacles of government of newly-powerful urban elites which would rival the traditional pomp of aristocracy and the squirearchy, and to give a physical form to a presumed community of interest within the town which would blur class divisions and hostilities within the urban community and effectively reinforce the 'natural' claim to influence of a middle-class elite (c.f. Cunningham 1981).

Town halls can be argued therefore to provide a public form for a new social order, they are city life at its most confident and self-assured, and yet there is something intriguing in why, for town halls and for many other types of public building: 'medieval modes were used to construct what Victorians saw as their representative building.' (Dellheim 1982 p.1). The first point to make is that the medievalism of 'Gothickry' does not represent a flight from industrial culture. To be sure it could be used as an aesthetic critique of materialism, principally by Ruskin, but it was also seen as appropriate to a modern age and architects were quite prepared to adapt the form to contemporary functions and technology. The salience of the past in nineteenth century urban aesthetics is that it implied a stability in social order in contrast to the rapid changes of contemporary experience; in conjunction with many types of amateur and professional interest, respect for history: 'supported the dominant social order by facilitating social assimilation, by screening out problematic aspects of the past, such as socioeconomic inequalities, and by fostering the celebration of a common past.' (Dellheim op.cit. p.58); and above all to employ the romance of history to create a sense of community, to imbue political power with spectacular dignity and : 'to impress laboring people with middle-class values and thus maintain middle-class hegemony.' (Dellheim op. cit. p.175). Inventing tradition was an integral element in modernising change.

Another innovation in public life that really developed in the second half of the century was a social fashion of eating out, that is lunching and dining in public places. To some extent this was a necessary consequence of city growth - people could not get home as easily, the nature of the working day changed, businessmen were more likely to be involved in journeys necessitating overnight stops, and as city centres became more entertainment centres public dining became fashionable as a form of entertainment. Public places of refreshment had traditionally been a



mixture of public houses, dining rooms and coffee houses. Their equipment was rudimentary and to the extent that food was one of the services they provided it was functional and, except for special occasions, only a little more sophisticated than the snacks offered by myriad street sellers. This type of provision persisted throughout the century but in the latter years was supplemented by the development of specialist restaurants, hotels with public dining rooms and gentlemen's clubs. Although London by the 1860s had a wide range of places to eat and drink: 'Yet those that existed, though so numerous, were in certain ways unsuited to a society increasingly sensitive to behaviour and contacts in public.' (Thorne 1980 pp.232-3). The problem with traditional places of refreshment was their social heterogeneity, they provided little opportunity for social discrimination and privacy and in particular they failed to provide segregated facilities for women. The restaurant, a concept imported from France, did not 'take off' at a particular moment in time, there were isolated examples earlier but it was not until the 1860s that significant developments in the commercialization of catering began. The important feature of these new eating places in this context is that not only were they considerably more elaborate and grand than previous types of dining rooms, and in the ritual of formal dining they could match the increasing formalisation of dining in private homes, but they also: 'offered a setting in which customers could appear in public while, seated at separate tables, still preserving an immediate territory that was private.' (Thorne op. cit. p.243). Pubs offered an entertainment setting which was increasingly spectacular but within which the customers were effectively submerged, while public dining rooms with their different form of spectacle were settings in which the customers were themselves on public display. Discrimination by price, style and decor enabled them to operate as public places for private taste and interaction. The social spectacle displayed a surrogate community of taste.

I want therefore to argue that the city became a form of spectacle in itself but in two different although related ways. The first is that cities, especially capital cities, were physically reconstructed during the nineteenth century and the new streets, buildings and services such as viaducts and bridges etc., were a public display of wealth and ambition. The second is that social life in the city became a form of performance in which the performers were increasingly estranged from the drama of which they are part. Or, if not estranged, increasingly fascinated by the business of performance by being able to follow the complexity of unscripted roles. This spectacular drama of social identity was most salient in but not exclusively restricted to public settings - this was also the century of the novel, the most private of cultural forms: 'The city, Simmel has shrewdly seen, intellectualized men by demanding more and more consciousness, more alertness and inference, more balance and tolerance for the unexpected, more processing of the immediate environment.' (Fisher 1975 p.386). Benjamin, in his exploration of mid-century Paris through the milieu and motifs of Baudelaire, frequently refers to the experience of city life as phantasmagoria - the city as a stage for public drama has become a series of images (1973). Such images can be experienced as hallucinations but even at their most benign they require an act of imaginative will to bring them into coherence.

A new cultural form appropriate to the metropolitan city which gave an imaginary coherence to the diversity and formlessness of urban social experience was the popular newspaper: 'the newspaper is in itself an image of the city, a miniaturized sample of the total life world, not seen in relation but in simple juxtaposition. Column by column, weighted without account of importance, the heroic and the trivial repose side by side:' (Fisher op. cit. p.388). The popular newspaper was in part a response to changes in urban ecology, as increasing numbers of people spent part of their day either being transported or waiting for transport they needed

reading material which was brief intriguing or sensationalist and varied

Newspapers benefited from the experience of city life as a spectacle, and they contributed to it. They provided their readers a running account of the marvels and mysteries of urban life.' (Schudson 1978 p.105). But the popular newspaper is not just a functional prop in an uncertain world, through the jumble of happenings, gossip and sensations it constitutes a way of seeing a form of vicarious participation which is effectively that of an imaginary crowd. 'For the crowd really is a spectacle of nature - if one may apply the term to social conditions. A street, a conflagration, or a traffic accident assemble people who are not defined along class lines. They present themselves as concrete gatherings, but socially they remain abstract - namely, in their isolated private interests.' (Benjamin 1973 p.62). The spectacle of metropolitan social life is first given a cultural order through popular journalism: 'The newspaper is a training ground for the crowd and the city the place where the habits of perception and imperception are formed and steadied.' (Fisher op.cit. p.388).

In attempting to identify some spectacular features of city life, as a prelude to looking more closely at forms of spectacle in dramatic imagery, a recurrent motif has been the interdependent contrast of public visibility and private distancing. The paradox of the Victorian city was that as a social entity more and more people were thrown into greater nearness and intimacy and yet this familiarity did not generate knowledge or even sympathy but estrangement. It is not surprising that the metaphor of exploration became dominant: 'The notion of "exploration" which recurs time and time again in the imagery of early urban studies carried with it a sense of adventure. It also carried with it the sense that nineteenth-century cities, in particular, were "mysterious places" where one section of the community knew very little directly about the rest.' (Briggs 1973 p.87). I have noted earlier that one aspect of this literature of exploration concerned the wonders of new structures and environments, there was, however, a possibly

more important aspect of revulsion and dismay at the persistence of poverty and a recognition that the very processes of urban transformation through the destruction of old housing stock were driving the poor into even more cramped and overcrowded accommodation. It is reasonable to estimate that throughout the century, while recognising fluctuations at different periods, around one third of the urban population were living on or below the poverty line. The poor were a constant source of fascination in part because of fears of their potential for insurrectionary mobilisation, in part because their conditions of life offended canons of decency and respectability - and because their very immorality subverted the moral tone of respectable society through providing havens of degeneracy - and in part because their subterranean concentration in particular districts forced a recognition of cultural difference and ignorance. The everyday world of different communities in the metropolis was mutually inaccessible and any form of understanding required an effort of imagination. In Dicken's pictures of London low life, for example: 'He writes like an explorer or anthropologist, clearly assuming that even those who have visited Monmouth Street or Seven Dials will not really have seen those places, have understood them for what they are.' (Irwin 1979 p.152).

A key element in focussing this fascinated dismay was the development of the symbolic image of the slum. When first used early in the century the term slum meant loosely a place where low goings-on occurred and as such might have been a room, a house and only gradually a district. It was around the middle of the century that the term acquired its full range of connotations of a specifiable district with distinctive conditions of poverty and housing. It is an impersonal characteristic, a slum as a noun: 'does inevitably imply something about people by directing attention towards the crowded, squalid and wretched nature of the environment, but first and foremost the word depicted the environment itself.' (Warner 1983 p.386). The dehumanisation of poverty into a slum as a place is significant

because it allowed a use of slum as a verb to describe the activity of going to the district. Thus those who ventured into urban ghettos in search of titillation or whatever were going slumming. A distinction between a place which is looked in at from outside and the reactions of those looking implies a new way of seeing and: 'thus suggests a new kind of class relationship. Slums were strange, novel and large places which well-to-do people visited as a foreign territory. Slums were not unfortunate families to whom you went on an errand of aid.' (Warner op.cit. p.388). The idea of a slum therefore implies a physical and a social distance within the city and, most importantly, a cultural distance so that poverty could become exotic. Traveller's tales from the hidden areas of the city could stress their authors' horror and fear but they could simultaneously function: 'to begin to turn the slums into a public spectacle, perhaps even a public entertainment.' (Dyos 1968 p.135).

It has often been observed that the roots of sociology lie in the confused reactions of reformers, moralists and various types of public authority to urban poverty. In the mixture of muck-raking exposes, exhaustive statistical enquiries, sentimental gossip and serious social documentation which constituted a flood of social reportage about the nineteenth century city, many characteristic tropes of twentieth century sociology can be detected. And certainly urban imagery is still a powerful resource in formulating contemporary social policy. The notion of a slum is obviously consonant with a metaphor of social exploration which in turn grounds much of the romanticism of the imagery of urban poverty. It is true that a commitment to social realism, in differing ways, was incumbent upon the different styles of writing and picturing explored terrain, but this realism had to be translated into a form which transcended the differences in forms of life which stratified class society into separate social worlds. The predominant solution was to guarantee realism through minute attention

to detail and to individualise social situations through narratives of 'universal' emotions and relationships. Comparing Doré's engraving Newgate - Exercise Yard (from the book by Jerrold and Doré called London: A Pilgrimage published in 1872 and itself a fascinating contribution to the literature of exploration) with a contemporary painting by Frank Holl Newgate: Committed for Trial, Woods argues that the works differ in the way they marry social with individual circumstance. In Holl's painting the emotional heart of the work: 'is not the social division, between prisoners and guards, but the melodramatic division between husbands and families, caused not so much by the husbands' arrests as by their crimes.' (1978, p.352). The social implications of crime and punishment in a society of massive inequalities were ignored in favour of dramatisation of more personal 'human' emotions. Although Doré's work was criticised at the time for insufficient care being taken with detail, it has come down to us as one of the canonical images of the Victorian city. This is not because we have a better sense of authentic realism; rather that we are divorced from the social tensions of the Victorian city. I have argued that the changing social order of collective experience in nineteenth century cities, and particularly London, generated a sense of social insecurity which was in part expressed through a restless and incessant enquiry about their own social world. One might expect therefore that cultural forms in the nineteenth century could be characterised by a strong commitment to social accuracy, and indeed there are good reasons for attempting to show, for example: 'why much of the appeal of Victorian modern life art, both painting and illustration, might be described as anthropological.' (Cowling 1983 p.461). The problem is that a fascination with their social world on the part of the author and a commitment to represent realistically does not mean that we can predict the form and style of the work produced. The narrative structure will be governed by, amongst other factors, the authors moral concerns with how the subject

matter should be understood, and very often with how it should be changed. To attempt to comprehend the realist impulse in fictional representation without reference to normative vision results in promoting technique above significance. This is particularly important in relation to nineteenth century theatre, and cultural forms in general, where technique often seems so alien to us.

The moral commitment in nineteenth century popular culture as in more self-conscious genres was that social life in general, and the heterogeneity of urban social experience in particular, could be understood. That is that character, circumstances and collective relationships could be found to display an intrinsic orderliness. Within the complex variety of both physical and social appearance there were governing truths and with their reaffirmation the essential rightness of a culture of respectability was sustained and given added force. One way of expressing this thesis is to say that a sense of community as moral consensus was continually being asserted or imposed on a recalcitrant reality. Urbanisation was undercutting the coherence of community and it is almost as if the possibility of a cultural coherence was sought to compensate for privatisation of collective experience. Such an affirmation of moral truths could obviously be sought in the lives of great men and women or at great moments in the life of a society, and we can find plenty of examples in all art forms but a quest for reassurance did not have to be restricted to the exceptional - everyday life should be capable of displaying these truths. Writing of the moral despair depicted in Hunt's Awakening Conscience Murdoch notes that: 'As tragedy, it is the sort of undramatic and drearily ordinary tragedy which achieves poignancy and the status of art by means of Pre-Raphaelite realism.' (1974 p.322). The moral force in nineteenth century English realism was expressed through the use of authentic detail to constitute conventional social types and situations so that narrative clichés could be implied in social form. The realist vision interrogated

social complexity so that: 'the artist could offer to perform for the public what its members might attempt, with difficulty, in public places.' (Cowling 1983 p.467).

I have identified some strands in the particular character of the realist impulse at this time, they can be summarised by saying that realism is committed to social relevance. And this is the focus which brings the social context of urbanisation into acting as the dynamic of fictional realism. The pre-eminent demand of collective experience was the destruction and construction of their urban environment. In responding to the changing social order of that environment cultural producers were contributing to an interpretive cultural order: 'For the eighteenth-century novelist environment was scarcely an issue....But for the nineteenth-century novelist it was essential that their characters should relate to an environment of some kind. Indeed, this was the very subject of their work. ...Their novels had to have large cast-lists, had to convey a sense of community.' (Irwin 1979 p.141). The prescriptive force of relevance, motivated by the gradual erosion of the certainties of an established social order, took art from its enclaves of patronage and propelled it into a public significance. The transition involved both secularisation (although not a loss of moral commitment, indeed in many respects the reverse) and democratisation. New forms of cultural production necessarily transformed the stance towards their society of both artist and entertainer. They had to teach their audience how to see their world: 'With construction in iron, architecture began to outgrow art; painting did the same in its turn with the dioramas.' (Benjamin 1973 p.161).

The significance of the dioramas in this context is that they encapsulate a form of representation we can describe as pictorialism - under whose rubric the serious endeavours of self-conscious realists becomes consistent with popular spectacle, and the vulgarity of the commercial theatre consistent with painting, architecture and literature. The diorama



as a form of entertainment was a development of panorama and both were members of a much wider class of pictorial entertainment and innovation. The panorama was an immense picture, initially circular although later flat, surveying a view or environment which was housed in a special building to which customers were admitted. Subsequent improvements on this idea included painting the panorama on an enormous strip which could be unrolled in front of the audience, the use of special lighting and other effects to simulate the setting, and, in the diorama, seating the audience who looked through a rectangular frame and down a tunnel at the painting. The various forms of pictorial entertainment quickly became very popular in the initial decades of the century and it is not surprising that they were soon adapted as adjuncts to theatrical presentations and indeed came to dominate theatrical style: 'To look at the stage as if it were a picture was by 1850 an automatic response to audiences, and to make performance resemble painting was a habit of managers and technical staff.' (Booth 1981 p.10). A mode of performance and presentation that was not peculiar to the theatre but which became so closely identified with drama, and given the dominance of theatricality in nineteenth century cultural forms, that narrative devices in other forms, for example scene-painting in novels, are often described through dramatic metaphors. The force of pictorialism for the theatre is that the perspectival vision it embodies is perfectly consistent with a taste for spectacular drama: 'the recreation of reality was a vitally important doctrine in the pictorial and spectacle theatre,' (Booth op. cit. p.13).

The combination of the city as a spectacular site with an impulse to represent the social world of the city realistically is not therefore paradoxical. Indeed they are not only consistent but in important respects mutually complementary. They come together in the narrative mode of melodrama, where, as we shall see, spectacular detail is used to entertain and engage audiences in performances whose form of staging

increasingly parallels the cultural order of the metropolis. The popularity of spectacular drama is ultimately only explicable through it offering a dramatisation of a more rewarding, if abstract, community which transcended the limiting ambiguities of personal experience. The implied continuity or stability of dramatic norms also explains how the past became such a popular resource both as grist for the mill of spectacular imagery and as topic for narrative representation. In the theatre the emphasis upon authentic detail led to an archaeological rigour adapted to the forms of spectacular show: 'The archaeologising of spectacle, at least in serious drama with historical settings, became de rigueur, but archaeology on the Victorian stage was in any case, from the time of Charles Kean, closely akin to display, a visual flourish of resources and scholarship combined. It was the outward show of things that tended to be most archaeological:' (Booth 1981 p.22). Consistently we find it is as though the surface of things can be used to yield up their circumstantial reality, their cultural meaning. Dellheim, writing about the vogue for local historical and archaeological societies which developed in the middle decades of the century, notes that: 'what is most significant in their work is their visual approach to the past, their emphasis upon fieldwork and their almost fanatical obsession with the historical significance of the individual object.' (1982 p.55). The tangible impact of new material realities prompted a demand to wallow in the feel of alien experience and yet to be sufficiently distanced to sustain a morally didactic interpretation.

In one respect it is easy to see how a belief that significant details can be used to display cultural types generates an attitude to other cultures that is enshrined in the concept of museum. The explicit classification through grouping being itself an interpretative guide to material reality. And it is consistent with the interdependence of morality and materiality in this account that we can see how the persistent creation of museums throughout the century was so salient in the development of a

rhetoric of national identity - that most imaginary of communities (c.f. Haskell 1971). The theatricalisation of social life through spectacle and the use of material display to ground fictional abstraction speaks to the future as well as recuperating the past. Extrapolating from Baudelaire, Benjamin notes that addicts become more charming when under the fantasy influence of their drugs: 'Commodities derive the same effect from the crowd that surges around and intoxicates them. The concentration of customers which makes the market, which in turn makes the commodity into a commodity, enhances its attractiveness to the average buyer.' (1973) p.56). The plenitude of consumerism is the most spectacular creation of the metropolitan social order and in the fantasy accomplishments of consumer values material reality is most thoroughly celebrated while remaining most irretrievably meaningless. Here we seem to search most fruitlessly for a sense of community.

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P A R T   T W O

Although any account of popular entertainment in the nineteenth century must be principally concerned with what is changing, there were of course major continuities from preceeding cultural formations even if they gradually adapted to changing urban conditions. It is appropriate to begin with the most 'primitive' form of staging, that is that employed by street performers whether directly on the street or in mobile booths. Their performances are only minimally framed, as McNamara says: 'Many street entertainers have...tended to use space pragmatically, not altering it in any significant way fortheatrical purposes. ...Such performers became, in effect, self-contained mobile theatres, with their prospective properties and costumes fulfilling the function that scenery and lights have in more complex productions.' (1974 p.17). This type of street entertainment did not develop in a particular period but has been a constant feature of town life up until our present century. The borderline between jugglers, acrobats, storytellers etc., and other street performers such as town criers and a huge range of street traders is obviously arbitrary and cannot be sustained for any useful purpose. For all relevant purposes the street was a theatre and many everyday 'instrumental' activities were performed with the hope of attracting an audience from the flux of passers-by. It is also relevant in this context to note Baker's point that early Victorian actors in the provinces could exploit their marginality by costume and gesture to provoke interest and possibly drum-up trade (1978 pp.76-7). Although the street entertainer has been a constant feature of urban life this does not mean that the content of performance reemained unchanged. For example, it is interesting that street traders were amongst the first to take advantage of the invention of photography and took the new facility to parks and other public spaces.



A good source for some of the flavour of the vitality street life in early Victorian London is the extraordinary range of interviews conducted by Mayhew and his associates. If we look at the reports of representatives of different occupations of street entertainer we see that they range from 'The Telescope Exhibitor' to 'The Strong Man', 'The Street-conjuror', 'The Snake, Sword and Knife Swallower', 'The Penny Circus Jester' and 'The Tight-rope Dancers and Stilt-vaulters' (Mayhew 1969 pp.474-546). His respondents reported very extensive practising so that they could do their tricks and in consequence were famous for their skills. Their earnings were, however, inherently unreliable and the trades were marked by deep economic insecurity. It is also noteworthy that performers did not seem to draw a strong status differential between street work and work in circuses, shows and penny gaffs etc. The 'theatres' of popular entertainment were only minimally distanced from the street and performers and audience drifted unselfconsciously to one from the other. The same sort of fluidity is noticeable in relation to popular literature which was not packaged as books available only from libraries or booksellers but was sold on the streets as broadsides, pamphlets, ballads and songs etc. (c.f. Neuberg 1973 and 1977 esp. Chap. 5). This literature was certainly unsophisticated and in its sensationalist attitudes prefigured many of our contemporary expectations of news: 'In its format, even in its format, even in its size, the Victorian street ballad perhaps bears a resemblance to the tabloid newspaper which in many ways - concern with sex, crime, Royalty - it anticipated in a somewhat crude way. Only sport is missing.' (Neuberg, 1976 p.206). This is a form of literature which is close to performance and in which exaggeration is encouraged so that it is consistent with other contemporary forms of entertainment.

A central feature of the street entertainment is mobility so that the show can be staged virtually anywhere. There was therefore no reason for the performers to be restricted to a particular locale so that they could

take advantage of seasonal changes and spend the warm months touring the provinces with acts that might win more approval amongst even less sophisticated audiences. As migratory workers entertainers were part of a much bigger sub-world or sub-economy of what Samuel has called 'comers and goers' (1973). It is true that the majority of strolling entertainers would have travelled in bands and would have performed within the licensed site of the circus ring or fair booth rather than unframed on the street; but as with urban theatres so the walls of circuses were relatively transparent and specific acts were not greatly transformed by being set in a more elaborate locale. In any case as Baker points out in the Northern industrial districts as much as in remote country villages the annual visit of: 'the actor and the showman offered at this date almost the only source of "amusement" outside the saloon. ...theatrical entertainment was the most thoroughgoing means of escaping for a while the harsh and dehumanising reality of daily working life.' (op. cit. p.78). It is in this respect that this tradition of entertainment is relevant to a discussion of the role of spectacle in popular culture. By definition street entertainers did not have elaborate props, except perhaps when the street was transformed for an annual festival usually by floral arches, elaborate lighting and carnival stalls and games etc., more usually the entertainer worked by imposing himself on the everyday rather than relying on a prior transformation of a mundane setting. It is, however, the claim to importance by displaying distinctiveness that attracts the interest and possibly the wonder of an audience. The spectacular features of the mobile entertainer's art lay in their ambition more than their achievements.

Valuable light is thrown on the detail of itinerant showmen by the career of Billy Purvis a clown and booth holder who worked out of Newcastle in the first decades of the nineteenth century (Mayer 1971).

Purvis's itinerary was governed by a calendar of fairs and race meetings in mainly North Yorkshire, Durham and Northumberland. The distance between stops were usually not more than twenty miles this being the distance that laden animals could travel in one night, the following day being used to find a site, set up a booth and distribute publicity. These twenty mile stops in villages and small towns punctuated between longer stays at fairs and race meetings. In his early days Purvis travelled alone carrying his props on his back such as: 'costumes, phantasmagoria slides, fuel, cheap paste-board marionettes called 'french figures' and a few conjuring tricks,' (Mayer op.cit. p.30). When he had grown more prosperous Purvis could afford to invest in carriages and saddle horses and to employ a small company of performers. This troop then performed variations on the traditional themes and characters of pantomime although the formulaic elements would be supplemented by references to local concerns and by strips of comic business for which the performer would have some local fame. An essential feature of this type of local entertainment would involve the performer trading on his ambivalent relationship with his audience. At once distanced by costume and make-up the clown would seek to identify with his audience by humourously employing a broad dialect and by proudly reminding them of his knowledge of local individuals. The showman could therefore exploit the licence of the familiar clown while at the same time intriguing the audience with stage effects and rudimentary marvels. Not that the show need be all that rudimentary: 'Purvis toured at least two full-scale pantomimes, The House that Jack Built and The Fairy of the Silver Lake in the winter of 1834, having by then a large company scenery, and some stock of machinery for trickwork.' (Mayer op. cit. p.132). Purvis' career also illustrates the fundamental insecurity of the craft in that he finished up as a solo entertainer again touring villages without the trappings of variety acts, entertainments such as boxing fights and stunts like

employing a live bear to dance and simulate a fight.

This type of entertainment can be described as fluid not just because the performers were essentially itinerant or because their stages were temporary, but also because when they came into the big city they could easily adapt to local circumstances. Thus they might take advantage of traditional fairs, more permanent sites such as inn yards or take over temporary premises on the street. Rosenfeld's study of the theatre of the London fairs of the eighteenth century highlights the traditions which provided the stock resources for these performers: 'What can we learn about popular taste from this survey? First, it was conservative, clinging to the old tales. Secondly, it demanded the ancient relief of comic interlude, revelling in swiftly alternating contrast of marvellous feats and knockabout farce, fustian and slapstick. Thirdly, it required an admixture of singing and dancing, so that all the elements of the Elizabethan jig survived in the booths to entertain the descendants of the Elizabethan groundlings.' (1960 p.149). In addition to jugglers, acrobats, puppet shows and slapstick comedians the booths offered employment to actors 'moonlighting' from patent theatres. Elements of all types of entertainment would be combined within a show that usually lasted less than an hour and that was repeated several times in a day.

Although fair booths were temporary there was a natural tendency to try to attract custom by offering more comfortable accommodation and so some of the arrangements for more sophisticated booths were very ambitious. This type of development was facilitated by siting a booth in the lee of a permanent structure such as an inn yard. Access to such theatres could more easily be illuminated and kept clean so that not only the undiscriminating might be attracted to a show mounted in a wooden barn. The actors could also take advantage of the balcony of the inn to parade their costumes and accomplishments to entice customers. Within the barn

the audience either sat on benches or in the poorer houses stood in front of the stage which probably projected into the auditorium and was often lined with boxes for customers willing to pay for privacy. I have mentioned these details of presentation as they underline one of the more interesting continuities between this type of entertainment and that offered at 'penny-gaffs' for working class audiences in the middle nineteenth century. Many features recur in both eras, such as the length of the show, the mixture of elements and skills, the degree of popular participation and the rudimentary character of the scenery which was often little more than a painted cloth hanging at the back of the stage. Mayhew speaks of these gaffs usually being in converted shops but Grant, another eyewitness, reports that most of them were in 'small stables, sheds, warehouses etc.' (c.f. Mayhew 1969 esp. pp.86-90; and Grant 1971). All reports agree that penny gaffs were predominately patronised by young members of the working class and that the entertainment was vulgar and boisterous in which formulaic elements were more important than individual characterization. They were financially insecure theatres from which the performers got extremely meagre wages and the proprietors often went bankrupt despite their popularity.

Commentaries on popular entertainment shifted in tone from the eighteenth century as leisure became increasingly stratified in terms of class culture. Both in order to construct a stable social framework out of the anarchic chaos of rapidly expanding cities and to ensure appropriate attitudes and expectations amongst the workforce of an increasingly industrial economy, the forms and content of traditional popular culture were critically inspected by reformers (c.f. Malcolmson 1973). Transformations in the political economy of the community meant that there were also pressures for change from within. The formation of an industrial working class could not take place within the framework of cultural forms that had survived from a predominately agrarian social order;

either new forms developed, as I shall argue in the case of melodrama, or those forms that survived were so transformed in meaning that they took on a completely different resonance, as in entertainments performed on the variety stage. In practice of course the gradual formation of an industrial working class was a process of conflict over how social changes were to be understood, a process in which 'dysfunctional' forms of association were actively contested such as the holidays and festivals of the pre-industrial calendar to be replaced by a number of versions of what Bailey has characterised as 'rational recreation': 'Contained within the various movements formed to structure working class leisure one finds approaches to a number of very important and inter-related middle-class objectives: the preservation of civil order, the imposition of new types of labour-discipline and the diffusion among the working classes of a new (and alien) system of moral authority.' (Storch 1977 p.139; also Bailey 1978). It is in this context that public life was the battleground for class conflict. When responsibilities for the provision of public facilities began to be recognised in later Victorian society, one response was in the architectural rhetoric of the emergent political order of parliamentary democracy (Meller 1976).

Street entertainment was not then just a primitive survival. It was an exhibition of the collective character of everyday life and the focus of a sense of community which was forced to adapt to an alien, ill-equipped and distressing environment. The uses of the urban landscape and what it could legitimately mean to different groups of users were the basic politics of popular culture. Although the legitimacy of particular sites was continually disputed, often the public places used for performance were licensed either by tradition and custom, as in the case of commons and fairs and race meetings, or were so ubiquitous that they could not be effectively patrolled, as in the case of the streets. It was not therefore just a lack of capital or the poverty of the audience that kept

entertainers in the early nineteenth century working with minimal props in ramshackle settings. It was also that the rapid growth of towns in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries had taken place without sites for public gathering and/or entertainment being constructed. The squares and halls that survived from previous eras were no longer adequate and therefore the growing population masses were forced to impose their communities on the minimal resources available. Which brings us to the third major site of public entertainment and central source of tradition in the development of the variety stage and that is of course the public house; a building by definition free to all members of society and one that quickly repaid entrepreneurial investment.

The very name public house alerts us to at least a part of their significance in this setting; in them the members of the industrial working class which in so many ways were denied reliable social identity by their conditions of labour and residence could insist upon a public identity. Publicans were likely to act as sponsors for entertainment whether by staging fights involving animals or by putting up the prize money in contests between adults, or by organising a talent contest amongst local amateurs, and as such became central in any history of variety entertainment. The pub was part of the street as much as a market stall or a chapbook seller and 'the barrier between pub and street was easily crossed, for the two worlds were connected by great areas of glass, by first-floor balconies, by pavement seats and tables, by potmen carrying cans of ale in wooden frames to customers in nearby premises, and by a multitude of entrances.' (Harrison 1973 p.169). Pubs were very common in working class districts, they frequently lacked any pretentiousness although there were waves of development throughout the century as for example the first gin palaces of the 1830s, and they were places in which the community could gather on its own terms. This of course meant that the pub was likely to facilitate types of social association that moral reformers were either

frightened of or strongly disapproved of. For example, besides the cost of drink, pubs were good haunts for prostitutes, they were places in which criminal activities would be planned and celebrated, and class consciousness within the community could be heightened by communal reading of radical press and pamphlets and by acting as a base for trade union meetings and as a support in industrial disputes. For all these reasons public houses provided for social association that was inimical to the discipline of industrial society and this is obviously very important for understanding the entertainment which grew out of this setting.

In attempting to appreciate dramaturgy in an industrialising and urbanising society such as nineteenth century Britain it is necessary to hold an interdependence between activity and place in mind. The pub was both a physical home for the community, in a way that almost no other institution could rival, and a celebration and transcendence of the limitations of that communal environment. I have noted above that advances in pub architecture and fittings etc., tended to come in waves during the century, so that by the end of the century pubs in city centres or on main suburban thoroughfares were frequently palaces with many rooms, furnished with fittings of wood, brass and leather, the atmosphere was intensified by glittering reflections thrown back from engraved mirrors lit up by masses of lights often in brass holders. (Girouard 1984). Such extravagance dignified the activity of drinking while encouraging that aspect of the drug which gradually distanced the customer from the immediacies of everyday experience. The pub therefore became a spectacular site for conspicuous consumption; rather than being a consistent focus for the community some dramatised an entertaining alternative to conventional routines. Of course the majority of pubs remained embedded in their neighbourhoods, but they were now in contrast to the magnificence available in some. A dramatic stage for local experience had become sensationalised by the end of the nineteenth century, in specific cases,



in ways that paralleled other forms of sensationalism in popular culture.

I have described some features of the simplest forms of popular entertainment which worked through fairly minimal adaptation of the environment to dramatic purposes. This led into noting instances of the dramatisation of the environment - public space as a stage for collective experience. In order to give a fuller sense of this type of dramaturgy I shall now describe some instances of entertainment environments in which the landscape was enclosed and adapted as a stage for different modes of performance. The pleasure garden as a cultural form is often associated with the eighteenth century although a full history of the pleasure garden would have to go back to the second half of the seventeenth century when diaries and other types of contemporary report mention the pleasures to be had by visiting gardens up-river from the city and there enjoying the pleasures of the countryside with some more urban amenities. This simple idea gives us some crucial features of the appeal of the pleasure garden throughout its history. These are that the garden is an enclosed space away from everyday environment but patrons are free to wander or not wherever they like within the setting; secondly, that the pleasures of the garden were to be enjoyed in company so that nature was being very firmly socialised; and thirdly, that although very much a public place gardens were places where private pleasures and indiscretions could be enjoyed. Throughout their history pleasure gardens were notorious for the opportunities they provided for unchaperoned meetings by lovers (at worst chaperones could easily be lost in the maze of dark walks), opportunities which were quickly exploited by professional purveyors of sexual entertainment, and opportunities which were abused by young bloods who not only threatened to molest unescorted ladies but were reputed to snatch suitable targets from groups and carry them protesting to the darker areas

of the gardens. The pleasure garden is then an entertainment environment marginal to normal social order, and I do not think it unreasonable to suggest that the persistent popularity of river transport and access to gardens such as Vauxhall and Ranelagh was not just because of the danger from footpads and thieves on paths and roads, but was also due to the ways being rowed upstream accentuated the patron's sense of moving out of normal settings.

The pleasure garden in the eighteenth century represented an intensification of normal social experience, the patrons went there to mingle in a relaxed way, to enjoy the sights and sounds of the countryside and to admire the civilisation of the setting. It is in this sense that the spectacle made available in the pleasure garden was the audience displaying each other to themselves - the manner and mode of sociality was the entertainment enjoyed. Of course this raw material of social civility was fleshed out with sundry entertainments, Altick summarises those at Vauxhall as: 'straight unbroken lines of trees and gravel paths to invite the stroller, triumphal arches, semicircular colonnades and domed pavilions, artificial ruins, statuary, openair tea shops and restaurants, platforms for concerts d'été, and thousands of lamps and lanterns.' (1978 p.95). The main change that occurred during the history of the pleasure garden is that these facilities for social discourse became more elaborate and the entertainment gradually shifted from background to dominating the evening and becoming spectacles in themselves. Of course the contrast between city life and the 'natural-ness' of the pleasure garden was always artificial. Quite early on the proprietor of Vauxhall realised that as one of the attractions of his garden was the song of the nightingale it was good business practise to hire men to help out with their imitations when there were insufficient birds. Similarly although lamps were originally introduced to bring out natural beauty, and to guard against some of the dangers to patrons of unlit walkways, by the end of the eighteenth century

the numbers of lamps were continually increasing and they were always being rearranged in formal devices and patterns (Southworth 1941 Chap. 4).

Although Vauxhall was always the most famous garden and is the one about which there is the most literature there were in fact many others of many different types. Wroth offers a tri-partite classification, in the first group he places those gardens that were primarily places of entertainment famous for their concerts, illuminations and facilities for eating and drinking. There were minor imitators but the main ones were Cuper's Marylebone, Ranelagh and Vauxhall. The second is grouped by a connection with mineral springs so that the main rationale for patronage would be beneficial consequences for health. Examples would be Islington Spa, Sadler's Wells, and the Wells of Pancras, Hampstead and Lambeth. The third group consists of places that were primarily tea-gardens. These were much less grand than other sorts of garden and were more places of afternoon relaxation than evening entertainment. Cross-cutting a classification by type we also need to bear in mind differences in the predominant social status of the clientele. The emphasis upon social civility as the rationale of the gardens meant that there would be shared expectations of respectable dress and decorous conduct within the garden whatever the social standing but undoubtedly there were wide differences in the patronage of gardens with Ranelagh having the most consistently aristocratic tone. It was sometimes difficult to discriminate between some of the more popular gardens and other types of entertainment house such as inns and pubs, and it is possible that the fame of Vauxhall has lasted because it always represented a model of social style rather than a model of desirable entertainment (Wroth 1979).

One reason for featuring Vauxhall is that although it was in gradual decline virtually throughout the first half of the nineteenth century and eventually closed forever in 1859, the developments in entertainment

pioneered by its proprietors were eventually taken up by later gardens and encapsulate the changes in the nature of the spectacle offered. I have argued that the social occasion was the principal attraction offered by pleasure gardens but it is true that even in the eighteenth century the management offered spectacular contrivances to entertain their clientele. At Vauxhall the most famous device became commonly known as the 'tin cascade' in which fairly rudimentary machinery was used to simulate landscape scenes employing as accessories a bridge and mill wheel and a simulated cascade. These props were adapted to different topical concerns, so that sometimes it was a mountain view or possibly a scene from the Napoleonic wars. The panoramic potential of the long vistas provided by the walks in the gardens was also exploited by illuminated transparencies of allegories of members of the Royal Family or other heroic themes. Vauxhall also acted as a type of art gallery with vigorous paintings hung in alcoves and other more or less suitable settings. I will discuss entertainment by fireworks slightly more fully below but as soon as the idea of using light and noise to create a scenic effect, such as the ever-popular eruption of Mount Vesuvius, had been developed it is short step to using the same resources to simulate martial effects. So it is reported that in 1814: 'the space at the end of the Grand Walk, ...became the scene of the Naumachia, or engagement at sea. The maneuvers of the sea fight were, according to contemporaries, portrayed with wonderful fidelity and effect. The firing of a cannon was heard, the flash distinctly seen, and the damage sustained by the hulls and rigging of the vessels most ably imitated.' (Southworth 1941 pp.60-1).

The types of spectacular entertainment offered at London pleasure gardens in the nineteenth century can be briefly summarised as extensions and developments of trends I have already noted. For example, a very successful innovation at Vauxhall in 1815 was an act by Madame Saqui who worked on high wires with other members of her family, her act culminating

in a descent from a high platform: "in a shower of Chinese fire producing an impression on the spectators that cannot be described." (Southworth op. cit. p.89). Other modes of entertainment at Vauxhall that greatly impressed contemporaries and became models for later shows were enactments of battles such as the representation of Waterloo in 1827; sometimes as an addition to such shows and sometimes as the main attraction there were displays of horsemanship by contemporary heroes such as Ducrow and Cooke. The spectacles offered were therefore overlapping very closely with entertainments available in early circuses, to be discussed below, except that the open air aspect of pleasure gardens meant there could be greater use of fireworks, illuminations and generally play with light, colour and noise. In the concluding decades of the life of Vauxhall gardens strong competition was provided by the Cremorne Gardens amongst others. As well as continuing the tradition of providing an opportunity for fashionable display and a meeting place for public society, Cremorne extended some of Vauxhall's innovations in entertainment only offering them on an even greater scale such as the attempted crossing of the Thames on a high wire, aquatic tournaments, equestrian exhibitions and various versions of ballooning and flight reaching a suitably bizzare "high-point" when Madame Poitevin was prosecuted for ascending seated on a heifer slung below a balloon. These exhibitions were a genuine cause of awe and wonder as there was a persistent record of nasty accidents and severe or fatal injury (Altick 1978; see also the chapter in Delgado 1971). There were various types of freak show exhibited in the gardens, again suggesting a common root in the travelling circus and funfair, and the history of Surrey Zoological Gardens provides a nice progression when after the commercial failure of the zoo the site was used for a music hall that later became a theatre.

Zoos were subsequently adapted to a scientific discourse but in their earliest form they offered a form of entertainment consistent with other types of pleasure garden. Although Regent's Park Zoo was founded in 1828 and it might therefore be convenient to take that date as marking the beginning of modern zoos, it is possible to go back to earlier zoological collections and travelling animal shows which were not entirely premised on the display of freaks and oddities. The main point about zoological collections in the first half of the nineteenth century was that the welfare of the animals was of no practical importance. Not only were living conditions extremely uncomfortable affording no practical privacy from the inquisitive but marked changes in climate were not effectively considered and life expectancy was extremely short amongst the animal population. In part, the purpose of collecting the animals together was much like any other collection of curiosities, a traditional preindustrial cultural form of the travelling freak-show, and in part as a new occasion for social gathering and intercourse much as any other type of public garden provided. From both aspects there was no interest in the family life of the animals or in the relationship between life-style and habitat. Altick sees the extremely gradual moves towards respecting the idiosyncrasies and autonomy of different species as a process of gradual humanisation, but he also recognises that important innovations were made by zoo directors who attempted to interest their public in the specific features of new animals (1978). In this case the animals began to be interesting in their own right and organised as a source of display in terms of an accounting scheme based on species characteristics: 'Zoos display not only the animals but also, possibly primarily, a certain knowledge about them. The underlying system that determines the modalities of the exhibition ...reflects the contextual 'zoology', that is the current scientific knowledge about animals.'

(Bouissac, 1976 p.110).

The animals in zoological collections could gradually become worthy of respectful consideration because they ceased to be solely a cause for wonder such as a bearded woman, and because they ceased to be a backdrop to social spectacle and became spectacular entertainment in their own right. The important point is that spectacular entertainment in the nineteenth century did not have to have our conventional connotations of purposeless 'fun'. It was important that for some audiences the entertainment can be seen to be contributing to some moral and/or intellectual purposes. This was particularly easy to achieve in relation to the organising logic of zoological gardens because as Bouissac points out: 'any zoo can be considered a sort of pedagogical discourse that contributes to a general system for interpreting the animal world.' In Victorian culture opportunities for pedagogical discourse in entertainment settings were not restricted to zoological gardens by any means. Indeed virtually all the types of entertaining environment to be considered in this part of the chapter came to be influenced in the course of the century by attempts to reformulate the discourse of entertainment in a direction of improvement. In the case of pleasure gardens the most influential innovation in this direction was the opening of the Great Exhibition in 1851.

The scale of 'the crystal palace' built to house the Great Exhibition was of course spectacular in itself and the statistics of admissions, exhibits, incidental services etc., constitute powerful measures of the extraordinary scale on which public entertainments could be provided. It is relevant to the themes of this discussion in two ways. First, that it marked an outstanding success for pedagogical discourse: 'it was the exhibition of exhibitions, the most lavish of shows, the apotheosis of the lofty ideal of "rational entertainment.'" (Altick op. cit. p.456). This aspect of the building continued after the exhibition had closed and the palace was eventually moved and enlarged on to a hilltop in Sydenham. Here, in the building and surrounding grounds, the democratisation of public

attendance that had marked the original exhibition was continued and the menace of imminent revolution gradually receded before the crowds of soberly dressed artisans and bourgeoisie who came to listen to promenade concerts, admire exhibitions of useful inventions as well as collections of morally didactic works of art, and to be impressed by models of instances of dinosaur species that bizarrely continued the logic of zoological gardens. (Interestingly these forms of rational entertainment have now been replaced by extensive sporting facilities except for the models of dinosaurs which are now part of a small living zoo). Although this mixture of improvement and cultivation was very successful in terms of critical endorsement and public patronage, maintenance costs were very high and before long we find this type of pleasure garden slipping into the modes of entertainment developed by other more traditional gardens, so that for example in the 1860's we find Blondin performing death-defying feats on the high wire and in 1865 the first of a long tradition of amazingly extensive firework pyrotechnics was presented. The shift to entertainment spectacles did not, however, exhaust the pedagogic legacy of the initial exhibition. The steering committee of that exhibition used the profits: 'to further 'Useful Knowledge'. They bought 70 acres of land opposite Hyde Park in South Kensington and encouraged museums and educational institutions to come there.' (Phillips 1978 p.31), thus laying the basis of a whole new wave of public intervention in cultural health or cultural capital; a process that has been described as 'the nationalisation of culture' (Miniham 1977).

A legacy of museums, galleries and colleges was not the only consequence of an attempt to give spectacular form to pedagogic discourse. The social abstraction involved in the earlier cultural form of the pleasure garden in the latter half of the nineteenth century was given a new twist and set of relevances by moves to create lungs within cities through the provision of publicly maintained parks and gardens. The social



significance of urban parks and gardens is not entirely explained by ideologies of rational entertainment and social civilisation, although they are consistent with a belief in the importance of escaping urban concentration through the development of suburbs and later 'garden cities'. The development of municipal parks contains many elements that have been noted in relation to developments earlier in the century in gardens as entertainment environments. Meller uses her study of Bristol to identify two main styles of park, one was based on the botanical garden in which the arrangements of flora was organised in a pedagogical discourse directly analogous to developments in zoological gardens. The other: 'was to use the land for physical recreation with the provision of numerous facilities for sports' (1976 p.116). Neither style of park-keeping precluded the provision of suitable entertainment such as musical concerts and occasional fireworks and bonfires on occasions of national celebration. As well as the importance of these developments in marking a significant extension of municipal responsibility for 'cultural health', I think they are also important as a recognition of the rights of a new mass public for space for entertainment. It may be objected that the conventional municipal park is rarely spectacular, but municipal relations of production and sponsorship do not preclude spectacular shows that can be traced directly back to entertainments early in the nineteenth century. A recent study has reported upon the dramatic staging of a naval battle using model ships and music and fireworks in a municipal park in Scarborough (Richardson 1980). There are so many parallels between this entertainment and the aquatic dramas of earlier pleasure gardens that it is tempting to see it as a deliberate revival, but it is evidently enjoyed for its own sake and not as a re-creation of earlier spectacular forms.

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P A R T   T H R E E

The forms of drama I have described were basic in several senses. First, as I noted there were strongly traditional elements in form and content so that these modes preceeded urbanisation and were built upon in later developments. Secondly, they can be described as basic because the imagery was manufactured out of extremely rudimentary props, there was frequently little elaboration in the artifice and the drama was only imperfectly framed out of everyday experience. Which leads to the third sense, that as the performer only marginally transforms their stage, the stage - that is the ground - becomes integral as part of the performance and indeed can become the performance as in a park or pleasure garden. The imperfect framing of performance means that the distinction between performer and audience is neither rigid nor consistent, with a natural possibility that the 'audience' can become performers for themselves as in much of the formal display of the pleasure garden. The spectacles staged in such dramatic forms were not then likely to be particularly impressive or complex but they do provide an essential introduction to the repertoire of resources drawn up in manufacturing spectacular drama later in the century. I will in this section describe some forms of drama which were in some ways equivalently primitive but differ by the ways in which the dramas they offered attempted more thoroughly to transform their setting. Either through building upon it or through imagery of noise, colour and light the setting was transformed into an environment not of this world and as such the drama became an alternative reality.

The principal focus I shall use for collecting examples of this type of entertainment is the dramatic occasion of the fair. Although fairs are a traditional feature of British popular culture a great variety of

activities can take place under the general heading of a fair. In agrarian society they offered a mixture of: function, the sale of produce and animals and human labour - frequently being occasions when labourers and servants were hired; recreation, such as popular celebrations of feasts and holidays usually through rough games, dancing, drinking and general merry-making; and entertainment by which I mean the shows, rides and entertainments offered commercially by usually itinerant performers. In urban society the first two elements have either fallen into disuse or been actively suppressed and we now think of fairs as entertainment environments often associated with a circus although this is a later amalgamation. To begin with I will return to the theatre often performed at pre-industrial fairs and one spectacular type of celebration, and then consider the cultural form of the fair in general, concluding with a discussion of the circus as a cultural form of the early nineteenth century.

I emphasised in the previous section the rudimentary character of theatrical booths at fairs and it may seem inappropriate therefore to note them as instances of spectacular entertainment. But if it is remembered that the spectacular elements rest in the importance of display, pageantry and formulaic elements in characterization and action rather than just the expensiveness of staging then this popular theatre was a spectacular art. Some of the features Rosenfeld describes are worth noting such as the importance of a parade or procession both prefiguring the performance in order to attract attention and excite curiosity and in the course of a performance as an occasion for spectacular pageantry. The motif of the procession is of course interesting in that it reminds us of the recent tradition of circuses and fairs parading on arrival in a new town. A related promotion Rosenfeld mentions is the habit of hanging show cloths with the names of performers and pictures of their acts outside the booths in order to excite interest; a method of advertisement that as she notes is perpetuated in photographs outside theatres and cinemas. Above

all within the performance, as far as resources allowed the less sophisticated members of the audience were impressed and entertained by depictions of the marvellous: 'Scenery played an important part in many of the fair offerings. Spectacle had a natural appeal to the rough, unsophisticated, untutored crowds which visited the fairs; they needed something visual to marvel at as well as the patter of Merry Andrews and the crude jests of comedians.' (1960 p.159).

If scenery and stage effects had an important role in impressing the audience it is inevitable that there will be competition between theatrical entrepreneurs in the elaborateness of the spectacles offered, and that these accomplishments will be advertised to promote the performance. It is obvious that if large capital sums are being invested in scenic constructions and machinery to move it around then the investment will only seem worthwhile in a permanent or at least semi-permanent theatre. There was therefore towards the end of the eighteenth century an increasing bifurcation even within illegitimate theatres between those that occupied fixed sites and those that travelled between fairs touring the countryside. As an illustration of the rudimentary character of the entertainment offered within such travelling shows I shall quote from an actor's memoirs of playing in a travelling theatre in Kent and Sussex in the 1830s and 40s: 'All this parade was by moonlight, a large hole cut in the temple, covered with gauze; behind this luminary a country boy, perched on a ladder, held two large candles. The solemn procession entered, a death-like silence prevailed in the front of the house, and the rustic visitors were stuck with wonder and delight. A wire extending from the roof of the barn, to guide a bit of sponge dipped in spirits of wine, at a given moment descended to light the altar, ...Lo and behold! the moon instead of the tea-chest was on fire displaying the boy's face grinning through it. Alarm seized the audience - screams of "Fire! fire!". A stampede took place, everyone rushing to the barn doors - Virgins,

army, and spectators - in one wild terror. Brooke rushed up the ladder, and was seen cuffing the boy's head; he quickly descended, and heroically taking his place at the tea-cheste, sang "Give praise, give praise, our god has heard!" This claimed the affrighted people, and our play proceeded amidst thunders of applause'. (Stirling quoted in Trewin 1968 p.39).

Another function of spectacle in this type of popular theatre is the use of spectacular resources to celebrate contemporary events. Rosenfeld, for example, notes that battles which had recently been fought in Europe were represented either by clockwork models or by actors heroically miming dramatic action and employing all the resources of noise and light to heighten the effect. Once again this is a tradition that is continued by the theatres of the penny gaffs. Grant notes that audiences like only broadest farce or deepest tragedy and that a topical murder would be eagerly exploited: "the moment that accounts of any such occurrence appear in the newspaper, a piece embodying the most shocking incidents in that occurrence is got up for representation at these establishments. The recent atrocity known by the name of Edgware murder, was quite a windfall to many of the Penny Theatres. Pieces founded on the most frightful of the circumstances connected with it were forthwith got up, and acted to crowded houses, amidst great applause." (Grant 1971 p.17). It should not be assumed that because the resources for representation were only crude that the emotions appealed to were always equivalently crude, either gross patriotism or voyeuristic outrage. There are reports of spectacular presentations appealing to the class sympathies of members of the audience as in an instance cited by Rosenfeld when the performers seemed to have tried to combine chauvinism with radicalism: 'The French Revolution found place at Bartholomew Fair in 1790 when The Spaniard Well Drub'd, or the British Tar Victorious ended with a procession of "the King, French Heroes

Guards, Municipal Troops etc. to the Champ de Mars. To swear to the Revolution Laws, as established by the magnificent National Assembly on the 14th of July 1790". Here the people's theatre was on the side of the revolutionaries.' (op. cit. p.144).

The idea of celebrating a triumph or a success whether by the people collectively or by a hero and his followers on behalf of the people may be the occasion of a fair ground drama, alternatively the imagery of a firework show takes the noise, colour and lights from fairground display and re-stages them in the heavens. A firework show is in important respects a paradigm of spectacular entertainment. It is thoroughly visual; it has to employ the scale of the full heavens and is best enjoyed in large numbers; it is conspicuous consumption that leaves no record other than the memory of pleasure at display; at its best a firework display can provide an exemplification of wonderful creativity more stirring than any other epic art form; and it is necessarily public in that access cannot be restricted and it is usually staged as part of a collective celebration. It is therefore not surprising that the early uses of firework displays were particularly associated with State occasions and/or moments of national triumph and celebration. The earliest recorded commercial use of fireworks seems to have been as an aid to goading or baiting animals but more appropriate uses of this spectacular resource were developed early in the eighteenth century. By mid-century the opportunity fireworks provide to simulate natural wonders such as eruptions had been realised and entrepreneurs had also taken up presenting wonderful displays produced for celebrating peace treaties for royal patrons (c.f. Brock 1949; and Altick 1978). More commercial displays were usually staged at pleasure gardens and it is worth noting that it was not an entertainment confined to London. Brock mentions that in the nineteenth century gardens outside London such as the Clifton Zoological Gardens at Scarborough began firework displays early in the century, and at the Belle Vue Gardens in Manchester: 'for eighty-



seven years, beginning with the "Bombardment of Algiers" in 1852 to "Clive in India" in 1939, exhibitions of the firework-scenic type were staged without a break,' (op. cit. p.68).

I have described firework displays as an epic art form and I think this is an aspect worth pursuing as a guide to some aspects of spectacular entertainment. Given the scale and cost which meant that displays were predominantly sanctioned by those in power, and the associations with celebrations and national pride it is not surprising that rulers used firework displays as a means of selfglorification and impressing the masses as well as a type of cultural reward. Brock cites a public notice for a firework display to be held in London in 1814: 'the object of the peaceful festival, is to give all ranks and orders, a grateful occasion to indulge in that full participation of happiness to which their perseverance in a most sanguinary and trying contest crowned with unprecedented success, has so richly entitled them.' (op. cit. p.72). It is also consistent that on such occasions the scale and impression of the displays would be supplemented by firing cannons and rockets by units of the national army. It is against this background that the nineteenth century predilection for staged reconstructions of battles developed. A fairly rudimentary natural set was illuminated with fireworks while companies of soldiers acted out the parts of the appropriate armies, cavalry charges and equestrian displays could be included and it was really only a matter of substance whether the battle was on land or water. These military spectacles did not have to trumpet unalloyed patriotism and jingoism but in practice they were a type of festival which depend upon a clear sense of presupposed community. It is also consistent with this type of drama that when pleasure gardens staged panoramic views, that is more or less three dimensional models, often including acrobatic feats the whole illuminated with fireworks, they were of epic nature such as the Alps, or a battlefield,

or a suitably impressive townscape such as a view of Venice.

A firework show aims to transform its setting and make it, however briefly, an entertainment environment. The great majority of entertainment environments work through exaggerating the artifice of entertainment as an overwhelming abstraction from routine concerns. For example if we think of a funfair with a mixture of stalls, shows, booths, bars and rides then it is apparent that each element works through being garish and assertively striving to catch our attention, the whole in combination being a transcendent profusion of sound, colour, light and sensation. The mixture of elements and the dominance of the setting makes a funfair at least analogous with a street market. The structural analogy between funfairs, markets, shows and exhibitions is that they are all environments toured freely by patrons: 'In the entertainment environment, it is the events that are fixed, and not the spectator, who is often completely mobile and presented with a large number of choices around which he organizes his own "event".' (McNamara 1974 p.23). McNamara introduces a useful distinction within this general class of entertainment between those settings that are redefinitions of pre-existing areas, such as street markets, and those that are autonomous uses of space solely for entertainment. Within the latter category he includes the very popular nineteenth century forms of various types of museum, waxworks, peepshows, booths of freaks and oddities and a general style of entertainment that survives in England as at one extreme amusement arcades and at the other striptease shows.

What holds all types of entertainment environments together in a recognisable category is that the environment doesn't just frame the performer but frames the audience as well. They are therefore necessarily removed from many of the props and grounds of everyday reality. This sense of alienation and freedom from normal constraints can be used to

license illegitimate behaviour as on festival days in villages in pre-industrial cultures, or as in the fabled reputation of holiday camps in British culture when the other-worldly setting is popularly supposed to license sexual freedom impossible back home. The example of a holiday camp is interesting because apart from the absence of work, and a vaguely institutional atmosphere, so much of the setting serves to remind participants of styles of life and values very definitely derived from everyday experience. (The holiday camp also reminds us of that great British holiday institution the pier, when an environment literally juts out from normality into the unknown and within that setting fun and health are combined in a procession of pleasures). This suggests then that it should be possible to rank environments along a scale according to the degree to which they accentuate the possibilities of alienation from normality. At one extreme one could imagine something like an opium den in which the customers are the performers and the entertainment is something that goes on only within their own minds. More prosaically many clubs and dance rooms in the last two decades have tried to combine music, light, smell and setting to produce complete disorientation and absorption amongst the audience. All these instances of the customer losing control naturally imply that someone else is intensifying their control. This may be used for straightforwardly commercial ends as in fairgrounds when the organisation of elements is designed to attract the punter from booth to booth and the disorientation both enhances the enjoyment and facilitates free expenditure. There can be more sinister uses of environmental control as for example in the case of spectacular political rallies such as that held in Nuremburg by the Nazis; and others have suggested that the spiritual guidance available in various alternative religions may be made to seem more attractive through manipulation of disorientation.

There is one type of entertainment environment which ought to be briefly noted and that is the occasion when a normal setting is transformed by an unpredictable event. For most people this will be a disaster such as a freak wind, storm, wave, eruption or crash of some sort, although there are more benign visitations such as in those countries where the President likes to drop in unexpectedly on ordinary folks and quiz them for the views of the people, or one is stopped by a television crew in the street. To some extent our interest in such happenings is how they are carried off and this is the interest appealed to by sensationalist media reports of disasters and transformations. I do not want to deny sympathy and concern of course but the vicariousness that many find distasteful is I think centrally directed to an opportunity to observe the response of normality to abnormality and the consequential display of genuine and overwhelming emotion. An interesting example of an entertainment that combined these several elements is the train crash arranged by a man called Crush in Texas in 1896 (reported in Moy 1978). The show was a spectacular happening in which two trains collided head on at a prearranged time, and it was therefore an instance of a natural disaster vicariously available to its spectators. The event was staged in a natural amphitheatre, to which access was only possible through the facilities of the entrepreneur and he also had control over the supply of supplementary facilities such as drinks, snacks and other entertainments. The whole environment therefore became a pleasure ground in which what took place was more or less designed for the pleasure of participants; more or less because, as in so many environmental spectacles, the unexpected took over and when the trains collided a huge amount of debris was thrown into the air and several spectators were injured - one fatally.

The idea that entertainment can be provided through a spectacular simulation of feats of outrageous risk-taking allied with the provision of supplementary entertainment in stalls and snacks etc., takes us to that

important cultural form of circus. There are good reasons for claiming that circus is not really an environmental entertainment but should be defined as: 'a travelling and organized display of animals and skilled performances within one or more circular stages known as 'rings' before an audience encircling these activities.' (Truzzi 1979 p.175), and in this sense seen more as an extension of theatre. The definitional issue is not of great moment, what seems more important is that the circus provides a mixture of entertainment within a highly flamboyant and ritualised setting, in which the performances combined human and animal skills to amuse, fill with wonder and admiration and occasionally terrify spectators. The form is inherently spectacular in that it relies on pugnacious presentation, outrageous claims and displays that are literally extra-ordinary; the staging is a crucial part of the showiness of this show business. We have become so imbued with the idea that the circus encapsulates the heart of the brash vulgarity of popular culture that the form itself is treated as hallowed with tradition and mythological in the sense that it pre-dates historical record. In practise the ritualistic aspects of circus entertainment lies mainly in the form of presentation rather than content of performances, as Bouissac says 'Circus tradition ....is not an invariable repetition of the same tricks but a set of rules for cultural transformations, displayed in a ritualistic manner that tempers this transgressive aspect.' (1976 p.8); and circus as a cultural form has both a specific and quite a short history.

In the previous section I briefly mentioned the founding of Astley's in London by an ex-trooper and it is from this that the modern circus is conventionally dated (Saxon 1968, 1975 and 1978). Shortly after the opening of Astley's first theatre, the Royal Circus opened nearby and soon other theatres both legitimate and illegitimate felt the need to respond to this competition by including animal acts in their presentations. The craze was not confined to England as circuses were founded in both France,

the Circque Olympique, and in America, by another English ex-soldier Joseph Bill Ricketts in Philaedlphia, before the century was out. Truzzi also reports that Spanish troupes visited Mexico and that the first full circus performance was given there in 1791. The early circus was neither exclusively theatrical nor an itinerant show in a tent. In fact the move from theatre to tent was not a once for all move but the two ran parallel for most of the first half of the nineteenth century, animals gradually dropping out of stage presentations when the fashion for hippodramas passed, and the development of national itinerant circuses depended upon a network of national railways. Although it is important to remember that while circuses in the twentieth century have been dominated by a few big names in each country there have usually survived a number of small local circuses working a regional circuit (c.f. Flint 1979). This level of entertainment only really gave up to be replaced by semipermanent more theatrical circuses with the spread of mass television.

The theatrical character of early circus meant that a distinction between a ring for equine displays and a stage for acting was very hard to sustain. The early circuses in practise had both with alternate bits of business switching between them. It was not long, however, before obvious innovations were introduced - first the combination of ring and stage so that pursuits and fights represented in the ring could be used to complement the text of what was being acted on the stage; secondly, bridges between ring and stage so that actors and even animals could pass from one setting to the next; and thirdly, the effective absorbtion of the ring into the stage so that the theatrical business could become increasingly spectacular in its effects. The implication of a lack of a clear distinction between ring and stage is that human actors could not claim any automatic priority as Saxon says: 'The true hippodrama, as the name implies, is literally a play in which trained horses are considered as actors, with business, often leading actions, of their own to perform.'

(1968 p.7). I think it is important to note as well that although horses were the original inspiration for the circus they were not the only animal to be exploited in theatrical spectacles. Other examples of animals included in dramatic presentations are a llama and a zebra in a representation of a desert, stories of a recalcitrant bear and most famously the vogue for including elephants in stage shows. Although their naturalness could have unfortunate consequences for other actors and the front rows of the audience, the elephants' privileged position survived various changes in circus format and have remained an integral element for any show or procession. Perhaps the most bizarre attempts to feature animals as actors came in the attempts to present Shakespeare suitably adapted as a hippodrama. Contemporaries seemed to have agreed that the most successful of these was Cooke's Richard III in 1856-7 when although the play was compressed in three acts, the first two were reasonably free of equine spectacles and it was only in the concluding battle of Bosworth that the energetic representation of battle overtook the basic verse.

In general, however, theatrical circuses did not aim for dramatic complexity but were content with vigorous action, noise and colour and thrilling spectators with daring feats of horsemanship. The narrative framework which gave a loose coherence to these spectacles was almost inevitably the melodramatic structure discussed in the previous section. A typical evening's entertainment at a circus consisted of a burletta and a conventional melodrama acted on the stage either side of a hippodrama in which the same themes would be subordinated to the audience's predilection for spectacle: 'But then as every stage historian of the period knows freakish types of drama were common enough in the nineteenth century. The sense of wonder that enveloped the theatre then and helped to create and sustain such drama has been almost entirely lost in the present century.' (Saxon 1968 p.29). Among the most famous of the spectacles presented at circuses were a recreation of the battle of Waterloo in which when the final

tableau was staged the performance area was littered with the debris of battle and the corpses of brave horses, and Mazeppa a story of prince wrongly accused who after terrible privations was able to return and exact his revenge. Initially the popularity of the latter piece was probably due to the opportunities it provided for daring leaps by horse and passenger over crages and up mountain sides - and it was not entirely simulated as several performers were badly injured or killed by mishaps. Later, the leading role was played by women providing opportunities for mild titillation, most strikingly exploited by the American actress Adah Isaacs Menken who toured America and Western Europe as the naked lady - a title her costume did not in the least deserve.

Although I have emphasised the importance of theatrical circus as an antecedent of contemporary circus there were of course other contributory streams that helped to shape the distinctive style of the almost ritualised show that came down to the twentieth century. One stream is a type of entertainment that survives from medieval spectacles and while it was incorporated into theatrical circus was simultaneously popular in street entertainments and later in music hall and variety stage. This is the tradition of feats of dexterity that lacks a general name and is usually referred to by specific skills such as rope-dancing or rope-walking, gymnastics both on moving animals and in combination with others to produce human pyramids etc., juggling, acrobatics and trapeze work etc. These skills were itinerant and were paraded wherever an audience could be recruited and tapped for support. They have in time become more exclusively incorporated within the circus but can easily transfer to the variety stage if opportunity permits. The other stream contributing to the distinctive character of circus is again very traditional in that it dates back at least to medieval spectacles, and that is itinerant fair booths and shows possibly displaying freaks, animal and human, or unusual skills, or animal shows or just unusual menageries (c.f. Disher 1742). The latter animal shows did in the course of the nineteenth century become more dramatic in that



the performers might be combined in front of some panorama or other representation and thus gradually merged with other developments in theatrical circus. I should also mention that the dramatic character of the clown although virtually synonymous with the circus in the twentieth century was only present in a more minor role in the previous century and was basically of only one type. Sub-divisions of clown costumes did not really develop until towards the end of the nineteenth century.

One aspect of the development of the circus as a cultural form is particularly relevant to the argument as a whole in that I have stressed how entertainment environments work to disorient the audience from everyday experience. If this strategy is to <sup>be</sup> successful one could expect to find that those particularly associated with the entertainment would exaggerate their own foreign-ness in order to underline the strangeness of the world the spectator was entering. Such a ploy would have an additional functional advantage that if the entertainment they are offering is an unusual skill it will obviously evoke more awe from patrons if they believe it is an esoteric skill which they could not hope to match. It is for these sorts of reasons that we can expect to find various social devices of exclusivity operating amongst showpeople. Of course this as a generalisation is true of acting and the world of entertainment in general, but circus people seem to have developed particularly strongly their role as strangers, a marginal caste. In Britain and Western Europe this has been accentuated by cultural traditions in which nomadism is associated with the ethnicity of gypsies, and so the style of dress and heavy dialect only reinforce these associations. In North America travelling shows will lack some of these associations and may stress their regional roots but as Truzzi reports entertainers will still adopt foreign-sounding names, both for their intrinsic attraction and to associate themselves with a particular piece of business (1979). By the mid-nineteenth century circus people had formed a distinct ghetto in London, roughly

stretching between Waterloo and Vauxhall bridges, where they lived when not on the road; they spoke a distinct slang - which has often filtered down to the mid-twentieth century in criminal and homosexual argot; took names that had strong Romany or South European associations; and there was a lot of inter-marrying between circus families (Frost 1875; Douglas 1975)

There are at least two ways in which the staging of spectacle in theatrical circus is interesting in relation to the meaning of spectacle as it has come down to the twentieth century. They are both concerned with aspects of Andrew Ducrow's preeminence. Ducrow took over Astleys and during the seventeen years of this reign, 1825-42, he established a name for equestrian virtuosity that has never been equalled. Although Ducrow performed astonishing feats on horseback he was particularly famous amongst his contemporaries for his dramatic interpretations of characters - that is he enacted pôses plastiques through which characters and biographies were assembled and enacted often with such force and vitality that spectators were caught up in the emotions depicted. Before Ducrow equestrian skills had been basically tumbling and after him there was an emphasis upon technical virtuosity rather than narrative command. The second point is somewhat paradoxical after the first. Although his solo performances were conceived as dramatic narratives many contemporaries felt that the thematic organisation of his spectacles left a lot to be desired: 'The real pleasure of attending a stage production at Astley's ...lay not in the human acting or the incomprehensible plots with their wretched dialogue, but in the glittering spectacle and massive groupings, the swift-paced action and profusion of gorgeous settings, the crashing music any pyrotechnical displays, and above all the thundering hoofs of the real stars of the establishment, Ducrow and West's mighty troop of horses.' (Saxon 1978 p.180; c.f. also East 1971). The heart of Ducrow's showmanship lay in his choreography of crowds, movement, noise and action - above all else action -and in this he is a central contributor to the dramatic tradition

culminating in the spectacular productions of Griffiths and De Mille than the circus tradition as it subsequently developed. Both in this respect and their elaborate theatricality Ducrow's shows take us to the more conventional drama of popular theatre in the early nineteenth century.

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P A R T F O U R

In the second and third parts of this chapter I have described some forms of popular entertainment, principally from the first half of the nineteenth century, which although they were intrinsically dramatic in form were not what we conventionally understand as theatrical. In this section I shall turn to more obviously theatrical modes of performance, again concentrating on the first half of the century. The reason for breaking the century into two eras is that Walpole's Licensing Act of 1737 had restricted 'legitimate' drama to a small number of licensed theatres, and until this act was repealed in 1843 these Theatres Royal were surrounded by a penumbra of illegitimate theatres. The reform of the law did not mean, however, that a distinction between high and popular theatre had been institutionalised by a licensing system which was then transcended by the emergence of a fully commercial theatre. Rather the opposite, that repeal of legislation: 'which had divided drama into legitimate and illegitimate, led, paradoxically, to a far sharper separation of these two forms than had been the case whilst that Act was in force.' (Davison 1982A p.ix). The reasons for this paradoxical consequence are profoundly bound up with shifts in the meaning of spectacular imagery and the significance of drama in urbanised society. In attempting to elucidate the character of popular theatre as an introduction to later developments I will concentrate on melodrama the principal theatrical mode of the century. In this section I will note some features of the genre and in the next explore the melodramatic vision.

The struggle for a free stage has assumed in the professional mythology of British theatrical history much of the ideological baggage that

the struggle for a free press has in the history of journalism. By this I mean that the freedoms won and the manner of their winning both tell us a lot about the ideology of 'legitimate' expression in British public life. Since 1737 only two theatres in London, those at Drury Lane and Covent Garden, had held licences entitling them to perform prose dramas of the sort associated with conventional theatre. As well as these theatres a number of others held opera-house licences or limited warrants to present dramas in illegitimate modes which did not infringe the privileges of the monopolists. In part these licences concerned the length of the season the theatre was entitled to present and in part concerned with formal issues of types of permissible drama. In either case officials of the Lord Chamberlain's office were empowered to adjudicate and were necessarily caught up as effective agents of censorship. (Censorship did not cease of course with the repeal of the Licensing Act and in its effect contributed to the very stylised character of popular drama, c.f. Stephens 1980). When producers were prosecuted for transgressing the boundaries of their licence, whether they had a semi-respectable public as Elliston did at the Surrey in 1818 or a more thoroughly proletarian public such as that for Sam Lane at the Royal Union Saloon in Shoreditch in 1839, their defence was that they were catering to genuine public demand (a fuller discussion of licensing battles and public demand in the last years of the Act is in Barker 1971). The necessity of satisfying the frustrations of new publics for theatrical entertainment was opposed by appeals to the necessity of privilege to preserve a national theatrical tradition. There were a number of martyrs in this slow legal battle and the record of unsuccessful attempts at legislative reform is a classic instance of the obscurantism of the British legislature, but it did mean that those seeking to provide entertainment for new publics were forced to innovate in theatrical forms: 'The illegitimate forms, melodrama, burletta, farce, pantomime, extravaganza and spectacle emerged as the result

of the Licensing Laws. Because the minor theatres were forbidden to produce regular plays, musical or non-spoken entertainments developed.' (Cowan 1978 p.10).

Although the legal distinction between types of theatre was important in providing a crucible for the development of new theatrical forms, and was associated to a limited extent with differences in the social composition of audiences for different theatres, there was not a simple correlation between type of theatre and the quality of the drama performed. Patent theatres were just as likely to include novelties such as performing dogs and grossly edited versions of Shakespeare. An evening's entertainment of even respectable theatre would contain a heterogeneous mixture of theatrical forms. For example, in Leacroft's brief history of the Theatre Royal, Leicester he notes that when in 1836 the management proudly announced the engagement of Charles Kean for five nights: 'on Monday Hamlet was performed, followed by The Grand Oriental Spectacle The Forty Thieves' (1958 p.5), a pattern repeated on succeeding nights. The innovations of illegitimate theatres did not just seep upwards but were also taken over and adapted to the conditions of the theatrical booths described above. Rosenfeld writing of the career of the itinerant showman Richardson in the early years of the century notes that his usual programme: 'consisted of a short play, nearly always a melodrama, a pantomime sometimes ending with a panorama, and a comic song between play and pantomime. ...The melodramas, though unsophisticated, were more coherent; folk drama had taken over in abbreviated form the type of romantic melodrama popular at the patent theatres.' (1977 pp.112-3).

There was an extraordinary boom in theatres founded and built between 1780 and 1830 and I shall mention some illustrative examples. As I have noted in the previous section Astley was an ex-horse soldier who in 1768 started giving exhibitions of horsemanship on an open field in Lambeth who then took his 'show' on a tour of country fairs. When he returned

to Lambeth he bought a site and built seats, improving the site each succeeding season. In 1778 a proper building was erected which could be illuminated with candles thus making possible the provision of evenings of spectacular entertainment. A rival home for hippodrama to Astleys was soon started also on the unfashionable south bank of the river and this was called the Royal Circus changing its name in 1810 to the Royal Surrey when Elliston took over the managership (Astley's was renamed the Royal Amphitheatre in 1804). The Surrey had by then abandoned horse dramas and developed a speciality of melodramas which later, partly because of its name and partly location, became generalised to the genre as Surrey-side gore and extravagance. Competing with the quasi-circuses of the horse dramas on the south bank a different type of spectacle was offered at Sadler's Wells Aquatic Theatre Islington and other theatres. This was tank drama in which naval battles and romances could be simulated. Another theatre opened in an unfashionable district was the Royalty Theatre in Whitechapel opened in 1787 and on whose behalf five thousand people petitioned Parliament to grant a licence for an audience otherwise denied theatrical entertainment. Finally, going back across the river again the Royal Coburg was opened at the junction of New Cut and Waterloo Bridge Road. Later renamed the Royal Victoria (and still with us as the Old Vic) the Coburg was particularly associated with the development of melodrama rather than theatrical novelties although spectacle remained a central element in its stagecraft.

Disher describes a popular play, Cross's Blackbeard, presented initially at the Royal Circus in 1798 in which a girl disguised as a pirate is amongst the crew who capture a princess and find themselves besieged: 'Ismene, a Mogul princess, is captured, and is going to precipitate herself into the sea, when a negro enters bearing the following scrolls. Blackbeard reads it and quails but, after the audience has cheered it, displays the other.



THE ENEMY IS BRITISH  
AND WILL  
DIE OR CONQUER

SHOULD THE ENEMY  
PROVE VICTORIOUS  
BLOW UP THE SHIP'

(Disher 1949 p.60)

As an instance of what could be done with the burletta form, Elliston's version of Macbeth presented in 1809 reduced the play to: a total of only 326 lines in the three acts, the bulk of which occur in the witches' scenes. ...Apart from mime and rhymed recitative, there were songs and the use of banners or scrolls to advance the plot or evoke atmosphere. ...The banquet scene was one of the biggest spectacles, with the ghost of Banquo 'surrounded by clouds', coming and going through a trap with unsettling regularity.' (Murray 1975 pp.23-4). A further illustration can be taken from Cowan's thesis, she quotes from the prompt book of El Hyder a melodramatic spectacle first presented at the Coburg in 1818: 'scene III: A grand Triumphal Arch, forming a grand Entrance to the City; military music is heard at a distance; the ringing of bells, discharge of cannon, and shouts denote a day of rejoicing. A splendid Procession enters the Great Arch: Banners, 6 Bengal Sepoys; banner - 6 Warriors of Behaleca; banner - 6 Warriors of the Hircarah Tribe; banner - 6 soldiers of the Brig Larsis Tribe; three Choobdars - Artillery - Seapoys - Prisoners - Seapoys - Artillery - Officers of State - Officers of the Household Military Band - Princess Zada and Prince Chareddin - Ladies of the Harem veiled, escorted by Black Slave, - The Rajah Hamet on a splendidly caparisoned Elephant surrounded by Officers and household Troops, as he alights and takes his seat upon a temporary throne, shouts, and a discharge of artillery.' (1978 p.56).

The provinces were not denied any form of legitimate theatre as a number of Royal patents were issued after 1750 so that there was a base for professional employment independent of the squire's patronage of strolling players. Up to the end of the eighteenth century provincial

Patent theatres seem on the whole to have co-existed without friction with more traditional fairground entertainments. The first half of the next century was more confused as on the one hand the traditional bases of popular entertainments were being eroded and at the same time there were comparable growths in the audience for theatrical entertainment as London. The Patent theatres were forced into the confusing task of trying to maintain their respectability, and follow the latest fashions and new styles coming out of London, and appeal to swiftly changing popular tastes, and beat off the challenges of unlicensed theatres opening in competition. For example, Barker K. discussing the relations between the Theatre Royal at Bristol and its competitors notes that while full-length hippodramas were reserved for the Patent theatre a circus could present in its arena: 'costumed processions and short burlettas to mimed spectacles ...in the course of which "various interesting situations and effects occur", ...in the same programme Powell had "a Grand Equestrian Scene, representing the Shakespearean Characters of SIR JOHN FALSTAFF, SHYLOCK AND RICHARD III" ' (1977 p.99). She shows that it wasn't until the beginning of the second half of the century that the respectable theatre in Bristol gave up the attempt to compete with popular presentations, and turned to the alternative of creating a 'Temple of Drama' based on a discriminating clientele. Similarly Roy's study of play bills for the Theatre Royal, Hull in 1820 finds that an evening's entertainment took much the same form as in London with a main melodrama followed by a ballet or several comic songs and dances concluding with a farce or pantomime or extravaganza. The popular aspects of these performances were stressed so that: 'the stock company was quick to draw attention to those incidents in a play, such as storms, explosions, battles, tournaments, trials, dances and processions of all kinds ...but the effects of which they seem to have been especially proud were the "new red fire" invented for conflagrations, and the moonlight:' (1971 p.28).

A genre of theatrical entertainment which was popular throughout the century, and has remained popular as a 'traditional' form in the twentieth century, was the pantomime. Certain elements of pantomime style fed into melodrama and as the genre came to be characterised by extravagant spectacle it is obviously relevant to a general picture of spectacular drama in the theatre. The tradition of pantomime stems from the travelling dumbshows and mimes of particularly Southern Europe and came to England with the Commedia dell' arte companies in the second half of the seventeenth century, although the term pantomime was not used in a play bill until 1717. The form of eighteenth century pantomimes combined traditional characters such as Harlequin, Scaramouche and Punch with scenic effects in what was largely silent enactment. It was not until the beginning of the next century, and then largely through the influence of Joseph Grimaldi, that pantomime structure became stabilised through a number of essential elements. In addition to traditional characters there were alternating elements of fantasy, low comedy and trick effects the whole organised through a characteristic pattern of a verse opening followed by a Harlequinade in which stock figures assumed a variety of roles to enact fantastic stories of love thwarted interspersed with amusing escapades, a: 'seemingly bizarre, wasteful, and gaudy concatenation of irrelevant theatrical events;' (Mayer 1969 p.1). The mythical characters and flimsy tales were clear indications that pantomimes were not meant to be taken seriously. They were a form of dramatic excess symbolised by the way plots were devised so that at a: 'crucial moment a complete metamorphosis of the whole scene took place visually - by means of transparencies, rising and falling gauzes, opening pieces, "rise-and-sinks", etc. to provide a crowning miracle of effect.' (Southern 1970 p.39).

In the course of the century extravagant effects became more significant and the comedy more stylised so that the topical satire which was a characteristic of Grimaldi's pantomimes became less effective.

Another consequence was that the Harlequinade came to occupy a less central role in the structure of the pantomime in later years. One way of describing these changes is to say that more traditional theatrical artifice of masquerade gave way to a form of dramatic structure which emphasised variety and the introduction of quite superfluous business such as jugglers, singers and other types of entertainers. In this way pantomime came to feed quite closely on the music hall and variety stages and exemplify a quite different narrative organisation - a form of theatrical entertainment which became an important resource for the development of the cinema at the end of the century. Despite these internal changes, however, it is common to characterise pantomime as a genre of fantasy, in which spectacular effects were quite as important as in melodrama but purely directed: 'to the end of fantasy, a fantasy often excessively pretty and ideally beautiful, sometimes darkly grotesque, but employing mass, colour, and light for nonrealistic purposes, as opposed to melodrama.' (Booth 1981 p.60). The fantasy of pantomime could exploit the romance of landscape, famous painters of dioramas were commissioned to undertake the most elaborate projects for pantomimes, but the conventional settings of dramatic action were either or both exotic and urban: 'Pantomime arrangers were hard put to find any comic business appropriate to the country except the conventional rustic games, hunting, or merry-making they nearly always preferred a city environment for the harlequinade.' (Mayer 1969 p.126).

In these ways it is reasonable to see pantomime as an unadulterated form of popular spectacle. The genre developed as it did because producers were willing to invest capital and technical resources in making spectacular effects more and more elaborate. When they found that increased investment generated extra revenue through public acclaim a vicious circle was created in which pantomime defined one end of a dramatic spectrum: 'The large number of scene changes dictated the quantity; the taste for

opulence and spectacle and novelty determined elaborateness; and the enduring fact that income from pantomime tended to rise in proportion to the initial investment makes it probable ...that most settings were thereafter passed on piecemeal to other entertainments staged at the same theatre.' (Mayer 1969 p.111). In addition to the scenic effects I have already mentioned, such as the elaborate stagings and transformation scenes and the prominence of dioramic backcloths, another remarkable feature of pantomimic fantasy was the elaborate use of traps. These were used for comic effect, as then a character could escape by jumping through a mirror which de-shattered itself to present a smooth surface, or for horrifying or startling effects when characters made dramatic entries and exits. Pantomime therefore was, and is, a fantastic form in which the fantasy grows out of an exaggerated theatricality: 'pantomime is the best example in the nineteenth century of a dramatic genre virtually defined by a new technology.' (Booth 1981 p.81). By the end of the century all the most elaborate and extravagant devices of staging were used for theatrical excess, to create entertainment which luxuriated in spectacular display.

Pantomime was certainly popular throughout the century. I have noted that producers found it profitable to invest in pantomimes, and indeed the pantomime season was used in many theatres to subsidise other less profitable, although possibly more worthwhile, seasons. In the first half of the century a pantomime was a common element in an evening's theatrical entertainment, and as such was one of a number of illegitimate forms. New pantomimes might be produced at special seasons throughout the year, such as Christmas, Easter and July, and it was not until after the repeal of the Theatrical Licensing Act in 1843 that pantomimes became limited to a Christmas season. The restriction of pantomime to the Christmas season, and bearing in mind that this was the era when Christmas was being reconstructed as a privatised, familial festival season, suggests that as

the fantasy in pantomime became more elaborate the character of the performance became more recognisably carnivalesque. Not only did leading players in the company 'mug' and parody themselves and the audience outrageously, and there was a significant role for processions in the stage business, but the traditional feature of inversion was adapted through cross-sex dressing. Madame Vestris, an early star of revues and entertainment, was famous for the elegance of her legs found that dressing as a young man legitimated a form of display otherwise impossible, and this has survived into a more permissive climate in the institution of the principal boy. The related tradition of men dressing as ugly women for comic effect cannot be dated so precisely but it has also remained a staple of pantomime and variety entertainment in general. The link to carnival and the associated bracketing of a type of festivity exempt from everyday considerations and constraints also helps to explain: 'the demand in pantomime for the opulent and exotic (which) was first expressed and continually maintained by a variety of oriental and eastern styles that were used ubiquitously and capriciously.' (Mayer 1969 p.139). The connection between this vogue for orientalism and the expansion of the British mercantile Empire to the East is doubtless valid, but it would not explain the continued popularity of oriental exotica, for example late twentieth century pantos such as Aladdin and Ali Baba. In general it seems appropriate to see the spectacular form of pantomime as parasitic on other theatrical forms. It has survived better than any of them because its fantastic variety of elements has become so closely tied to certain traditions of festivity. As childhood has become a privileged social space, innocent of the corruptions of public drama, nostalgia has become institutionalised in the transparent artifice of pantomime and the spectacle is used to conjure a sentimental community of reassuring traditions.

The emphases upon superficial effect, emotional rhetoric and crude stereotyping in these types of drama make it easy to see why even Raymond Williams, writing about responses in early nineteenth century theatres to the demands of new audiences, has said that: 'the major expansion was served at a very low level throughout' (1961 p.263). A generalised dismissal is however, inappropriate - it is a failure in cultural relativism to attempt to impose our norms of dramatic force upon the conventions of a previous era: 'The current modes of taste in production are so antagonistic to Victorian styles that a real effort at historical understanding is necessary before the existence and importance of spectacle in the Victorian theatre can be properly appreciated.' (Booth 1981 p.1). In part the rather stiff iconography of the displays, gestures and processions of these presentations points back to the significance of tableau imagery in medieval dramaturgy. And interestingly this strand in dramatic imagery did not die out as melodramas became more sophisticated: 'Andrew Ducrow's "living statues" in the 1820's at Astley's and on tour, in which he posed in a picture frame behind a curtain in the precise attitudes of classical statuary, was another transposition of the tableau vivant to theatrical performance. By the 1830s tableaux vivants had become public entertainment, known sometimes as poses plastiques, and eventually found their way into the music hall.' (Booth op. cit. p.19). Surviving in popular variety they culminated in one sense in the sexual hypocrisy of the display of naked women before the licensing of striptease inaugurated a different imagery of analogy. I shall attempt to show though that too great a stress on traditionalism is inappropriate and that the spectacular features of early nineteenth century theatricality point towards a concern with pictorialism and ways of seeing that has a very different social resonance <sup>than</sup> of the communalism of medieval dramaturgy.

Spectacles and their associated extravaganzas and pantomimes were legitimate within the legal framework of the late eighteenth century because

their dramaturgy centrally worked through action, ceremonial, mime and dumbshow with occasional linking commentary provided by banners and backdrops. Similarly operas and associated musical forms escaped the restrictions on dialogue as a defining criterion of drama. An obvious development was to try and import dialogue into spectacle by having performers speak, in recitative, lines that would have been sung in opera. Once this cautious experiment had proved successful: 'A regular play was taken, the dialogue put into blundering rimed couplets and a few songs added, the whole being presented as a "burletta" ...When once this fashion had been established, clearly the dialogue came to assume an ever greater importance and the formal orchestra dwindled down to a single piano.' (Nicholl 1955 pp.138-9). The lines of development can be clearly discerned and although an attempt at defining burletta need not concern us here, as it proved a task beyond the Lord Chamberlain's office at the time, important ground-rules for melodrama's growth had been established. These were that music was a key constituent element in the drama (thus melos music and drame drama as the roots of the name), and that dialogue was based on formal rather than naturalistic conventions. These elements combined with traditions of mime and extravagant show gave melodrama a set of stylistic characteristics which persisted until at least the silent cinema. Melodramas were presented as items in a heterogenous evening's entertainment which lasting from 6.30 to after midnight had scope to include a farce, pantomime and other entertainments as well as a three hour melodrama.

Melodrama developed therefore in a setting of new theatres uncertain of their legal status, providing entertainment for a public that most contemporary commentators felt were not traditional patrons of the theatre, and utilizing traditions of the procession, mime, comic song and dance and fairly rudimentary stage business of spectacular contrivances. Although the gothic moralising of melodrama is usually assumed to be a French invention, more specifically attributed to Pixerecourt, and dependent on a



wider climate of romanticism, the pillaged form was adapted to certain native traditions. Melodrama was a cultural form that pulled these disparate strands together into a distinct moral perspective. Before considering that perspective in greater detail it is appropriate to consider the audiences for whom the form was developed as well as its authors and performers. I have noted above that the period of rapid urbanisation necessitated a transformation of popular culture both because places for the public to gather were either being destroyed or not being built, and because a social struggle over appropriate forms meant that many traditional entertainments were undermined and suppressed. The theatre was therefore pushed into prominence: 'Only the Church, the brothel, the circus, the public-house and the theatre remained and of these the theatre was perhaps the most widely available and by far the most entertaining. To the theatre then they came, an invading army of factory slaves, navvies, guttersnipes, emaciated counter-clerks and care-worn women suckling babes in arms.' (Smith 1973 p.16). Audiences were drawn from the immediate locality, Rahill has described that for the Coburg in Lambeth as 'apprentices on the loose, sailors, coal bargemen, navvies, costers, Chinamen, Malays, fishwives, peddlers, pickpockets, streetwalkers.' (1967 p.138), and were notorious for the vociferousness of their responses. We may treat a failure to observe norms of polite attendance as indicative of low social status, but should recognise that these norms are both comparatively recent: 'by the time Henry Irving took over the Lyceum in 1878 even though an audience might still be restive given cause, it was usual for legitimate drama to be watched in respectful silence - apart from applause and laughter intentionally aroused.' (Davison 1982A pp.67), and mainly derive from changing conventions of representation associated with emphasising the realism of the stage and the pictorial framing of its illusion.

Norms of respectable decorum in the theatre were not widely shared in the first half of the century. For example Nicholl cites a critic's

report written in 1827 of The Pirate's Dream: 'There was much fighting which would probably have been more effective, but for a real battle in the pit, to which the screams of the women imparted a truth and reality, that quite spoilt the effect of the stage combats.' (1955 p.8). This may have been an extreme instance but it is part of a more general climate in which going to the theatre was a social occasion as much directed to who else you might meet there and what else might happen as the performance of a play. In this setting the very extensive patronage of theatres by prostitutes was partly due to the convenience for meeting clients and partly because their parade of their wares was part of the performance. It is not surprising that if this camaraderie of performance was true of the quasi-respectable theatres of the West End, that when contemporaries visited working class theatres they came back with tales of even more disorderly proceedings. Rahill quotes Dickens on the opening of Macbeth at Sadler's Wells in 1844: 'performed amidst the most hideous medley of fights, foul language, catcalls, shrieks, yells, oaths, blasphemy, obscenity, apples, oranges, nuts, biscuits, ginger beer, porter, and pipes ...Expectant half-price visitors to the gallery howled impatient defiance up the stairs and dance a sort of carmagnole all around the building.' (1967 p.143). It should be borne in mind that this intensity of participation was partly possible because performers had not retreated behind a proscenium arch, because the body of the theatre was not yet plunged into semi-darkness, and because although each rebuilding of a theatre after the frequent fires increased their size they were still fairly intimate places. There is a nice story of Elliston breaking off a song to debate with the audience in the pit over whether they are over-crowded and then arbitrarily resuming his performance (Murray 1975 pp.147-8).

A discussion of the class basis of audiences for melodrama should therefore avoid slipping into the pejorative class stereotypes that riddle British discussion of popular taste. (Barker makes two relevant points

when he notes that journalistic commentary on the roughness of the audience at the Britannia was always directed upwards from the stalls to the gallery, it was observation from the other side; and that reports on the Britannia audience were only produced after the 1880s when it was by then fashionable to go in search of proletarian colour and exoticism (1979)). An emphasis upon the 'popular' character of melodrama's appeal will, however, serve to alert us to the salience of hierarchy in representations of social life. In relation to a discussion of the fantasy character of melodrama Estill's remark is appropriate: 'we should hesitate before we attribute the popularity of the melodrama to presumed escapist tensions: as a theatrical form, melodrama is capable of making social comment with precision and clarity of the political cartoon.' (1971 p.26). The analogy with cartoon is appropriate because if the corpus of melodrama is searched for sophisticated analysis of the class tensions of industrialising society, or even for sympathetic explanations of proletarian crime and disorder, not many examples will be produced. But at the same time as Booth points out: 'Villains tend to be noblemen, factory owners, squires; heroes peasants, able seamen, and workmen. ...English and American melodrama identified virtue with toil, simplicity and poverty; vice with riches, idleness and property.' (1965 p.62). Although it was occasionally difficult for dramatists to reconcile their class perspective with the consensualism of an underlying moral order. For example, the romantic robber was a hero figure that could partly be redeemed by robbing the rich to give to the poor but in general has posed moralists both then and now with problems of legitimation.

It is important to bear local identity in mind when considering the intimacy of the relationship between performers and audience. In a culture where the dividing line between the street and public hall was ambiguous and relatively transparent it is unsurprising to find that the stuff of sensationalist street literature was quickly transformed into

the stage. And so in surviving texts and playbills we find representations of many local scandals and contemporary cause celebres. (Barker K. (1977), reports a particularly hard-headed example when an actor in Bristol was convicted of murdering his mother-in-law and within hours his ex-colleagues had offered a dramatic re-enactment of the dastardly deed.) The sensationalism of this topical commentary is exemplified by the licence authors and performers felt they had to change characters, motivations, actions and even consequences. Although it is possible to see these performances as a type of living newspaper the producers were certainly not bound by norms of professional objectivity. Another aspect of local relevance is illustrated by the ways in which local theatres would present dramas taking place in settings well-known to the audience. This local appeal did not survive the growth of more sophisticated sensation dramas in the West End which could be exported to suburban theatres, as well as touring the provincial circuit, and brought a greater gloss than local companies could invest. In assessing the local appeal of these theatres the tremendous social mobility of districts as suburbanization pulled successive waves of population out should also be borne in mind. Barker's study of the Britannia, Hoxton (1979), suggests very clearly that what began as a working class theatre in 1841 with a very local catchment area not only changed its policy on programming several times during the century, but also had its 'constituency' changed by factors such as the emigration of professionals and skilled artisans, the growth of family stability amongst a previously transient immigrant population and the development of cheap transport both into town centres and between suburbs. A picture of a changing popular culture therefore has to include the changing character of proletarian communities as much as the changing character of performances.

The cultural form of melodrama developed therefore as a set of dramatic conventions approved by popular audiences. It is a significant feature

of the commercialization of leisure involved in urban popular culture that the names one thinks of as entrepreneurs in this climate of innovation for popular audiences are primarily producers or managers rather than performers or authors (although characteristically they did also perform and write). This may have been because from the beginning: 'Manufacture is a better word than creation for the process by which English melodrama came into being in the early nineteenth century - manufacture of a strictly standardized article.' (Rahill 1967 p.171), and therefore creative writers were frightened away. Or it may have been that fiction at that time was considerably more lucrative than play-writing which was certainly true. More probably the salience of producers stemmed from the fact that the entertainment was a collective enterprise held together by the opportunity for performance. The financing of popular theatre was sufficiently hazardous enterprise that leases of theatres etc., were constantly changing hands and making profits could never be confidently relied upon. (The parallels between this situation and the early years of the film industry before the main studios became effectively owned by finance houses are intriguing). It is not surprising therefore that those who stamped their identity on theatres and companies were acknowledged by their contemporaries to be showmen and personalities rather than creators. (c.f. Murray 1975 esp. Chap. 7). Even someone like Madame Vestris who I suppose had a contemporary notoriety much like that of a film star now, was principally famous as a manager and used her personality to legitimate a distinctive brand of farce, comedy, extravaganza, musical and decorous humour (Appleton 1974).

Citing Mme. Vestris may seem to be taking us too far away from the heartland of popular melodrama, but it is significant that it was as a result of Vestris buying and paying well for an early play by Boucicault that the entrepreneur of sensationalism above all others was started on his career. As well as being a classic showman: 'Completely commercialized

and utterly cynical as he was and freely admitted himself to be, Boucicault nevertheless had the secret of a potent magic for bringing homely, unspoiled folk like Jessie alive on the stage.' (Rahill 1967 p.185), Boucicault is important in two other respects. First, he was prepared to innovate within the conventions of the melodramatic mode to create new genres. Thus he devised a slave play for American audiences and other topical dramas and he developed a genre of Irish dramas which are still being revived over a hundred years later. Secondly, he was firmly committed to the authenticity of the spectacular scenes presented in his dramas. He was famous for his sensations and indeed the later development of popular melodramas into the more respectable sensation dramas of the third quarter of the century can be attributed to him, but he was always concerned that the spectacular device be accurate and convincing. For example he wrote two plays in one of which in 1859 as a dramatic device photographs are miraculously taken and discovered, and in the second in 1866 he used the possibility of a telegraph message as the miraculous resolution to his dramatic cliff-hanger. This type of showmanship is not unusual in popular culture and however powerful his personality it is also consistent that he created in collaboration with others: 'the Irishman scribbled his play in close contact with the playhouse, accepting the suggestions of actors and rewriting much at rehearsals; and he made himself a nuisance back stage by his exacting demands, earning the lasting enmity of many of his co-workers.' (Rahill op. cit. p.192).

As well as the more famous names of entrepreneurs there were of course a myriad of struggling hacks who eked out a living writing and performing many melodramas a year. Pillaging was rife both from Continental sources and from the work of other playwrights, novelists and any available contemporary source. Attempts at legal redress were common but the relevant laws were so ramshackle that the pillaging continued unchecked. The amounts resident playwrights received from theatres that employed them were derisory,

unless they were either very famous or very lucky and therefore the distinctions between playwright, actor, manager and stage designer were never clearly drawn or maintained. It is not surprising in this context that a public taste for sensationalism was eagerly responded to and developed. To attempt a sensational display was therefore sometimes easier than writing a strip of convincing, exciting and persuasive dialogue and it provided opportunities for all the members of the theatre's company to contribute to staging and devising and carrying off. The collective character of this cultural form meant that the performance dominated the enterprise such that individual talents were adapted to the show rather than vice-versa: 'The actor in the hippodrome, aquatic theatre, and diorama, when he existed at all, became a mass-performer, as mechanical as the elaborate special effects that were the central reason for the existence of these theatres. The chief actor became the effects themselves' (McNamara 1974 p.22).

What I have called the collective character of production is perhaps better understood as a form of production more akin to that of the workshop of traditional craft guilds. Theatrical entertainment, particularly when it was largely performed by itinerant companies, was dominated by the family as a basis for organisation. Companies were formed around a family, the children grew up in the business and there was a high degree of inter-marrying between families in this marginal world of outsiders. This situation changed only gradually and remained particularly true of more popular entertainments, but in the course of the century different tasks became more specialised and there was a greater degree of hiring on merit rather than personal connections. When respectability came to the theatre it meant several things; that polite people could attend without risk of offence - from either the performance or their fellow patrons; that the business could be professionalised; and eventually that members of an intelligentsia would proudly work for and even write for theatrical productions. At first a claim to respectability could be staked on the

opulence of new theatres and the complexity of detail used in spectacular productions. There was, however, a contradiction between the individuality conventionally associated with art and the scale of spectacular theatre: 'Since the end of the eighteenth century actors had been struggling to project style from large stages into vast auditoria, and the big theatres - Drury Lane, Covent Garden, the Standard, Astley's, the Pavilion, the Britannia - were still dominated by spectacle in the second half of the nineteenth century, despite the existence of many smaller theatres suited to a more intimate and natural acting style.' (Booth 1981 p.27). The solution was increasingly to draw a distinction between art and spectacle with the former, particularly in theatrical performances, becoming associated with naturalism, individualistic features and a private perspective. The opposites of these characteristics in spectacle has become associated with vulgar commercialism. Benjamin was not therefore correct to associate mass reproduction with a loss of aura - it was rather that aura came to be attributed to art as a defining feature when urban public life made popular culture potentially art.



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P A R T F I V E

I have described some examples of early nineteenth century melodramas and indicated their popularity as a dramatic form in both legitimate and illegitimate theatres and for both respectable and popular audiences. In this section I shall examine what I shall call the melodramatic vision in greater detail. The reason for describing the inter-relationships of structure and theme as a vision is that it can be shown to constitute a distinctive way of picturing social experience; a way which is both spectacular and obsessed with realism. The melodramatic vision therefore not only provided for the sensationalism which was to become the dominant characteristic of theatrical and popular entertainment later in the century, but it also expressed the ambiguities in urban consciousness - in particular scepticism over the relationship between appearance and meaning - which were to become the dominant motifs in the modernist sensibility at the end of the century.

The reason for concentrating upon melodrama is both its undoubted popularity throughout the century and because it can be argued that: 'Melodrama then, with its roots in tradition and the sensibility of the people, out with its dynamic emotional conflict and change, became a natural stylistic mode for the period.' (James 1978 p.87, emphasis added). One way of interpreting a thesis that something is a natural stylistic mode for a period is that as a mode of expression it can be seen in a number of cultural forms: 'Its conventions can be found in areas from the popular sermon to the novel and painting, from the rituals of books of etiquette to the working class love of ceremony.' (Ibid). A second, and more interesting, meaning of the thesis is that the stylistic conventions of melodrama were a dramatic language for the time that enabled experience to be articulated and

understood in ways that no other 'language' could have done. If spectacular contrivance is a fundamental dramatic resource for melodrama then a study of spectacle is inevitably led to the modal significance of melodrama in a developing popular culture. Melodrama does not stand for a type of story as much as a manner of performance and a structure of dramatic resolution. Melodrama cannot therefore be simply defined by characters or message but involves a more complex use of characterisation to represent conflict between forces of good and evil and in this respect there are continuities with the epic forms of medieval drama. There are, however, distinctive features to the relationship between melodramatic perception of moral order and characteristic use of dramatic resources and it is these I shall describe and discuss.

The argument that melodrama is the name of 'a certain kind of literary structure' rather than the 'dramatic productions of a certain period' (Cawelti 1976 p.44), means that an explication of the moral vision of melodrama does not have to be restricted to instances drawn from the nineteenth century. Indeed Cawelti continues to make some very general points about the formula of melodrama which are collected by an emphasis upon the morally integrative drive of the formula: 'we can specify a characteristic purpose which differentiates a large class of works that can be called melodramatic from the other major formulaic types. This type has as its center the moral fantasy of showing forth the essential "rightness" of the world order.' (op. cit. p.45). The idea of 'rightness' here is essentially conservative and a confirmation of how different circumstances can be integrated within a simple moral rubric: 'its (melodrama's) chief characteristic is the combination of a number of actions and settings in order to build up the sense of a whole world bearing out the audience's traditional patterns of right and wrong, good and evil.' (Ibid). The vision of melodrama is not therefore necessarily repetitious, although highly formulaic, rather that novelty - even chaos - can be accommodated by being subsumed to various forms

of narrative order. The conservatism is not therefore necessarily political conservatism, indeed much radical literature and drama can be highly melodramatic, but structural in the sense that implicit categories of social distinction, paradigmatically gender, are utilised and displayed in constructing narrative order. I shall illustrate and develop this approach through outlining three dimensions to the significance of order in the melodramatic vision: generating excitement and identification; unmasking phenomenal reality; and articulating moral purpose.

I appreciate that the names of these dimensions are not perhaps self-explanatory but I hope they will become clearer. It is commonly remarked upon that in melodrama action is episodic, if by this we mean that characters are placed in situations of extreme stress, the resolution of which is only followed by the gradual intensification of another even more stressful setting. The reasons usually offered for this style are that it provides easily for audience involvement in the story as it seems unquestionable to authors like Smith (1973 pp.10-11) that we enjoy simple identification with clear-out heroes against clear-cut villains. I am a little hesitant about this sort of claim only because it is too reminiscent of the half-truths of theories of 'human nature' but it is true that it is a useful device for generating involvement if sympathetic characters can be seen to be threatened by a hostile environment. So important does this device become that Smith sees it as the defining characteristic of melodrama: 'the undivided protagonist of melodrama has only external pressures to fight against: an evil man, a social group, a hostile ideology, a natural force, an accident or chance, an obdurate fate or a malign deity. It is this total dependence upon external adversaries which finally separates melodrama from all other serious dramatic forms.' (op. cit. p.8). A style of recurrent tension makes for a form of order: 'Speed and excitement are necessary to its success, and the characters must not linger by the way to indulge in niceties of psychological introspection. That is why its characters are so sharply

divided between vice and virtue.' (Reynolds 1936 p.129). In one sense therefore there is an order of epic characterization, there is also a second sense of order which is the implication that there is normality which is being threatened or disrupted by malignant disorder, whether human or cosmic.

This leads us well to the second dimension of the theme of order in melodrama which I have called unmasking phenomenal reality. The melodramatic vision seems fundamentally revelatory, inspired by a concern to show a contrast between appearance and meaning, although in contrast to the isolation of modernism the insights are not a source of horror but of the existence of eternal verities. In part this concern with revelation is pragmatic, a necessary solution to problems of dramatic tension when all normal escape seems precluded then a character or relationships or the setting will be shown to be other than it seems and thus a resolution becomes possible. A multitude of examples is possible but the sort of thing I have in mind is the discovery of star-crossed lovers that they are not necessarily kept apart by social norms because one is actually the foundling child of noble blood and can thus legitimately marry the other. Alternatively, another common crisis was the imminent deflowering of the heroine by the villain in the most unpropitious circumstances which could only be resolved by the 'impossible' appearance of the long-lost hero either from nowhere or out of disguise. Such transformations of appearance are both technical solutions and sources of surprise and pleasure, once an audience knew of their possibility anticipation was part of the pleasure. More seriously though Brooks has suggested that such transformations are part of a wider imaginative set: 'to the melodramatic imagination, things are necessarily all in the nature of metaphor because things are not simply themselves, but refer to speak of something else. ....Melodrama may be a drama which is heightened, hyperbolic because the moral realm it wants to evoke is not immediately visible, and the writer

is ever conscious of standing over a void.' (1973 p.209). In this perspective the metaphoric character of dramatic representation is recognised and made explicit because rapid changes in the social circumstances of everyday life meant that it was more important to cling onto a sense of transcendent order: 'the melodramatic mode arises in an era which demands rediscovery of the spiritual within and behind a phenomenal realm which seems to have been deprived of possibilities for transcendence. Stage melodrama is one early response to this demand, the Gothic novel is another.' (op. cit. p.217).

The two dimensions of the theme of order I have discussed so far come together in the third which I call the articulation of moral purpose. Both have been concerned with dramatic strategy, the creation of character and the unfolding of narrative, as a way of depicting implicit orderliness. I want to suggest now that the strategy is itself metaphorical, that the mode of dramatisation is articulating a language for social experience in which the semantic units are moral stereotypes. It was not just that any particular drama represented aspects of moral order but that to go to the drama was to invest in the practice of shaping incoherent experience through moral predicates. It is because: 'The dramatic strategy of melodrama is the clear-cut opposition of the forces of good and the forces of evil, a polarization that is reflected in both the characteristic types and the pattern of action. ...In melodrama the polarization is both horizontal and vertical: characters both represent extremes and undergo extremes.' (Mendelson 1977 p.23), that: 'What we bring away with us from the experience of any melodrama is the fundamental sense of bipolar clash and conflict, the experience of a world schematized into moral and ethical extremes, an order in which characters, actions and values are all absolute and unambiguous. The set of stage figures associated with melodrama is thus not a defining attribute in itself; rather, it illuminates the fact that characters in melodrama represent extreme moral positions.' (op. cit. p.40). The morality of melodrama to which Cavelti directed our attention can

now be seen to be more than a set of didactic cliches, in the sense that it used to be a definitive cliché of the western that in the final shoot-out the villain lost to the hero, and to be more thorough-going in that the purpose of the performance was to create a drama of moral contrasts.

An emphasis upon moral contrasts might be taken to be implying a mythological status for the formulae of melodrama either because of the significance of structure for narrative organisation or because of the schematism of the moral categories involved. I do not think this is a very fruitful approach. Myths are anonymous tales which function as a form of communal identity and durability for social formations which have no need of consciousness of structural change and historical development. Melodramas are written by specific individuals with a clear sense of their audience and explicitly commercial purposes. More importantly, their location in a period of rapid social change was precisely the context within which certain touchstones of communal certainty could act as motifs assertively affirmed for realities visibly being constructed. The multiplicity of social worlds in urban industrial consciousness meant that any over-arching framework had been irretrievably fragmented but this did not preclude a language of community as something to be defended and celebrated (Calhoun 1982). In the same way the parallels with medieval dramaturgy are relevant: 'Melodrama is first of all a normative form of drama whose hallmark is moral clarity. ... Shaw noted that melodrama's simple formula of innocence traduced and ultimately vindicated brought it very close to the morality plays.' (Mendelson op. cit. p. 21 c.f. also Booth 1965, Chap. 2) but descriptive. The innocence of a morality articulated through stereotypes is always nostalgic, at least in tone, but the communal certainties of the earlier era are no longer the ground within which the drama makes sense rather a rhetoric for asserting that sense should be possible.



A particular difficulty in cultural appreciation is generated by the innocence of melodramatic narrative organisation. It seems too easy to slip into analogous simplicities in our own explanations; for example Bargainnier begins with the simple premise that a nineteenth century audience: 'sought release and fulfillment, excitement and a better world than the one in which they lived.' (1975 p.730). A crude functionalism in explicating taste is matched by an equivalent sense of the evolution of cultural development: 'The influx of people to the larger cities of England during the latter half of the eighteenth century, as a result of the Enclosure Act and the beginning of the Industrial Revolution, rapidly increased the urban lower-class, while adding almost no-one to the upper-class. At the same time, the middle class was rising, again as a result of the Industrial Revolution, but this group had yet to gain sophistication and social polish; its tastes were essentially those of the lower-class.' (op. cit. p.728). In this type of perspective it was both because the audience were able to dictate to the playwright and thus restrict his autonomy and because the audience were so unsophisticated that the plays they were to demand and get were so lacking in dramatic complexity.

A simple functionalist explanation of dramatic exaggeration, as something audiences enjoy as an escape from unpleasant reality, is unhelpful both because it trivalises the significance of drama for audiences and because it fails to address the changing character of drama in different theatrical contexts. We may opt for something we recognise to be dream-like not because it offers an unproblematic set of resolutions of contradictory pressures in the 'real' world but because the dream may be ironic, a burlesque, a skillful transformation or a romantic sentiment. It is the very distance from the immediacy of mundane experience that gives melodramatic representations the power to impose moral principles on tangible actuality. It may be as Disher says that the extremism was all: 'part of melodrama's process of making emotion do the work of thought', but it was based on a

charitable assumption that: 'Every man from the famished striker to the Duke of Wellington was upholding a high principle.' (1949 p.157). The extremism of characters, situations and intensity of emotions is therefore based on naturalistic observations organised with dream-like intensity and punctuated by dream-like reversals and resolutions. Apart from the frequently flimsy skeleton of plot with its implied motivations, the shift from the actuality of personalisation to the archetypal significance of moral positions had to be accomplished by the performers using what rudimentary stage effects were available, amongst the most important of which was of course themselves.

Acting in melodramatic style has, perhaps even more than the plays themselves, come down to us as something suitable only for satire. So imbued have we become with the norms of naturalism, that the enactment of character should be consistent with everyday experience, that the stylisation of melodramatic performance is sufficient proof of the inferior artistic quality of the drama. Even in the late nineteenth century a critic reflecting on the early years of a popular theatre off the Tottenham Court Road reports that: 'Anything so utterly stilted and unnatural as the acting it would be impossible to conceive at the present day; burlesque could not exaggerate it, as it was beyond the reach of exaggeration, even in the utterance of the simplest words. If a character asked for a piece of bread and cheese, or if he said "How do you do?" he would raise and lower his eyebrows three times, and pause between each word, which was dragged up from the very pit of his stomach, and intoned as tragically as though he had requested a cup of poison.' (Trewin 1968 pp.164-5). That this was not unusual many other reports confirm and it was consistent with a number of other features of performance such as stylised gestures, elaborate miming of emotion and a tableau style of stage-craft as in a climax to a scene showing a number of performers each literally displaying an

appropriate emotion. Booth cites an example of typical stage directions: 'Eugene sinks at the feet of Isabelle, who raises his head and regards him with alarm and astonishment - the servants stand surprised and motionless - the guests flock round Eugene and Isabelle - general picture.' (1965 p.196).

The extremism of this mode of presentation was to some extent as I have noted a function of the scale of the setting within which the performers were required to work. More importantly though the exaggerations and elaborate gestures should be seen as devices for imbuing personal actions with formal significance. In the same way that the cinematic close-up transcends the emotional and physical distance separating audience and performer and provides for a more general identification with that performer's point of view, stylisation in the theatre cloaked the performance with dramatic rhetoric: 'in the Victorian theatre the actor had to supply the degree of enlargement provided in the cinema by the camera.' (Rowell 1978 p.60). The heightened stylisation of conventions of melodrama takes us away from considerations of the rationality of any particular story and towards a different level of dramatic significance. If the plays are enactments of moral contrasts caught in extreme situations then not only can identity be largely communicated through non-verbal means but the resolution of the constituent conflicts has a significance over and above the specific story: 'The good social melodramatist makes us feel that his story is involved with large events of social and historical importance that usually eventuate in some massive public spectacle or event. Our excitement about large events intensifies our feeling about the significance of individual episodes.' (Cawelti 1976 pp.264-5). This process of dramatic intensification, of focussing, became an end in itself through tightening the theatrical frame. The relative looseness of the frame of illusion separating performer and audience of early nineteenth century drama, was

changed by an increasing concern with heightened theatricality, partly though changes in the organisation of staging and technology of perception to be described in a subsequent section, and partly through the logic of melodramatic sensationalism.

In so many aspects the principal dynamic in Victorian culture seems to have been an attempt to impose a framework of order on incoherent experience. Things were not left as they are but dressed up, elaborated and made fussy through a profusion of detail. The very density of social form speaks to the importance of rules and implicit knowledge of those rules as a display of civilisation - the social was made manifest and jealously guarded against the ever-present threats of disorder. The feminine ideal was centrally important in symbolising the advantages of order and in imparting its moral lessons in each generation. Women symbolised a purity that was utopian. The ideal was impossible to live up to and although this meant very real suffering and oppressive contradictions for individual women, the impossibility was comforting for the social order. The lack of aggression, rationality and physical vigour that was so admired in women were simultaneously recognised to be desirable even necessary in men. The public pleasures of male culture could thus be seen as necessary compensation for the burdens of social responsibility. The ideal of womanhood could be held up as the source of stability and tranquility principally through domestic happiness and therefore threats to feminine virtue were a particularly potent disruption of social order.

The heroine could act as a fulcrum for melodramatic intensity because she was such a powerful symbol of fundamental norms about the family and its significance for themes of social order: 'Most important to the new bourgeois ethic was the virtual cult of marriages, home and family; economically, it made the marital partnership a force for action and linked it to the increased emphasis on individualism and self-help; morally, it

was central to contemporary feelings about the nature and office of women.' (Mendelson 1977 p.111). The family was also seen as being centrally important in providing a moral structure for an incoherent society. Continuity and stability are generated through proper respect between generations and children learn an appropriate respect for authority and the necessity of social discipline. These virtues were seen to be particularly important for the disorganised poor. Propogandists and missionaries intent on improving proletarian behaviour and attitudes were therefore particularly concerned with the decency inculcated through family life and the influence of female members of the family (Phillips 1978). The privatisation of urban residence described earlier reinforced the cultural significance of autonomous family units as models for a vision of social order and harmony.

The symbolic significance of feminity was most potent as dramatic metaphor, and most contradictory, in relation to the highly charged topic of sexuality. An ideology of purity would seem to preclude the very physical intensity of sexual desire and of course the attempts to create a medical discourse of gender differences in desire and pleasure are well-known. The contradictions between personal pleasure and cultural ideal could be suppressed through highly charged languages of discipline although, in a further contradiction, the force of expression instead of suppressing sexuality more insistently made it a theme in dramatic metaphors. This can be seen in the almost ritualised consequences for individuals who are represented as flouting the constraints of propriety in contemporary fiction and drama. Writing of the cult of womanhood in American magazines for women, Welter notes that: 'The frequency with which derangement follows loss of virtue suggests the exquisite sensibility of woman, and the possibility that, in the women's magazines at least, her intellect was geared to her hymen, not her brain.' (1966 p.156). The idealisation of feminine purity

drew upon the intensity of romanticism, a cultural perspective of spiritualization that was bracketed, in a further contradiction, with the sexual degradation of extremely extensive prostitution (Mannheim 1956 pp.48-51); itself another metaphor of public alienation in urban experience.

In melodrama the ideal of femininity, with its implications of social and moral order, and the contradictory tensions of sexuality, provided the most potent source of dramatic imagery. Notions of threat with which the drama abounds could be particularised as threats to specific innocents. Of course this structural role could be filled by children or animals or fantasy creatures like fairies but they could not offer the particular combination of someone who could be violated and yet was adult enough to fight back, flee, struggle, curse her oppressors, and to some extent plan her own salvation. Women were ambivalent figures in their combination of desirability and their need for protection. Disher summarises this function tersely as: 'What the public wanted ...was constant threats to a female's peace of mind.' (1949 p.137). The vulnerability of the heroine meant that the extremities to which she was subjected could be made even more extreme and not only was the drama thereby made more intense, but the moral outrage was similarly intensified as well as the satisfaction of the eventual resolution: 'the melodramatic function of the heroine is an enlargement and intensification of that of the hero. Although the weaker vessel in one sense, in another her strength is far greater, and she is far more persecuted, far more suffering.' (Booth 1965 p.30). The violations of normality represented in the most fevered imaginings of melodramas gained extra force because they were visited upon that class who are the fundamental guardians of normality. In contrast to public drama it is unsurprising that women's own creative engagement was privatised and most often expressed through themes of family, sexuality and the dramas of domestic order (Perry 1974 and Moers 1978).

A language of binary distinctions between Right and Wrong was clustered around interdependent themes of femininity and domesticity for several reasons. The first is that the importance attached to chastity and the reality of threats upon it provided an opportunity for identification on the part of the audience, but one that was not as politically contentious as for example appeals to class solidarity or religious affiliation. Secondly, the theme was very adaptable in that it could be set in all types of stories from nautical melodramas, such as the sailor kept from his love, to gothic melodramas set in gloomy castles or romantic landscapes. Thirdly, the theme of domesticity traduced was one that could be shown to be relevant to all social classes so that whether or not the story was about people with whom the audience might feel some acquaintanceship manifest social differences could be discounted in favour of underlying common concerns. Fourthly, the type of moral drama concerned with threats to domesticity lent itself to spectacular effects, if it is borne in mind that spectacle is used initially in a more 'primitive' sense of mime and high stylisation. The second sense of spectacle, when the force of enactment shifts from character to contrivance or setting grew 'naturally' from this initial moral idealisation. The ideology of domesticity therefore lies at the heart of the mode of melodrama both because of its dramatic potential and because it had an elective affinity to the salience of decorum in nineteenth century moral order (c.f. Delamont and Duffin 1978).

The relationship between feminine respectability and elaborate codes of fashion and etiquette and horror at the 'disorder' of unstructured social interaction were articulated through the social organisation of Society, a sub-world in which norms for recognition and etiquette governed status and respectability: 'in the 1830s and 1840s there was a reinterpretation of the idea of Society and the expectations for individual behaviour to gain access to that society. Under these pressures, an increasing division

between public and private life was stressed.' (Davidoff 1973 p.22). Although the distinction between public and private worlds is usually and correctly associated with a re-formulation of sexual inequality, such that the former is characteristically masculine and the latter feminine, the formality of an elaborate code of etiquette and particularly as a peculiarly female domain provided common concerns to both worlds mediating between and having resonances in each. It seems to me that the significance of a common mode of early pornographic photographing - showing women undressing or deshabelle going about domestic tasks - is in the illicit thrill of making private behaviour public imagery. It is undoubtedly true as Davidoff argues that the central function of the regulatory conventions of the social world of Society was to manage the ambiguities of status in a period of transition: 'Society can be seen as a system of quasi-kinship relationships which was used to "place" mobile individuals during the period of structural differentiation fostered by industrialisation and urbanisation. As such it can be understood as a feature of a community based on common claims to status honour which were in turn based on a certain life-style.' (op. cit. p.15). Its very formalistic aspects, however, allied with the increasing bureaucratisation of institutional life in the course of the century meant that the centrality of life-style dramatised the performance of everyday interaction and provided subject matter for the theatre which reflected while exaggerating the moral concerns of the 'real world'.

So far in this section I have been considering the significance of moral order for the melodramatic mode. I have not tried to explicate a vision or structure of feeling that is common to all melodramas, but to pick out some of ways in which a language for representing social experience differs from languages of other cultural forms. To speak of the melodramatic mode as a language is to imply an intimate correspondence between the



structuring conventions of the form and the practice of performance and it is for this reason that the discussion has frequently touched on dramatic strategy. I have remarked that this strategy can be characterised as a rhetoric of extremism - in character, situations and intensity of emotions - and this might be taken to mean that the strategy involves a denial of realism. It would be mistaken to treat this denial of realism as a positive opting for fantasy as thoroughly other-worldly, and it would I think muddle a future grasp of the significance of melodrama as popular theatre. I want to argue that the representations of social experience in melodramas were not fantastic but archetypal, not an escape from reality but an intensification of reality. My ideas on this point were initially clarified by Grimsted who quotes Melville describing theatre audiences as looking: "'not only for more entertainment, but, at bottom, for even more reality than real life itself can show", so that audiences did not want nature: "but nature unfettered, exhilarated, in effect transformed," (1968 p.234 emphasis added).

I will conclude this section therefore by arguing that the ways in which melodramatic theatre developed in the course of the century, briefly moving towards a spectacular sensationalism, were not an escape from reality into fantasy but a more complex representation of social experience. In the concluding section of this chapter I will discuss the nature of what I can call the sensationalist realist mode more fully, there in the light of a discussion in the next session of mechanics of staging and representation, I want now merely to note that our problem in the late twentieth century of recognising the significance of realism in spectacular melodrama stem from the dominance of critical perspectives in which spectacle and realism are contrasted as antithetical rather than complementary. In terms of theatrical history realism has been associated with intimate drama, complex characterisation in the work of playwrights such as Shaw, Ibsen and Strindberg a move which, as I shall argue, is itself interestingly dependent

upon the complex framing of sensationalist melodrama; and is a view which privileges authenticity in performance over setting - an emphasis upon identity which is consistent with my approach to twentieth century spectacle in Chapter Four. More generally, realism has become associated with various forms of social engagement which in their particularity seem to conflict with the moral abstractions of melodrama. In order to appreciate the cutting edge of melodrama we have to see that it was in attempting to assert moral truths in a complex and unreliable world that led to a stress upon authenticity in portraying that world as a way of grounding the dramatisation of uncertainty. Winifred Hughes writing of the mid-century sensationalist genre in fiction as well as drama notes that it was characterised by a narrative technique which: 'combines a melodramatic tendency to abstraction with the precise detail of detective fiction, an unlimited use of suspense and coincidence with an almost scientific concern for accuracy and authenticity.' (1980 p.16).

In the first part of this chapter I argued that one way of reading the dominant forms of imagery in nineteenth century Britain, and in particular the salience of pictorialism in fictional representation, was as attempts to comprehend a material environment, the city, which was increasingly experienced as alien and threatening. In terms of physical metaphors for social life this was expressed in the complex interaction of privacy and naturalism in the positive evaluation of rural as opposed to urban life. In complementary manner the social world of the city, the enormous and inescapable community of others, was represented as something to be lovingly re-created with a mixture of fascination and terror: 'the beginning of a new kind of sensationalist appeal - an appeal not to the terror of the unknown, of the vaguely suggested and barely imagined, but to the even more terrifying terror of the familiar.' (Hughes op. cit. p.8). The sense of community which I argue is the central motivating force of spectacular drama

was being transformed through the intensification of city life for nineteenth century society. New forms of social description had to be manufactured. Warner has traced the rise of the concept of a slum as an illustration of a way of talking about urban experience which recognised the interdependence of social life with ecological form: 'People were not a slum, people were "slum dwellers", or "slummers" to use the English term. The noun does inevitably imply something about people by directing attention towards the crowded, squalid and wretched nature of the environment, but first and foremost the word depicted the environment itself.' (1983 p.386). Objectifying social life as an environment did provide a form of distance which was functional for a bureaucratic rationality of social problems and social welfare, but it was also consistent with a dramatic perspective in which an emphasis upon environmental detail was combined with narrative hyperbole. Spectacular melodrama was therefore not fantasy if we take that term to characterise escapism, it was rather an attempt to develop new metaphors and perspectives of social categorisation as a way of dramatising individual consciousness in a continually changing multiplicity of communal forms.

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P A R T S I X

I have described several types of spectacular entertainment common in the nineteenth century. I have tried to indicate the form of performance and aspects of audience involvement. Adopting a distinction formulated by Raymond Williams we can describe some of these types as residual, in that they are effectively inheritances from a more traditional cultural order, and some are emergent, in that they are a distinctive engagement with new forms of social experience and represent an attempt to articulate a new cultural order (1977). I do not presume that spectacular drama is more consonant with one role than another and in different ways forms of spectacle from quite different cultural traditions have been inherited into the imagery of mass entertainment. I have, however, argued that the cultural form of theatrical melodrama was peculiarly salient for an urbanising culture. In part this was because the melodramatic form articulated a sense of moral order which could be allied with a naturalist fascination with the variety of urban experience and the necessary limitations of personal understanding. The language of representation of this form was essentially pictorial, it was a way of seeing in which physical resemblance was used to ground social meaning and was therefore inherently sensationalist. The more drama could picture the unusual, the exotic, the frightening and the spectacular then the more vicarious reality could be married to mundane experience. The success of spectacular drama was not of course purely a matter of intellectual sympathy, processes of urbanisation commercialised popular culture and created opportunities for entrepreneurs and star performers to stylise public taste.

Pictorial sensationalism offered endless opportunities for commercial exploitation and seemed to its critics to substitute spectacular awe for sympathetic insight. In the concluding part of this chapter I shall describe how the staging of sensational effects allied with more spectacular settings for entertainment became more significant in the later decades of the century, and attempt to show how a mature commercial popular culture was adapted the first major form of mass entertainment - the cinema.

An important element in sensationalist entertainment is the technical ability to generate new illusions and more impressive displays. It would therefore be possible to write a history of spectacular drama in terms of changing techniques and technical innovations. I have not done so because I am less interested in technique but certain aspects of innovation cannot be ignored. In the nineteenth century one such aspect was the persistent experiments with the projection of light throughout the century. Light could be used to illuminate an image in a variety of ways, or to project an image or, ultimately, to project a succession of images so that they gave an illusion of movement. Those involved in these experiments ranged from respectable scientists, to enthusiastic amateurs, to commercial artists and to a variety of more or less disreputable entertainers. The mixture is important, all the elements helped to contribute to the salience of imagery in urban entertainment.

A central resource in shows playing with light was the magic lantern. First invented in the late seventeenth century it was not seriously exploited for public entertainment until the end of the eighteenth and then interestingly by a magician called Robertson. The essence of the Phantasmagoria show, which remained popular under several versions of the name for many decades, was that the audience

entered into a suitably decorated room and in combination with special effects of smoke and music were scared out of their wits by cunningly projected images of the dead. The entertainments by Robertson and others who developed his techniques were magical in that they played with illusions and transformed reality. The optical effects and illusions became more complex with the invention of limelight and its development for theatrical use by 1840. Limelight offered a more concentrated beam of light and was very important for all forms of theatrical spectacle not just magic shows. The strength of limelight also meant that the projector did not have to be close to the screen, and while illusionists obviously wished to continue to conceal the source of their effects other entertainers could project images from behind the audience over their heads: 'This helped the magic lantern to become the companion of lecturers, an overt presence. Or rather, the magic lantern now embarked on a double life - an overt aide to lecturers, a covert tool for others including magicians and spiritualists.' (Barnouw 1981 p. 32.) The complexity of the visual effects produced by this sort of machinery should not be underestimated. In the Egyptian Hall in London in the 1870s for example complex narratives were presented involving magic effects, a wide range of sensory stimuli and the use of as many as fifteen magic lanterns. Entertainment through projected images was not restricted to public shows, even bearing in mind the variety of types of light show, but was also available for domestic entertainment through a number of inventions.

An analogous form of entertainment, the Diorama, was originally devised by Daguerre in 1822 several years before he turned his attention to the problems of photography. As an elaborate light show it can be seen to have been a direct precursor of the cinema. The



audience sat in front of a vast picture, some 70 feet by 40 feet, elaborately painted on translucent canvas in such a way that when the light falling from behind and in front was varied by the use of blinds and shutters, the image went through subtle changes and transformations. A romantic ruined chapel, for example, might be suddenly filled with lights and a praying multitude; an avalanche might overspread an Alpine village; a luminous summery landscape would be menaced by a storm; an empty Abbey would suddenly blaze into the glories of a Coronation. The audience saw two such pictures for their shilling admission charge. Since the mechanism was too complicated to permit the pictures to be moved, however, Daguerre devised the idea of moving the audience instead. They were seated in a circular auditorium which gradually revolved, so smoothly that the audience had not so much the impression that they were moving, as that one picture was slipping away, to give room to the next. Such an entertainment environment was obviously considerably more sophisticated than the penny gaffs of street theatre and required purpose-built settings - one of the most famous surviving examples is in Nash's Regents Park Terrace East.

Complex pictorial presentations were not restricted to these forms of entertainment but were quickly adapted for the theatrical stage. The conventional flat scene hung at the back of the stage in the early years of the century became more complex in two ways. First, the quality and respectability of the artists recruited to paint these drops improved to such an extent that the art/entertainment distinction between easel paintings and panoramas was greatly lessened and artists such as Clarkson Stanfield or de Louthenburg could become members of the Royal Academy. Secondly, backdrops became more complex in that attempts were made to make their representations more dynamic. There were several styles of achieving this effect, most obviously

through making the images more sculptural in that the artists strove for perspectival depth. Another approach was to make the drop move, usually winding it on rollers so that a long image gradually unwound in front of the audience. This could be made more complex still by having two drops, one in front of the other. The first would have parts cut away so that spectators looked through to scenes painted behind. Not only did this provide greater depth but it necessarily increased the importance of stagemachinists as well as painters. The expense of spectacular panoramas meant that the most complex would be restricted to the most expensive productions but simpler forms were popular even in travelling shows and fair booths. Rosenfeld, describing the type of entertainments offered by Richardson 'The Great Showman', notes that amongst the record of his props are a number of panoramas: 'of scenes abroad and at home, including Amsterdam, Lake Como, Gibraltar, Montevideo, Niagara and St. Helena as well as of Glamorganshire, London and a naval review in which a pillar emblematic of British victories arose from the ocean.' (1977 p. 155.) In this context pictorial panoramas were an element in a range of popular entertainment, including for example waxworks and peepshows, which did not die out with the decline of the traditional fair but were adapted to new contexts so that: 'even the popular success of the later showplaces of the London exhibition industry, Crystal Palace, Olympia and Alexandra Palace, owed as much to an interest in mechanical and natural curiosities generated in the earlier fairgrounds as to "the march of intellect".' (Judd 1983 p. 28.)

A taste for illusion and display is therefore consistent with what I have described as a naturalistic belief in the worth of authentic detail, a fascination with mechanical contrivance and shifts in forms of staging which generated: '"theatres for spectators rather

than playhouses for hearers".' (Quoted in Leacroft 1973 p. xi.)

In theatres the main physical form of this change can be found in the retreat of the stage behind a proscenium arch. Inevitably the change was gradual although possibly more quickly than could be expected due to the devastations of frequent fires. The impetus for change can be summarised under three headings: depth; contrivance; and safety. By the first, depth, I mean a concern with scenic effects which might take the form of a representation of nature or a complex representation of a building both inside and exterior simultaneously or present a thrilling scene such as a battle, both on land and at sea, or a fight on a cliff top or a chase across a hazardous terrain. In all of these instances or the many others that could be mentioned the stage became less a ground upon which entertainment was performed and more an opportunity to look into an alternative reality. The more the latter ambition was dominant then the more important contrivance became.

In the course of his detailed discussion of the meaning of various theatrical terms Southern argues that the difference between a flat scene and a set scene is that the latter consists of independent props filling the stage and around which the action takes place (1952 Chap. 13). The persuasiveness of the setting comes through a shock of recognition: 'a set scene is essentially one that can, because of the nature of its elements, only be placed in position previous to its being disclosed to the audience's eyes; or shifted away piecemeal after it has been concealed by a curtain or has had a flat scene drawn in front of it. A set scene is a pre-set scene.'

(op. cit. pp. 269-70.) In the course of the century this concern with masking, and thereby celebrating, contrivance became more marked so that the distinction between front and back stage became rigid and

spectators were denied any glimpses of staging procedures. A process that was reinforced by increasingly elaborate safety regulations which led to theatres being sub-divided into effectively separate compartments to cut down the contagious consequences of fire and panic. An unexpected complementarity was thus found between theories of staging, the needs of adequate access and control and the desirability of social segregation.

The contemporary language conventionally used to describe these changes in staging is full of metaphors drawn from perspective and pictorial representation. It is obviously central to our understanding of the meaning of these spectacular forms that actors as carriers of meaning became subsumed in a design only available from outside the ground of the performance, i.e. from the perspective of the audience and imposed by a coordinating vision superior to that of any particular performer. Although the most common unit of theatrical production remained a relatively stable company usually based on a family and inspired by a patriarch, it is interesting that at this time the roles of first stage manager and then director emerge as authoritative voices independent of performers' interpretation. The stage was therefore in the process of becoming a self-enclosed world, something into which the audience looked from outside. Madame Vestris, first a celebrated actress and later theatrical manager, is usually credited with the innovation of including real pieces of furniture, such as chairs and tables etc., within a stage set; and it is an interesting suggestion that such a development in theatrical realism should have occurred at the same time that Daguerre and Neipce were conducting their first experiments with photographic reproduction (Appleton 1974 p. 74). Once embarked upon the path of spectacular illusion Madame Vestris went on to anticipate

further developments in photographic entertainment with her 'confections' of the 1850's: 'These extravaganzas with their transformation scenes, elaborate groupings, and opulent decor unmistakably point the way toward the later fantasies of Florenz Ziegfield and Busby Berkeley.' (Appleton op. cit. p. 174.)

The premis of this discussion is that the developments in staging which led to pictorialist norms not only had massive implications for the theatrical experience offered, and the character of acting and the relationship between actor and audience, but were also intimately bound up with and essential for an emergent language of public drama. The sort of changes I described above under the heading of an increasing concern with perspectival depth were inseperable from a spectacular theatre. Similarly, the changes in running flats onto the stage to build a scene, the extensive use of several different kinds of trap to raise or lower characters, and the importance of first gas lighting and then limelight in painting the stage with optical effects, were all crucial to the language of spectacle. Leacroft uses the nice analogy of 'the stage as machine' and pays considerable attention to the importance of the machinist who came to rank at least on a par with dramatists (1973 esp. Chaps. 7-9). It is in relation to the increasing complexity of staged effects, and both made possible by and necessitating an increasing orderliness amongst the audience, that dimming the lights in the auditorium became inevitable. It was also inevitable that the environmental splendour of the performance should 'leak' across the footlights and transform the whole setting of the show. The buildings became increasingly luxurious and as Southern says: 'Kean may have suffered criticism for his over-decoration of Shakespeare but he brought elegant society into his theatre. The building had to change suit; its ornateness became

almost royal, the trimmings (and dust-traps) profuse.' (1970 p. 78.)

I have referred to the increasing decorum amongst theatre audiences and this is obviously part of a more widespread culture of respectability which became dominant from mid-century onwards. It is also true, though, that as the theatre became more elaborate it became more rigidly internally segregated by social class and gradually lost its popular base. From around 1860 onwards there were important changes in the social ambience of central urban theatres which correlated with developments in the dramas performed. Popular melodramas did not disappear overnight, continuing to do well in suburban and provincial theatres, but a combination of touring West End companies, changes in clientele, and the development of a film industry had removed these last bastions by early in the twentieth century. It is also true that in terms of theme the contrasts between early and late melodrama are not pronounced: 'The Gothic slowly disappeared; the military and nautical remained. The domestic was stronger than ever and formed the vast majority of all melodramas in this period ... dialogue was more natural, plots more skilfully constructed, and the characters more credibly conceived, than in the earlier period.' (Booth 1965 p. 145.) Sensationalism in the respectable theatre did not involve then a complete transformation of melodramatic romanticism but an increased sophistication was increasingly mediated through an atmosphere of social realism. A realism which as I have noted was based on accuracy of detail rather than narrative credibility of motive or consequence; social realism that was primarily a concretisation, the antithesis of abstraction (Booth 1979). In practice the concrete detail of the later Victorian theatre was often as bizarre as the Bancrofts' using real leaves dropping during a conversation, or the importation of fresh beeves

from a slaughterhouse for a stage butcher's shop, or the introduction of authentic smells in the representation of a farmyard scene - authentic although still cleaned up in that reports only mention sweetness not manure. It is also relevant that a prison drama (Its Never Too Late to Mend 1864) complete with torture scenes and a suicide were so realistically presented that they elicited protests from the first-night audience and had to be subsequently modified.

The generic name of sensation dramas for later nineteenth century melodramas is appropriate because the spectacle was used to create sensation, shock or excitement rather than something approaching a ceremony. A good illustration of this process is provided by that genre of melodramas based on pictures of urban life. It was because such plays often offered violent social contrasts in settings and life-styles, and because movement between different social worlds was frequently based on crime - either that one or more of the characters had been unjustly accused of or had been driven to or that the hero was attempting to solve - then it might be reasonable to expect a degree of social anger or disquiet. In general, however, even the greatest poverty was pictorialised as an occasion for romance and/or sentiment. The very successful Lights o'London (1882): 'gave off the very stink of the teeming, noisome London slums, one scene in particular being masterly in its realism: a fight in the streets of the Borough outside a pub on a Saturday night,' (Rahill 1967 p. 219), but did not use this staging as more than a prop for a conventional moral tale. There were of course didactic melodramas such as those sponsored by Temperance organisations, but in general the massive resources of late Victorian stage-craft were deployed to satisfy the public's taste for the pictorial, the richly decorated image, the photographic representation of domestic reality, the visual re-creation

of history, and the ostentation of lavish display in an ostentatious age.' (Booth 1979 p. 19.) There were therefore many more plays about very rich people enjoying their wealth although frequently threatened by villainy and forced to defend their interests in precipitous situations. It is also unsurprising that uncritical pictures of an economic elite should go hand in hand with traditions of military and naval spectacle exploiting crude patriotism and dismissive stereotypes of dissident conomials.

Spectacular realism is not restricted to contemporary subject matter, indeed the attempt to give the tangible feel of alien experience is likely to lead producers to stage exotic settings. It does, however, seem interesting that cinematic spectaculars in the late twentieth century are predominately set in the future and outside this planet, while late Victorian sensation dramas often involved the most pain-staking re-creations of historical settings. An antiquarian concern with accuracy of detail was not characteristic of only sensation dramas; in literature, painting, sculpture, architecture, and more generally as part of the chivalric ethos (c.f. Girouard 1981), history was a living presence clothing contemporary experience particularly in ceremonial occasions and settings. Although the high point of antiquarianism in the theatre was the last quarter of the century, when for example for Irving's production of Macbeth in 1888 detailed museum research lasting several weeks was an unquestioned priority, the attitude had begun to develop much earlier. An attitude that was not restricted to the theatre, Planché, who made a serious attempt to clothe the cast in Kemble's production of King John in 1824 in historically accurate costumes, was later commissioned as consultant for important costume balls held by Victoria and Albert. The concern with accuracy over details can I think



therefore be described as part of a romantic attitude to dramaturgy: 'It is fascinating that not for a long time did the aim of accuracy in historical reconstruction become irreconcilable with a romantic view of the past. Indeed, it might be said to have strengthened it.' (Strong 1978 p. 153.)

In the same way that I have argued that spectacular staging was not inimical to social realism so we have now to recognise that dramatic romanticism did not preclude social relevance. In both cases the social issues were framed by idealistic commitments to a sense of community, and particularly a community grounded in Victorian bourgeois values, but idealistic values can have a practical significance in the language of public life. Issues such as the responsibilities of representative government, relations between the classes ideals of womanhood and a consensualist patriotism were all articulated through versions of the past as popular in paintings and literature as in staged dramas. The argument teaches us that relevance is not only possible in socially conscious representations of contemporary class conflict. The language of moral intensity developed in popular melodramas was part of a wider current of romantic gothicism that was by no means a simple fantasy escape from social reality, but a persuasive attempt to bend reality to the dictates of normative order. It may indeed be a language of popular drama and public life that has survived its initial cultural form. Strong suggests at the conclusion of his book on history painting that painters found the demands of antiquarianism too restricting, only when an alternative ideology of artistic autonomy had developed, bringing about: 'the end of that brief brilliant alliance of the artist and antiquarian, a relationship which was to be relegated by the end of the century to the world of the illustrator and the theatre designer -

and in our own century, the movie spectacular.' (op. cit. p. 72.)

The reference to artistic autonomy points towards a fundamental paradox in the moral force of spectacular drama at this time. The conscious desire to make theatre socially respectable and thus appeal primarily to a bourgeois public led to more elaborate and sensationalist dramas. And yet the attempt to translate theatre from entertainment to art in turn encouraged values of dramatic worth which ran directly counter to the formal style of spectacular drama. This process culminated in a situation where at the beginning of the twentieth century the theatre had largely been captured by a style we can call intimate naturalism, leaving the tradition of spectacular drama, in all its aspects, to be taken over and developed by the emergent cultural form of the cinema. There are a number of contributory strands to this process which need to be set out in sequence.

First, the physical organisation of the theatre had to be changed to provide for new social meanings in the dramatic experience. I have previously described changes in the physical organisation of the stage, these were complemented by analogous changes in the auditorium. In part of course they were the same in that the development of the picture-frame stage meant establishing a clear divide between two realities. As an example of the difficulties of drawing this line I can use Guest's discussion of the constraints on the development of theatrical dance imposed by the custom of fashionable gentlemen joining the performers on the stage - seated that is not dancing (1954). In the case of ballet this was not just a failure to draw a firm distinction between 'normal' and 'dramatic' realities, but also stemmed from the sexual attractiveness of ballerinas who often used the dance as an opportunity to acquire rich patrons. Although other types of

theatrical performance were not burdened with spectators on the stage by the nineteenth century, traditions of most privileged patrons having boxes virtually lining the stage and having access as of right to the performers' green room did persist. As the picture frame stage became more absolute so performers were pushed back behind the proscenium arch and the audience became onlookers firmly relegated to a world beyond the stage. It is in this respect that the development of stalls seating is relevant. The area known as the pit had previously been socially mixed. As this area was filled with seats so the great banks of boxes lining a horseshoe stage were pulled back to a vestigial few at the edge of semi-circles of raised seats and many of their former patrons moved down to the new stalls seating. These improvements were a continuous process throughout the century. For example, the Theatre Royal in Newcastle which was completely re-built in 1837 was substantially re-designed again in 1857, when stalls seating was extended and the tiers of boxes and balconies radically modified. The cumulative effect of these changes was to increase the distance between actors and audience and lessen the social command of the latter.

There were analogous changes in the organisation of the evening's entertainment. As dramas became more naturalistic so the suspension of disbelief became more coherent and the plays were occasions in and of themselves, and so the tradition of a long evening of mixed entertainment was gradually suspended in favour of a single play. This not only worked to the advantage of authors by increasing their status, as those primarily responsible for the show, but it also meant that plays could start later - and become more consistent with bourgeois dinner habits. (Also contributing to the fashion of public dining discussed in the first part of this chapter.) Plays did not

necessarily finish any earlier as it took an increasingly long time to mount complex sensations and stage effects and patrons were frequently warned of the delays to be caused by scene-shifting. Scenes put in to cover these changes were often resented and plays might open with very spectacular effects to be modified in subsequent performance. A later starting time and more elaborate productions required higher admission prices and so a battle lost at the beginning of the century was won towards the end. A change in popular appeal was further stimulated by more comfortable theatres with greater facilities, greater social segregation within the theatre - including separate entrances and exits for different classes of patrons - and more prestigious locations for new theatres. It is consistent with these changes that the innovation of lowering the lights in the auditorium during the performance should have been introduced, a development facilitated by the invention of electricity. Darkened house lights threw greater attention on the stage increasing the status of author and performers, facilitated the mounting of tricky stage effects, and encouraged norms of orderly behaviour in that movement and conversation within the auditorium were incompatible with respectful attention. Similarly the introduction of matinee performances assumed that there was a leisured audience who would be willing to patronise something suitably entertaining. It was appropriate that this innovation was pioneered by Gilbert and Sullivan for their light operas, and it became socially acceptable for respectable ladies to attend the theatre unaccompanied by gentlemen escorts.

I have mentioned changes in the status of those who worked in and for the theatre, and there is obviously a circular interaction between status and respectability. That is, until the theatre became

respectable high-status figures would see a theatrical career as demeaning and the theatre needed high-status figures associated with it in order to become respectable. In part the circle was broken by the gradual evolution of factors already mentioned, in part through external influence. Shaw was encouraged to write for the stage by his admiration for the work of Ibsen, and after limited early success took up professional reviewing as an opportunity to study while commenting upon the dramatic skills of established playwrights, and of course a body of serious criticism is essential in constituting a difference between art and entertainment. Another factor was the professionalisation of acting that led to the founding of the Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts in 1904: 'which perhaps more than any other theatrical institution encouraged middle-class women in large numbers to join the stage and further transformed the social image of the profession.' (Baker 1978 p. 107.) The history of the gradual change in the status of acting is not central to this account, although the legacy of distinctions between serious and entertaining acting has bedevilled attitudes towards an understanding of stardom, particularly in the cinema, in the twentieth century. There was, however, a fundamental contradiction between acting as the naturalistic representation of character and spectacular drama: 'The problem of acting in the Drury Lane spectacle dramas was one to which the critics constantly recurred. Of The Armada the Illustrated London News (29 September 1888) was restating general opinion when it declared that at Drury Lane acting was an art subordinated to pageantry and scenic splendour.' (Booth 1981 p. 70.) In struggling against such subordination actors and actresses successfully led theatrical taste.

The theatre in becoming respectable did not lose its popular

audience entirely; neither was there a simple equation between the dominance of a bourgeois audience and the decline of spectacular drama - there is some evidence, for example, that working class audiences had a sophisticated appreciation of Shakespearian drama (Reid 1980). The increasing stratification of leisure and entertainment by social class did, however, mean that cultural forms indigenous to the urban working class had the opportunity to develop. The most important of these has become generically known as the music hall. It is relevant to this account both because it amplifies our understanding of the spectacular form of popular entertainment and because it is the best illustration of the radical commercialisation of entertainment for working class audiences in the second half of the century.

The singing saloon, which with supper clubs and other informal gatherings is the basis of the music hall, falls between the extremes of a professional theatre and neighbourly sing-song. Bailey argues that although there was an admission charge to the saloon, partly to be redeemed for food and drink, the publicans real profits lay in encouraging further drinking inside (1978). The atmosphere was therefore informal, there would be continual movement between tables, and the relationship between performer and audience would be considerably more dynamic and more intimate than in even the most popular theatre. In these ways singing saloons were more like penny gaffs and other forms of street entertainment than more elaborate stagings, but they also differed in that the buildings were better furnished, lit and they were licensed - their permanency encouraged the emergence of a substantial body of professionals who travelled between saloons. Although the entertainment differed in each locality and retained a regional flavour: 'the songs, dances and

tricks were derived from the travelling show and popular theatre, the village green and the street, the drawing room and the church, and the recently-imported nigger-minstrel show ... The saloon audience also had a taste for spectacle (tableaux of battle scenes and reproductions of great historical events) but essential to all performances was the chorus singing, in which the audience came into its own.' (Bailey op. cit. p. 31.) The important features of this type of entertainment were that it provided an intriguing combination of communalism with nascent professionalism; based upon the pub an emergent class pillaged its own cultural history to provide with pride, ostentation and vitality a celebration of identity that was spectacular in form.

The singing saloons and later music halls were important in one respect in that they signalled a change in the meaning of public space in popular entertainment. The tricks and songs of performers were taken off the streets and polished and professionalised by being staged in the near-theatrical setting of special rooms in public houses. It was still, however, a distinctive form of entertainment. In conventional drama narrative development was used to order episodes while entertainment in the music hall: 'was based on the principle of variety structure in which there is no transfer of information from one act to another. The shape of an entire vaudeville bill, for example, was not the result of plot or theme - it had none - but of the way in which the various acts or "compartments" were combined by the showman in charge.' (McNamara 1974 p. 19.) A corollary of this episodic structure was that each performer had to create his or her own context utilising the limited resources available appropriate to each act. The performance space was therefore likely to be a neutral area only minimally distinguished from the space of the audience, in

marked contrast to the respectable theatre, and within that space the performer had to excite interest by creating character rather than deriving character from the narrative implications of elaborate scenery and props. It is not surprising that within such genres as vaudeville, music hall, minstrel shows, burlesque and above all circus that the characters traded upon by performers, such as types of comedian, romantic balladeer, strong man or acrobat, were highly formulaic. The stock characters of entertainment were as transparent and pragmatic as: 'functional equipment, such as lights, rigging, and cages, the function of which is neither concealed nor integrated into some overall design scheme. Equipment is there simply because it needs to be, while the scenic elements that appear from time to time are frankly gratuitous, existing purely and simply for the sake of spectacle.' (McNamara op. cit. p. 20.)

Variety entertainment of the sort that is most famously associated in Britain with the general heading of the music hall is therefore a distinctive form of staging with strong roots in pre-industrial popular culture. It was, however, innovatory in that as an unquestioned urban, commercial, popular cultural form it was intrinsically national rather than communal in appeal. As one indication of this I can mention Barker's report that the regional travelling theatrical fit-ups only stopped coming into central Newcastle around the middle of the century when the first music halls were opening, and that the latter generated nationally touring entertainers: 'From 1840 to the end of 1842 the sole visitors (to Newcastle theatres and halls) were conjurors; in 1870 they ranged from leading members of the music hall profession to a diorama of Ireland with accompanying entertainments; ... Music hall had developed from tavern sing-songs to professional independence.'



(1983 p. 67.) Of course one should not exaggerate this trend and as indication of surviving regionalism: 'Artists who worked in the provinces in the 1860s and 1870s reported sharing the bill with tests of local skills: a bootmaking contest in Northampton, net-making in Grimsby.' (Bailey 1978 p. 156.) In part this conflict of evidence stems from the predominant social base of the music halls remaining in the lower classes. In many of the smaller halls in working class districts and provincial halls the close alliance between the class interests of the audience and the hall as communal centre was sustained until the end of the century. It is also relevant though that this particularity of class affiliation was situated within a consensus over what Tholfsen has described as: 'the fundamental values of a culture that presupposed middle-class hegemony.' (1976 p. 17; c.f. also Jones 1974 and Senelock 1975.) The 'consensus' of urban culture was expressed in many ways, but not least was a massification of popular entertainment in which class character was romanticised, regional differences sentimentalised and differences in life styles made occasions for stereotypical humour rather than perceptive social commentary.

I do not think it necessary to sketch the development and decline of the music halls (in addition to the sources already cited see also Chanan 1980 particularly on the relationship between music halls and early cinema); I am more interested in characteristics of the form as urban, commercial entertainment. These can be summarised as: emergent stardom; lavish settings; formalisation of the show; and moral panics over content. First, professional performers became increasingly famous outside their locality, the top stratum were nationally famous; songs were identified with individuals and performers were encouraged by their managers to live up to the

characters they performed. Inevitably a star has a different relationship to their public than a local character, admiration is still there but an immediacy has been lost and the celebrity has become abstract. Similarly, in relation to the second point as theatres became grander the audience became dwarfed by their surroundings. The tradition of serving drinks during the performance continued for many years, as did a license for the audience to show their disapproval if appropriate, but norms of decorum became more binding and the audience increasingly became spectators: 'in spite of its rowdyism, which so often previously went hand in hand with radical agitation, music hall subsequently fostered traditions of self-expression which weren't politically self-assertive and therefore ended up becoming tools of commercial exploitation.' (Chanan op. cit. p. 150.) Another aspect of this disciplining of the audience is that the evening's entertainment changed from being something people could wander in or out of as they wished to a show which took place at a specific time and the audience had to attend at the discretion of the management. This style of tightly regulated shows was accelerated by moves to put on two shows an evening and then by performing matinees. Stars shuffled between several venues an evening again increasing the power of management over both performers and audience. Finally, music halls were continually culturally contentious, less as propagators of seditious ideas and more as disreputable and sexually licentious. In practice it seems doubtful that music halls were ever particularly 'naughty', but moral reform was promoted and enforced by managers partly to protect themselves and partly to 'improve' the social character of the entertainment and the audience. (A process of internal moral regulation that has become characteristic of entertainment industries such as American vaudeville, the cinema and television.)

The cumulative effect of these developments was that a cultural form based in a sense of community became metropolitanised, and the political contentiousness of working class culture was dissolved in a commercial rationality in which the audience consumed rather than participated: 'In a sense big business had succeeded where the social reformers of recreation had failed ... the manipulations of the music hall entrepreneurs manifested a potential for defining and enforcing socially appropriate behaviour - "the rules of good citizenship" - which identify the emergent mass entertainment industry as a conscious and effective agency of rational recreation.' (Bailey 1978 p. 168.) The formal display of this social process was an increasing exploitation of spectacular effects and settings almost as if to bludgeon the audience into submission. To illustrate the extremes to which spectacle in variety entertainment could reach I can point to the Coliseum opened by Stoll at the end of 1904. The building itself was on a phenomenal scale with unrivalled luxury of fittings, 'service knew no bounds' including an Information Bureau in the Grand Salon: 'Here there were shorthand typists who, without fee, would take brief messages and arrange their dispatch.' (Barker 1957 p. 17.) A huge number of people were employed both to provide this range of services and to maintain Stoll's innovation of four shows daily and to work the highly elaborate stage machinery. The centrepiece of this machinery was three revolving stages each of which could rotate independently and at different speeds in either direction at up to 20 mph. All these resources were used in a spectacular climax to a show consisting of spectacles, in which the Derby was re-created on the stage by having the horses gallop against the revolving stage going in the opposite direction. The race was part of a picture of Epsom Downs which included a full cast of social types from the race day and in which there was a stand full of cheering

spectators: 'It was all twice as large as life - Stoll outdoing Frith.' (Barker op. cit. p. 26.)

At this pitch of splendour it is arguable whether such a palace of variety can be called popular let alone working class entertainment, except that such palaces are the ultimate promise of consumerism. They are a fantasy land, a cornucopia of luxury which is open to everyone who can afford admission. In a democracy of consumption class becomes irrelevant, and thus social reality is denied and suppressed. The promise of entertainment is, however, more complex than this. The spectacular show and its palatial setting are not a simple flight from reality into fantasy, they are consistent with pictorialist realism already discussed. It is not just that Stoll's staging of the Derby outdid that great example of Victorian naturalism Frith's painting, but a whole range of music hall characters, such as Vesta Tilley's cross-sex dressing and Albert Chevalier's cross-class impersonation, were far more finely observed than early nineteenth century characters such as Jolly Jack Tar. Martha Vicinus has suggested that this realism is puzzling unless we accept that music hall in fifty years changed from class culture with a class perspective: 'the use of characters and characterizations built upon details which speak for the condition and beliefs of an entire class', (1974 p. 266), to a form of mass entertainment characterised by: 'the use of stereotypes in which the behaviour of a particular group or class is portrayed, but the emotions are generalised and acceptable to all classes.' (ibid.) It is not so much accuracy as communal significance that provides the implied social world of cultural representation. Treating that world as if it were real provides one sense of what sort of people we can be. It is in this sense that accuracy of detail may be part of an effective neutrality rather than faithful realisation.

The humourous or sympathetic or despicable features of those depicted were coins of social exchange that could be used in pictures of social representation independent of the context in which they were generated. The gross vulgarity of the characterizations offered by showmen and clowns in earlier less sophisticated dramas was not more subtle but was more directly involved in shaping reality rather than a more formalised mimicry.

My argument is, then, that the music hall was the first major cultural form to grow out of the experience of an urbanising proletariat. It did not, however, constitute a mode of class consciousness preparing for structural transformation but rather a recognition of social difference that in detail and general orientation was consistent with the moralising narratives of spectacular pictorialism in other cultural forms. A language of social drama that made sense in the context of fully commercial theatres, serviced by national organisations and media of publicity, and catering to anonymous audiences. In such settings entertainment was a fabulous alternative to mundane experience, something for the individual to purchase as a source of pleasure rather than the community to celebrate, and drama has become a commodity.

The illusion of movement through the sequential projection of photographic images onto a screen was a natural development of experiments with light and picture-making discussed earlier, but was also consistent with: 'the aesthetic of spectacular romantic realism that dominated the popular arts of the nineteenth century. In the movies that aesthetic has survived.' (Eidsvik 1978 p. 112.) Film shows were at first part of the cultural form of the music hall because as short novelties, such as the Lumieres' film of workers leaving their factory or Edison's film of Fred Ott's sneeze, they could fit easily into a variety bill. Film was, however, more than a cheaper and more reliable

form of music hall. The technology could be used to re-stage melodramatic narratives with a more arresting use of naturalistic detail and spectacular climax. It was inherently pictorialist and through its form of projection could heighten the illusion and dramatic force of an alternative reality being displayed. Film shows could be staged in purpose-built environments that were themselves spectacular celebrations of urban sophistication. The production, distribution and exhibition of films could easily be undertaken by those engaged in the existing commercial organisation of leisure and entertainment, and through high returns on capital investment quickly develop those relations of production to new heights of complexity. In all these ways film inherited the culture of urbanisation, but as the most sophisticated form of entertainment technology it also inaugurated a form of spectacular drama in which the community was sympathetically imagined rather than experienced: 'The receptiveness and sense of security of crowds were keystones around which the art of cinema was built. When, by using a darkened theatre, a technical way of creating that feeling was achieved, without large crowds actually being present, the future of the cinema was assured.' (Eidsvik op. cit. p. 126.) In the concluding paragraphs of this chapter I will briefly discuss film as the culmination of nineteenth century spectacular drama and precursor of the spectacular entertainment of the next century.

It is a little too neat as a sequence but there is some justification for saying that music hall emerged to catch the lower strata of the popular audience being left behind by the theatre, and in turn film shows caught up the equivalent strata of the music hall audience. It is true that early demonstrations of the technology were usually prestigious social occasions, either of fellow enthusiasts

or specially staged showings in cafes and theatres. The Lumieres' Cinematographe was shown in this way in all the chief cities in Europe in 1896 and a year later an especially arranged programme was shown at Windsor Castle to Queen Victoria and family. Despite this early success, however, the medium was principally exploited as entertainment for working class audiences. The first films were bought to be shown in one of three ways: as entertainments shown as special travelling booths at fairs or village halls; as turns or acts with equivalent status to other acts on the variety stage or in the music hall; as entertainments in makeshift halls and rooms in city streets, often known by the traditional name for urban shows as penny gaffs (c.f. Low and Manvell 1948). In these ways the new technology did not transform existing modes of popular entertainment but was straightforwardly grafted onto existing systems of exhibition. It seemed to many in the business, in North America as much as England, that the only escape from the poverty of these sites was on the coat-tails of another cultural form and thus: 'Despairingly the film-makers sought spurious respectability by luring their actors and directors from the theatres.' (Perry 1974 p. 10.)

In practice, the mantle of established art has consistently failed to fit the cinema (despite persistent attempts to purchase it in various guises), and film shows were gradually transformed into the cinema as much through spectacular exhibition sites and more sophisticated story-telling devices as more 'serious' content. In relation to exhibition Mellor has summarised the progression well: 'First came the era of the fairground Bioscope, followed in turn by the converted chapels, shops and temperance halls, leading onto the "Electric Palaces" and "Picturedromes" with their plaster fronts and gaudy interiors.' (1971 p. 18.) A progression which led eventually

to the luxurious fantasies of the inter-war years. Besides the desire, on the part of entrepreneurs in film, to increase profit margins by attracting wealthier patrons (c.f. Merritt 1976), there were pressures from local and national legislation in both Britain and America ostensibly addressing the hazards to public safety posed by large congregations of people in the vicinity of a highly combustible medium. These pressures, to regulate seating, exits, projection rooms, ventilation etc., were also exploited to address the moral dangers raised by the possibility of uncontrolled exhibition to working class audiences: 'What was most galling to many ... was the idea that workingmen and immigrants had found their own source of entertainment and information - a source unsupervised and unapproved by the churches and schools, the critics and professors who served as caretakers and disseminators of the official American culture.' (Sklar 1978 pp. 18-9; the point also holds as a description of comparable reactions to the popularity of film in England.) Even public entertainment which takes place in clearly segregated private commercial settings is now considered threatening by moral guardians; we find that the issue of moral control through censorship is inextricably inter-related with intervention over sites for performance with paternalist concern to train proletarian audiences in cultural respectability.

An explanation of why cinema owners were led to build more and more luxurious palaces - 'cathedrals of the movies' (Atwell 1980) - to show films in would be the increasingly fierce competition to attract customers willing to pay more than the minimum to watch a film show. This would, however, leave unresolved the attraction of such spectacular halls. One factor would be the hucksterism of many in the business: 'Promoters who had moved in on the new mass



media had been brought up with a desire for an ostentatious display at the front of their "houses" and they passed on this same enthusiasm to the designers', (Sharp 1969 p. 8); in other words, the aesthetics of the fairground could suddenly be indulged at unlimited expense and in, what seemed at the time, more permanent form than ever before. (The brief life of this architectural form - the vast majority of picture palaces have now been either destroyed, closed or gutted - is itself consistent with a sense of spectacle as ephemeral display.) Another factor would be a widely shared feeling that the more sumptuous the setting the more respectable the audience would assume itself to be. It would thus be socially acceptable for unaccompanied ladies to attend film shows (women have consistently constituted a majority of the cinema audience), and an outing to the cinema would be a social occasion. Remembering, of course, that the cinema as the first mass medium was radically egalitarian in social ambience - its public was a casual, haphazard crowd as Hauser regretfully noted: 'you can attend a screen-play, making up your mind on the spot, entering the cinema in your street clothes, at any hour of the day - when your shopping is done, or while you are waiting for a train.' (1938 p. 82.) Hauser argues that drama in this democratic milieu has lost its last festive and cult-like features and become completely profane. The fantasy of the setting would not contradict such a democratic ethos - it would indeed be a display of the rewards of citizenship. Stein draws a parallel between the place of baths in classical Roman towns and picture palaces for American cities. In two imperial cultures they provided opportunities for the unimportant to wallow in collective grandeur and splendour: '"In a Balaban and Katz theatre every man can feel like a King"' (1979 p. 46.)

The impetus to out-do other entertainment sites began early: 'a manual on theatre construction that year (1917) recommended, "palatial in design, of colossal dimensions"', (Sklar 1978 p. 46), for new buildings. The spectacular scale of these palaces lay in a combination of the size of the building, the luxuriousness of the fittings, with the excellence of the supplementary entertainment which might have ranged from a solitary organ - albeit enormous - to a large orchestra and live stage performances, culminating in the imaginative extravagance of temples in ornate, often bizarre, designs. Without a large battery of photographs it is impossible to give a proper sense of the scale of these palaces but two details may help. In Loew's 72nd. St., there was: 'a "dog checkroom": five kennels beneath the foyer, complete with lamp-posts and attendants, where pooches could be parked while their masters caught the show.' (Stein 1979 p. 34.) At the Chicago Tivoli, opened in 1921, an attraction was introduced which spread rapidly to other palaces: 'The manoeuvres of the ushers with their white gloves, braided costumes, and swagger sticks ... seem to have been copied from the changing of the guard at Buckingham Palace.' (Stein op. cit. p. 37.) Discussing with pride the opening of a Loew's theatre in Richmond, Virginia, the local Times-Despatch reflected that: '"it has always been suspected that the theatre to most persons is a refuge from reality. But, until recently the illusion was confined to the entertainment presented there. Now the purpose is to surround the patron with this illusion, to swaddle him with luxury"' (quoted in Atwell 1980 p. 78).

Film, in addition to offering more opulent settings than in any previous type of theatre, could also easily pre-empt theatrical effects: 'photography captured with little effort the qualities of

spectacle, fantasy, naturalism, and mime that had required unbelievably complicated and wieldy stage machinery and designs.' (Fell 1974 p. 13.) The sensations of later melodramas required such complicated instructions in the text of the play that they quite outweigh dialogue, and seem to cry out for a camera to act as an organising perspective for the audience (see for example Vardac's outline of the first stage production of Ben Hur in 1899 (1949 p. 79), a particularly interesting example as this story also provided one of the great challenges for designers for the cinema). There is a more fundamental sense, though, in which filmed dramas inherited story-telling conventions from nineteenth century popular theatre. The essence of melodrama is structure, the interweaving of narrative elements to create suspense. Scenes, characters and themes are juxtaposed to create ironic contrasts and to build to the satisfaction of a revelatory climax. Representing on stage these narrative elements required considerable ingenuity in devising what Fell has called 'transitional devices' (1974 p. 18). These could take the form of using a panoramic backdrop to create the effect of a change in visual focus, or subdividing the stage to show simultaneous but independent action. Film narratives, at least within the dominant conventions of commercial cinema, have been articulated through the camera being used to replicate the function of transitional devices. What Vardac has called 'a basic motion picture syntax' is identical with melodrama's editorial pattern of: 'a progression of pictorial episodes defining a single line of action, or, more frequently, brought about by cross-cutting between two or more parallel lines of action or flashing back to earlier actions.' (Vardac 1949 p. 65.) Griffiths' acknowledgement that his 'invention' of montage was taken from Dickens is by now well-known, the more general sense in which the syntax of film is a more fluid but

structurally consistent development of melodramatic theatre is less widely-acknowledged.

I think in fact it is necessary to go further than recognising narrative continuities between the two cultural forms. The spectacular character of film does not rest purely in its ability to stimulate otherwise inaccessible visual sensations; but through the static organisation of 'scenes' in order to construct a plot. I have noted that a melodramatic plot can be described as a series of visual climaxes - staged tableaux which punctuate and encapsulate the story. In this it shared a form with other types of popular entertainment such as cheap novels, comic strips and poster art, the essence of the form is the pre-eminence given to plotting over other possible fictional features such as characterisation or mood. One reason for this form is the cheapness of popular entertainment - the market cannot sustain big profit margins so each author has to mass produce and it is easier to work to a formula than explore the presuppositions of fictional representation. The formulaic plot is also likely to generate an emphasis upon constructing scenes through significant detail, a privileging of movement over introspection and a maze-like complexity of structure, perhaps to disguise its own formula. The characteristic mode of production of the commercial cinema has retained one crucial feature of this approach to story-telling - this is the use of story-boarding as a bridge between the screen-play and the set. The screen-play is translated into a number of cartoons which set out in sequence dramatic high-points of the story (the number varies between different production crews). The visual image of the cartoon both organises the director's sense of what the story should look like and acts as an organising framework for set designers and special effects men etc. The spectacular aesthetic of nineteenth

century theatre is here preserved in the production practices of twentieth century mass entertainment.

I have consistently emphasised that photographic images are only a representation of reality, and this perhaps is a clue to what many will find uncomfortable about locating cinema as spectacular imagery in a nineteenth century tradition. They will recognise that Melies was as much a founder of cinema as Lumiere (c.f. Chanan 1980 p. 32) but photos purport to be unmediated pictures of reality, the fantasy must lie in the stories the images themselves are the culmination of the realist aesthetic: 'The arrival of the motion picture cannot be looked upon as an isolated and haphazard expression of scientific progress ... When, ... realism ... had ... attained real leaves, beeves, and ships, the stage could go no further ... Only the motion picture with its reproduction of reality could carry on the cycle.' (Vardac 1949 pp. xxiv-xxv.) In one respect of course the ability to capture authentic detail in a photograph makes it a logical extension of the pictorialist naturalism of the Victorian stage, but the more substantial point is that however good the likeness of a world out there a photograph is only and always only a record of itself. The resemblance an image bears to social reality is still as much an illusion as the resemblance Robertson's phantasmagoria bore to the spirit world at the beginning of the century. The roots of this form of imagery in the tricks of magicians are a salutary reminder that it is all illusion. However grainy and arresting the conventions that stamp one sequence of images as news or documentary or docu-drama, we should always be forced to ask: 'How is it possible that we who should know better, no longer think of the images of the magic industry as illusions, but have come to accept them as reality - our window on the world and what it thinks and does?' (Barnouw 1981 p. 107.)

It is at this point that this chapter ends. Spectacular entertainment in a culture of urbanisation has become a culture of mass entertainment, and the spectacle is now no longer a stylised version of reality - the forms of the spectacle now constitute our sense of reality. The boundaries between drama and reality are subverted in a culture of images.

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CHAPTER FOUR: The City Dissolved: spectacular reality in mass  
entertainment

'A capitalist society requires a culture based on images. It needs to furnish vast amounts of entertainment in order to stimulate buying and anesthetize the injuries of class, race and sex. And it needs to gather unlimited amounts of information, the better to exploit natural resources, increase productivity, keep order, make war, give jobs to bureaucrats. The camera's twin capacities, to subjectivize reality and to objectify it, ideally serve these needs and strengthen them. Cameras define reality in two ways essential to the workings of an advanced industrial society: as a spectacle (for masses) and as an object of surveillance (for rulers).'

S. Sontag: On Photography p.178

P A R T   O N E

The material described and discussed in the two main substantive chapters so far has been, to some extent, self-evident. While I have not aspired to be exhaustive about forms of popular entertainment, I have tried to broadly survey the main forms of spectacular drama. In this chapter, concerned with forms of spectacular drama in a culture of mass entertainment, I have adopted a slightly different approach. I shall not survey a variety of types of entertainment but select three key themes. These are: the concept of mass in relation to entertainment, which I will develop through some notes on sport; some aspects of the boundaries between realism and fantasy in contemporary culture, and the transformations of real resources for entertaining purposes; and imagery and display in consumer culture which I largely discuss through some notes on the iconography of sexuality. My initial plans were more ambitious but researching the material for topics that I thought I ought to address, and in attempting to clarify my approach to these topics, it became apparent that the theme of the relationship between drama and community which had structured material in previous chapters, in relation to contemporary culture was translated into problems of identity. Nation, community, region, class, gender, generation, individuality - the variety of modes of identity we all carry are dramatised and displayed in the imagery of entertainment (amongst other related forms of discourse). The particular themes of the three parts of this chapter are an inter-related discussion of the significance of ours being a mass culture for our understanding of community and identity.

In the course of discussing changes in the character of spectacular entertainment in the nineteenth century I utilised a distinction between urbanisation and urbanism. The latter as a state of mind is not an inevitable corollary of living in the city, and as a characterisation of life-worlds of different collectivities its meaning and significance will vary. I also suggested that intellectual commentary, in a variety of forms, on the perceived advantages and disadvantages of changes in social patterns need not be a response to the clear establishment of those changes, but could prefigure them in important respects - and thereby help to create a climate in which those changes are legitimated and institutionalised. A city has always been more than a number of streets and people, it has been used metaphorically to conjure images of wealth and freedom as well as poverty and pollution. The most powerful of such images cluster around metropolises which may be but are not necessarily capital cities - for example New York. The metropolis has come to signify a new scale of urban hegemony, a new force in integrating diverse social circumstances (Sutcliffe 1984). A focus for standardisation not only within a nation-state but also between post-industrial economies.

Cumulative developments in transport facilities have meant that manufacturing enterprise has profited from urban markets and labour force while being able to disperse and minimise congestion costs. The development of consumer services, central business districts and complex forms of local and national government have all meant that although urban populations have continued to be decanted to suburban and satellite districts, cities have retained a magnetic force as entertainment as well as occupational centres. To such an extent that it has been felt that society has become metropolitan, in the sense

of being oriented around one or very few major centres with differences between parasitic districts becoming increasingly marginal. A process of standardisation that has both generated and been dependent upon new technologies and organisations of public communication and entertainment commonly called processes of mass communication.

The discipline of sociology is an integral feature of the phenomenon of metropolitan society. First, because it became established as a distinct intellectual perspective in the course of the period during which metropolises achieved dominance in national societies; the period at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries in which societies and culture became modern. Secondly, because a central problematic for the founding fathers of the discipline, and a legacy which has dominated the work of their successors, was the nature of community. The implications for communal bonds of the metropolitanisation of normal life. One way of characterising their sense of the modern city is as a mass society: 'the result of a general breakdown of the elements of differentiation that internally diversified former societies, as well as the parallel loss of a sense of the sacred: technology, economic abundance and political equality have created a homogeneous society, in which men are the prey of the impersonal forces of bureaucracy and regimentation.' (Giner 1976 p. xi.) Giner refers to this perspective as an outlook rather than a theory - and it is an outlook which has permeated the attitudes of those involved in formulating policies for, and regulating the bureaucratic organisations of, developing technologies of mass communication.

One element then in the idea of a mass society developing from

the massive urbanisation of the nineteenth century is the scale of the principal cities which became established by the end of the century. Indeed a distinction between urban and rural has largely become nominal in urban-industrial societies, they are both subordinate to a sense of the immensity which dwarfs the localisms of previous forms of collective association: 'Conurbations, large populations, modern industry, the "urbanized" countryside, the powerful territorial and centralized state, they all spell one thing: the great size of modern societies.' (Giner op. cit. p. 117.) A consequence of this use of mass to refer to a shift in scale has been a diminution in the significance of the individual vis-a-vis the making and taking of collective decisions, and, perhaps paradoxically, an increase in the importance of personal or private experience for individuals as something which is uniquely reliable and comprehensible.

A dwarfing of individuals by the scale of the stage upon which they are required to perform, allied with rising standards of living and the gradual provision of a rough equality in housing stock and the standardisation of goods and services throughout the nation, has meant the decay of traditional forms of structural differentiation and an increasing homogeneity between members of society. A second element in the process of massification is then a reduction in social differences so that individuals become bureaucratically interchangeable and feel themselves to be indistinguishable cogs in a machine of consumption. Integral to these processes of mass scale and mass homogeneity is a third sense of mass which has been particularly applied to communication technologies. Here facilities of immediacy, reproducibility and standardisation allied with personalised consumption have meant that national culture industries can produce unrivalled amounts of culture uniformly available for anonymous

audiences. In the endless drama of new cultural forms an imagery of modern society endlessly probes at the character of contemporary experience and constitutes the terms of modernity.

One consequence of the development of mass communication technologies has been the dissolution of the boundaries of the city; physical access to performance is no longer necessary and as urban life loses its privileges so rural life loses its distinctiveness. A feature of a culture of mass entertainment is then that the city is gradually dissolved and we all become inhabitants of an infinite city. I have noted that the evacuation of city centres by progressive waves of emigrants seeking the privacy and status of home ownership was a feature of nineteenth century cities even as they grew. In mass society suburbanism has become the predominant norm as a consequence of the combination of both market forces and compulsory re-housing by state authorities in the interests of raising living standards. Suburbs deliberately exploit the looseness of any boundary between urban and rural, and it is unsurprising to discover that in the visual uniformity suburban life critics find a display of the dissolution of communal variation: 'The processes of urbanization, industrialization, and bureaucratization at work in mass society appear to shape the destinies of communities and individuals along irrevocable lines ... And all the communities in mass society look like so many minor variations on a single major theme.' (Stein 1960 p. 296.) The changing forms of urban life are integrally bound up with the development of a culture of mass entertainment and in particular the themes of community and individuality have become central to the imagery of contemporary experience in mass culture and are therefore picked up in what are often surprising ways in spectacular drama. There will be no clear point at which mass culture can be said to have emerged and I have

therefore jumped in chronology from the end of the nineteenth century to discuss features of popular entertainment in the second half of the twentieth century in the following pages.

I have suggested that mass communication facilities are necessary for modern society. The most basic facility is a change in the mode of distribution such that cultural performances become available to an audience of potentially infinite size. For example, a theatrical performance can be filmed and innumerable copies of this film can be printed so that the original performance can be distributed world-wide. Of course the distinction between original and copy quickly collapses under the impact of technological advances so that the transmission of a television signal to a potentially infinite number of receivers is simultaneously a number of performances determined only by the number of receivers. The problem is compounded in that the transmission can itself be recorded for subsequent re-performance at the owner's whim. The central idea to massification in communication is therefore that technological developments have broken physical constraints on audience size and there can be a far wider degree of simultaneous participation in fictional representation.

Spectacular drama is in a fundamental sense a public experience. It is true that it may be sponsored for private purposes and one can imagine individuals who are so wealthy and/or powerful that they can stage spectacular effects, for example an elaborate private garden, primarily for their own entertainment. But if the thrust of spectacular drama is to excite awe and admiration then it is probable that one will want to do so on as wide a scale as possible. The imagery is therefore likely to be employed and staged in such a way that the producers can have no precise control over who attends or what sort of people attend. The final qualification is necessary because a



rock band may stage a show in a football ground, and necessarily provide spectacular effects for a finite number of people, but in such cases the public sale of tickets ensures a rough, within financial limits, democracy of access. It may be this democratic or public character to spectacular drama which encourages the attitude that such drama is vulgar or unsophisticated; with the further consequence that even creative workers who are generally seen to be highly sophisticated lose status over those of their works which employ spectacular effects such as Tchaikovsky and the 1812 overture.

It is also relevant to argue that the mass media are public forms of communication. Denis McQuail in his discussion of mass communication theory utilises a concept of media institution which: 'refers to the principles, rules, laws, conventions and instruments of control and regulation in the given society' and is separate from: 'the "media organizations" which actually perform the production and distribution function.' (1983 p. 55.) The understandings of the purpose and significance of their activities for those who work in media organizations will therefore be structured by characteristics of the media institution, amongst which McQuail mentions the fact that: 'the media operate almost exclusively in the public sphere - they comprise an open institution in which all can participate as receivers and, under certain conditions, even as senders. The media institution also has a public character in that mass media deal with matters on which public opinion exists or can properly be formed (i.e. not with personal or private matters or those which are essentially for expert or scientific judgement).' (op. cit. pp. 33-4; see also Gouldner 1976 esp. Chap. 4 and Chaney 1979 esp. Chap. 2.) The process of massification, that is the gradual dominance in forms of entertainment and information by cultural forms dependent upon the technologies of

mass communication, can therefore also be described as the gradual emergence of a new mode of collective interaction which has been called the public sphere or public discourse amongst other labels.

It would be tempting to jump directly from the common occurrence of public in relation to both spectacular drama and mass media of communication to argue that massification involves a society becoming a spectacle for itself, or more prosaically that mass media of entertainment and information work essentially through spectacular imagery. Before developing that idea I want to explore in greater detail some possible ambiguities about the nature of communication in mass communication. Our simplest model of communication is I suppose a dyadic face-to-face piece of interaction in which the constituent individuals interchange the roles of speaker and hearer, although even such situations are not as simple as they initially appear (e.g. Goffman 1981 Chap. 3). A more complex piece of communication occurs when one or more individuals represent a conversation either between themselves or as addressed to an audience so that these over-hearers understand the interaction as a dramatic representation. What is crucial about these entertainments is that although the audience is an essential constitutive element in the overall performance, it is conventionally silent during the course of the representation or its interventions are encouraging punctuations rather than introductions of new material. We can therefore point to a distinctive mode of communication, theoretically in which the audience shares the setting with the performers, the nature of the sharing varying between types of entertainment, and therefore helping to determine to differing degrees the length, style and character of the performance. In the terms with which I have characterised mass communication so far it will be apparent that the audiences for the

several types of entertainment communicated through the mass media cannot 'determine' the performance in any such way and therefore that the nature of the communicative exchange has been fundamentally changed. (It may be true that for some performances there will be a studio audience which will simulate the work of a real one, or even act as a real one would do, but their role is essentially as a dramatic prop for the performers or the performance and not to articulate in any way the responses of the mass audience.)

The public character of communication has implications for both performers and audience in the institutionalisation of their respective roles. I shall illustrate one aspect of such implications by reference to Goffman's concept of 'frame space' (1981 Chap. 5). Although this chapter is devoted to how radio announcers repair slips in the course of broadcasting, the more general topic is the correction of faults in everyday talk. A frame space derives from the particular relationship the speaker has to the words to be uttered, such a relationship provides an interpretative framework for understanding those words. Any speaking is necessarily a choice within a set of options and all the varieties of authorship, responsibility, style and direction in speech combine to give a particular identity to an utterance. This identity may be consistent with the framespace that the speaker would normally be expected to be operating with or it may intentionally or unintentionally violate that space: 'To speak acceptably is to stay within the frame space allowed one; to speak unacceptably is to take up an alignment that falls outside this space.' (op. cit. p. 230.) There is therefore a normative character to an individual's use of frame space and this normative character can be exploited to deal with the manifold slips and mistakes that litter everyday talk. Part of the informality of such talk is our ability to comment on our own speech

production in the midst of doing it, so that awareness of mistakes is displayed through the manner of corrections and apologies.

Neither the speaker nor the hearer is likely to be aware of all the slips that are made and of those that are noticed their significance will be affected by the frame space the speaker occupies. This is a problem in two ways for radio announcers. First, part of the institutionalisation of their medium is: 'that faults we would have to be trained linguistically to hear in ordinary talk can be glaringly evident to the untrained ear when encountered in broadcast talk.' (op. cit. p. 240.) Secondly, the announcer's identification with the station, and to that extent the subordination of his identity to his role, means that necessary corrections are ideally handled through a complicated balancing of self-respect with station discipline. It therefore seems that the frame space for broadcast talk, or more precisely announcer's talk, is more circumscribed than the informality of everyday talk. Goffman recognises that there is a style of announcing which either deliberately or inadvertently violates these norms of formality so that their talk is more openly self-referential, but there appears to be hierarchy of status between announcers and between stations in which a recourse to 'self-reporting' is a mark of marginality or inadequate socialization. In fact the reason for using radio talk for this analysis is that the formality of the public voice provides a contrast to everyday experience: 'it is only by looking at such things as delicts in broadcast talk that the liberty we conversationalists have been enjoying becomes obvious.' (op. cit. p. 324.)

Of course announcers, and particularly radio announcers, cannot stand for all performers on the mass media and there are a variety of

ways in which an implied relationship between role and identity can be exploited in different types of performance, but it is even so relevant that Goffman drawing largely upon experience of commercial radio can place such stress upon the formalism of the frame space for announcing. It has become conventional in Britain to characterise the Reithian legacy too glibly and to also treat it as an aberrant outcrop from an idiosyncratic cultural tradition. It may be that the institutionalisation of broadcasting in Britain during the monopoly years did take on a very distinctive sense of the public that was being addressed, but this does not mean that other forms of institutionalisation were less public-minded although possibly less (in one sense) public-spirited. The important point is that our understanding of the public is not just as a potentially threatening or rewarding political mandate but is also one of the ways in which the institutionalisation of communication for mass media organisations becomes possible.

The British experience has been idiosyncratic in that in a number of fields of public policy a hybrid form of administrative control has been developed. This hybrid, or what Williams has called an intermediate institution (see 1974, see also Heller 1978), is a form of organisation which while under the ultimate control of central government does retain a considerable degree of autonomy both in day-to-day administration and in terms of policy perspectives and institutional style. This mixture of a degree of significant independence from direct pressures from commercial marketing and from equivalent pressures from departments of state has meant that it has been feasible to describe working in such an organisation as a form of public service. Thus we are led to another use of public which abuts on to the usages already discussed. The central element in the conceptualisation of

public service in the ideology of the BBC is that as individuals do not have to respond to immediate pressures from vested interests, they are able to develop the art of the medium and to flesh out an ideology of the news as public information which transcends sectional interests (see for example Burns 1977 and Tracey 1977). One can describe this corporate self-image as ideological because it works to mask the conflict of class interests in how forms of popular culture are developed, legitimated and disseminated. It is precisely because the public that is being served is so imperfectly understood and basically distrusted that one finds such deep ambivalence over what are considered to be suitable forms for the presentation of popular entertainment.

It seems then that the use of the technology of mass communication will be dependent upon organisational forms and institutional culture which have been developed in relation to more general conflicts and tensions in the social structure. The process of massification will not be a straightforward matter of making communication accessible to unlimited numbers of people, but will involve more complex changes in the communication process of which they are a part. In a culture of mass entertainment conceptualisations of public anonymity lie at the heart of our experience of collective life. This is not to claim that intellectual debates over the semantic complexities of the various use of public are the stuff of everyday conversation; or even explicitly addressed when people struggle to express their sense of membership of community, neighbourhood, class or nation. Rather that a generalised egalitarianism, a pragmatic conviction that individual experiences and responses are not usually unique but stem from shared life-worlds, can be appealed to and drawn upon when negotiating imagery and entertainment indiscriminately available. That which is shared in our sense of public commonality is expressed in uniformity in that cultural

performances are enjoyed by masses, literally huge anonymous audiences; but it is simultaneously privatised in that our enjoyment is a private choice and usually a private experience. It is an investment of the self in culture, a display of morality as well as taste, and it is in this respect that the management of public identity can be a source of at least as great tension as gratification. The cultural rhetoric of mass entertainment is concerned to constitute the publics of mass society as collectivities we can recognise and share; but equally to reassure individual's of their practical competencies and pleasures as participants. Individuality has to be bolstered rather than suppressed in what is shared.

In discussing the character of spectacular drama in mass-mediated culture I will not concentrate upon those occasions and settings when very large resources have been invested in order to achieve spectacular effects. From one point of view these are interesting as instances of the persistence of traditional forms and images in modern guises, but they are more interesting in the context of the innovatory cultural forms of mass entertainment. I shall attempt to show in the course of this chapter that holding together spectacular demonstrations of communal bonds with spectacular images of stylised excess are a number of ways of constructing and sustaining identities - both public figures, those who are known (and their ways of being known) in media worlds, and the private identities of anonymous members of the public. The reason why identity has become the central focus of cultural tension, in even such an affirmatory mode as spectacular display, is the conjunction of collective instability with new forms of personal legitimacy or validation. By collective instability I do not mean structural instability (the ability to absorb and defuse structural tensions has been a remarkable feature of the political

systems of post-industrial societies), more an abrogation of established structures of meaning and personal stability: 'In all, the modern sense of unreality stemmed from extraordinarily various sources and generated complex effects. Technological change isolated the urban bourgeoisie from the hardness of life on the land; an interdependent and increasingly complex corporate economy circumscribed autonomous will and choice; a softening Protestant theology undermined commitments and blurred ethical distinctions ... success began to occur in a moral and spiritual void.' (Jackson Lears 1983 p. 10.)

The new forms of personal legitimacy were based upon the development of new values of aspiration and reward: 'Around the turn of the century a fundamental cultural transformation occurred within the educated strata of Western capitalist nations ... a new set of values sanctioning periodic leisure, compulsive spending, apolitical passivity, and an apparently permissive (but subtly coercive) morality of individual fulfillment.' (Jackson Lears op. cit. p. 3.)

The modernity of a culture of mass entertainment is the democratic liberalism of unparalleled choice amongst deracinated objects and activities. The rhetoric of freedom and contemporaneity is a culture of images and visual excess; in forms of display we assert the possibility of selfhood and implied community. Through the consumption of objects and styles we concretise a private identity but in doing so become performers in a drama of display for which there is no back stage. A form of identity which is parasitic upon public imagery.

This leads to curious problems of framing for more self-conscious performers who might seek to sustain a distinction between performance in different settings and selfhood, such as theatrical



performers. There is an inevitable elision between role and self with the latter becoming subsumed in the former. Although some performers are able to create a persona quite independent of their theatrical roles and use this as a public identity - Ronald Reagan is a good example of this process. In this respect it is reasonable to suggest that the low status usually accorded to film stars as actors stems from a feeling that their identity is subordinate to and swamped in a stereotype role. Therefore the publicity industry which is an inevitable part of stardom, and which is the basis of their news value as public figures, makes them marketing strategies rather than creative artists. The idea of stardom leads us to a further type of status which in addition to announcing includes a host of ways of being a personality or a celebrity - introducing talk shows, being a pundit on something(s), having an idiosyncratic expertise or an idiosyncratic manner in presenting a more common skill, or more generally having once been identified the fact of identity is sufficient to generate further occasions for identity. The supplementary industries of being interviewed, pictured, described, explained are not a bridge between audience and public figures, they are the ways in which personalities are constituted and sustained.

A necessary element in the emergence of this class of public figures is the voraciousness of the media of mass communication through which they exist. It seems part of the industrial logic of technologies of mass distribution to attempt to maximise their share of the relevant market, whether it is air time, copies sold or audience size. It is also true of massification that given mass distributors it is possible for minority selective marketing, such as The Guardian or Channel Four, to exploit mass technologies to create minority audiences. It does seem, however, that prestige or minority

audiences are dependent upon a bedrock of mass audiences supplied through a monopoly or oligopoly of distribution channels. The old fear that massification would lead to complete standardisation has not been sustained, but there are pressures to remove uncertainties in marketing entertainment by supplying what is predictably successful or at least inoffensive to mass audiences. The point here is one that has been made many times - investment in mass entertainment involves a high degree of risk and therefore producers and distributors will attempt to minimise that risk as far as possible by using previously successful formulae (Pekurny 1981). These formulae may be narrative genres which are highly predictable and thereby presumably comforting in their structural resolution. Other formulaic features are, for example, the use of stars whose persona is independent of a particular narrative, or, particularly in television, the use of personalities who are reliable in that they don't fluff, they speak appropriately to camera and are reassuringly consistent from one performance to the next.

My argument then is that the development of a media culture is something that not only takes place in the public sphere, in the sense in which McQuail uses that concept, but that the development generates new forms of public life and more specifically a new class of public figures. The community these figures represent is an abstract, imagined, community effectively constituted through forms of communication controlled by an oligopoly of producers 'speaking' to an atomised mass of readers, listeners, viewers etc. The material described and discussed in this chapter is in effect an extended exploration of some of the ways in which the spectacular forms of a culture of mass entertainment provide for a private participation in, a privatisation of, contemporary public life; but before approaching

this theme directly I want to clarify the notion of an abstract community.

I have argued above that political publics are in a fundamental sense dependent upon the existence of impersonal means of communication; and, as part of a constitutive dialectic, that the institutionalisation of public imagery makes mass communication possible. Mass politics requires that individuals feel themselves caught up as members of an abstract collectivity so that they can make commitments on political issues of varying degrees of personal relevance, commitments which require a means of stepping outside the immediate web of involvements and relationships and searching out support, information and the stuff of credibility for public opinion. The nation is an abstract collectivity - a sense of community sufficient to mobilise the emotions and loyalties of its children (the prevalence of family metaphors in nationalist rhetoric is in itself significant) which is necessarily experienced through cultural images and metaphors in place of its physical inaccessibility: 'My point of departure is that nationality, or, as one might prefer to put it in view of that word's multiple significations, nation-ness, as well as nationalism, are cultural artefacts of a particular kind.' (Anderson 1983 p. 13.) The nation is a political entity too big to be known by any individual, and therefore existing through symbolism or representational imagery or (for Anderson) imagination. It also, as has any other cultural form, has an historical trajectory: it has been invented however much the imagery of national identity may point to timeless essence. Despite its imaginary status the nation stakes a powerful hold upon our emotions and political identity: 'Finally, it is imagined as a community, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived

as a deep, horizontal comradeship. Ultimately it is this fraternity that makes it possible, over the past two centuries, for so many millions of people, not so much to kill, as willingly die for such limited imaginings.' (op. cit. p. 16.)

Nations are an invention of the closing years of the eighteenth century. That is, they began to be invented then they have been continually re-invented ever since, but nationalism - the populist rhetoric of the cultural form - did not acquire a general usage until the end of the succeeding century. The process of mobilising commitment through and to dramatic forms of citizenship is therefore contemporary with a number of steps towards developing new modes of political and cultural integration. Some examples from British experience are: the institutionalisation of a mass electorate and national political parties; popular entertainment which while retaining the character of working class culture was also effective in a 're-making' of the working class integrated into a stable social order (c.f. Stedman Jones 1983); the emergence of a national popular press committed ultimately to sensationalist entertainment and consumerist leisure; and the transformation of political ritual through symbolism of institutional legitimacy, principally the monarchy, abstracted from concrete alliances with specific interest groups (c.f. Cannadine 1983). These are general processes of limited and uneven relevance, and would have to be re-written for each national context, their significance is that they gave the cultural form of nationalism a variety of stages for the performance of an imaginary fraternity. The crucial resource for such a mode of integration, a re-writing of community, is a language for impersonal media of communication - initially a language for print - but the languages of new technologies can subsume illiteracy and oral diversity: 'Multilingual broadcasting can conjure

up the imagined community to illiterates and populations with different mother-tongues.' (Anderson op. cit. p. 123.) The technologies of mass distribution provide for not only new cultural forms of entertainment, but also for a new frame work for social identity of members of a mass public.

I want, therefore, to argue that the most significant features of a culture of mass entertainment are not the messages of particular performances, however much their cumulative reiteration may constitute stereotypes both functional for dominant elites and offensive to marginalised groups. Rather it is the form, in all the complexities of the multiple useages of that concept, of representation and participation which constitutes our deep sense of community and thereby individuality: 'the message of theory seems to be that we might better regard media content as a unique cultural form, a "media culture" fashioned according to its own conventions and codes and forming a more or less independent element in the social reality rather than a message about that social reality.' (McQuail 1983 p. 219.) As an example of how a form of entertainment has been generated within the presuppositions of a culture of mass entertainment, I shall, for the remainder of this part of the chapter, discuss the cultural form of modern sport. Sport is an interesting example because despite its precise cultural location in the dynamics of modernity much of the rhetoric concerning sport expresses 'traditional' values; and because sport is presented, described and dramatised as spectacular entertainment - more perhaps than any other form of contemporary entertainment sporting performances are spectacular occasions.

Sport is not conventionally thought of as culture because the performance does not articulate a conventional narrative, it is not

authored, and neither does it utilise conventional forms of aesthetic expression - except perhaps a grace in movement. There are, however, important ways in which sporting performance is a cultural occasion. For example, performance is inherently dramatic, the participants, whether in teams or individual sports struggle to reach an emotionally satisfying conclusion; the form of the performance is highly stylised and the forms of events and dramatic arena are marked by a complex symbolic repertoire; the performance can be enjoyed and appreciated by an audience; and although the participants may earn a living through performance the occasion is essentially a form of enjoyment, a leisure activity, rather than a form of production. A view of sport as a form of culture might lead to the judgement that it is an activity that has been distorted by being absorbed into a culture of mass entertainment, by being cannibalised by voracious media of mass communication. I shall argue, however, that sport is an inherently modern activity, a paradigm of mass entertainment. As a spectacular form of mass entertainment sport has been a crucial element in constituting the imaginary communities of nationalism, and the development of sport in countries taking on a culture of mass entertainment is inextricably bound up with ideologies of national identity.

The main difficulty in the sociology of sport is to avoid being sucked into moralistic debates about the nature of 'real' sport or sportsmanship. These debates are often cast in terms of a number of antitheses which are worth noting as they help to illuminate broader prejudices about popular culture. I shall present these antitheses as a set of contrasts. For example, amateur is favourably contrasted with professional; the performer with the spectator; the respectful, in the sense of somebody who voluntarily observes the 'spirit' of the

rules, is seen more favourably than somebody who exploits every opportunity rules provide to take advantage of an opponent; the spontaneous, in the sense of natural ability is favourably contrasted with the mechanised as somebody who uses forms of mechanical aid to improve performance, the main example in recent years of course has been 'artificial' stimulants; and the individual is favourably contrasted with highly disciplined forms of collective organisation. I am aware that the set of positive terms is a very idealised complex amongst administrators and commentators rather than practical norms for sports people. Even so setting up these antitheses in this way helps us to see that the desirable forms of participation in sport correspond in important respects to 'folk' characteristics of cultural creation. The undesirable aspects reek of commercialism and materialism, the dark side of modernity. Ideologies of performance are therefore an inherent part of spectacular dramatisation in mass entertainment. To put it another way, the density and profusion of mass communication means that we are knowingly aware of everything we watch and hear being representations of representations in infinite regress.

I do not want to argue that sports and games did not exist before the urbanisation which underlies a culture of mass entertainment. Statues and paintings of athletes, boxers and wrestlers in classical Greece are a familiar illustration of the antiquity of sporting heroism. Continuities in names of activities and types of achievement do not preclude, however, fundamental shifts in meaning and significance. Throughout the thesis I am concerned to show that changes in the cultural configuration within which activities are embedded will mean that their significance will be transformed despite the persistence of surface characteristics. I shall illustrate it more precisely at this

point in the thesis by arguing that 'sport' has a modern meaning such that the constituent activities have a different significance in the twentieth than in other centuries. A common way of describing the 'modern-ness' of sport in mass culture is to say that it has become a spectacle (as for example in Holt's chapter on cycle-racing in France which hinges on a description of cycle-racing as spectacle - 1981 Chap. 5), but it might be thought to be prejudicing my account if I equate modernity and the spectacular too glibly.

I shall present some reasons which seem to me to justify seeing modern sport as a different cultural form from previous forms of sporting contest, games, play etc. (Anticipating the reasonableness of these arguments I will no longer qualify sport by bracketing it with modern or framing it in quote marks - when I use sport I mean a cultural form of a type of leisure of the last hundred years.) The first set of reasons stem from the judgements of contemporaries that new types of activity were being taken up, and that these activities often came from England and were associated with recent English social and cultural history: 'That "sports", the type of English pastimes which spread to many other countries mainly between 1850 and 1950, had certain distinguishing characteristics in common which justified their designation as such, i.e. as "sports", has probably been noted more in other countries than in England itself.' (Elias 1971 p. 88.) Although I will discuss the relevance of the 'English-ness' of the development of sport more fully shortly, one feature that the English were seen to have innovated and exported, and that is centrally important, is that sport is popular rather than elitist: 'the first types of English sports which were taken up by other countries were horse-racing, boxing, foxhunting and similar pastimes, and that the diffusion of ball games such as football,



tennis and of "sport" generally in the more contemporary sense began only in the second part of the nineteenth century.' (op. cit. p. 89.) Sport is popular in the sense that it is both accessible to mass participation and enjoyed by a mass audience; both senses being dependent upon, amongst other reasons, rising standards of living and increasing amounts of time for leisure.

It might of course be objected, quite legitimately, that the contests between humans and between animals, the crude athletics and many types of contest and game associated with the traditional carnivals and festivals of folk culture were also not elitist (see for example Malcolmson 1973 and Burke 1978). Identifying the differences between physical competitions in folk and popular cultures takes us to the second set of reasons for claiming the distinctiveness of sport. These are briefly that sport is dependent upon an impersonal form of organisation and in order for that form of organisation to be accepted as legitimate nation-wide it was and is interdependent upon mass media of communication. The key to what I have called an impersonal form of organisation is that the rules of a particular game had to shift from being casual, communal and regional to being: 'very much more detailed and differentiated; they are not primarily customary rules but written rules, explicitly subject to reasoned criticism and revision.' (Elias op. cit. p. 95.) Written rules are capable of consultation by and exist beyond the memory and experience of any particular player, spectator and manager; they are necessarily in competition with any alternative set of rules until one is accepted as authoritative within the area of that game's being played - a regional, national and ultimately international impetus; and they provide a forum within which evaluative comparisons as to technique, worth and even aesthetics can be attempted. A corollary of a set of written rules

is an organisation of bureaucratic officials to administer them in particular performances, to adjudicate appeals, to manage leagues and competitions etc., and to provide a national framework within which the sport can be institutionalised. Media of mass communication are dependent upon this impersonal form of organisation to provide a resource which can be understood by all their readers, listeners and viewers however partisanly they are committed to an individual or a team. The organisation is in turn dependent upon national media to generate interest in the sport - primarily spectators although also aspirant performers of course. I shall amplify and clarify all of these points in the succeeding discussion.

The interaction of these factors, that sport is articulated through a written code of rules with a concomitant bureaucratisation of organisation and that sport is dependent upon mass media of communication, produces the most characteristic feature of sport that it is an activity for spectators. This is not to resuscitate that traditional fear of mass culture theorists that the massification of entertainment will mean the disappearance of amateur participation to be replaced by passive audiences dependent upon a professional elite. All our evidence indicates that amateur performance remains as high and is possibly stimulated by media publicity - the number of amateur violin players and footballers has not fallen. The impact of national publicity is that it becomes much harder for local professionals to survive, the aura of stardom generates a mass following for a professional elite and it becomes increasingly difficult to generate audiences for the second and third ranks of professionals. There is in effect a polarisation towards a thriving amateur base and a professional elite of superstars. The consequence is that sport is performed for audiences - amateur performers are

either aspiring to be accepted into the ranks of the professionals or are playfully re-enacting the dramas of their mentors.

In order for the spectating character of sport to be sustained a number of other factors and consequences have to be briefly described. The first is that sites for this new type of dramatic performance have to be created. The emergence of sport can be traced in one way through the building of increasingly vast spectacular arenas. These stadia dominate the urban landscape and can be seen to be the natural successors to the spectacular public buildings of previous centuries. There is also as Shergold has pointed out an interactive logic between the construction of such dramatic edifices and the commercialisation of performance: 'Entrepreneurs required superior stadium facilities in order to increase the sale of viewing privileges and thereby maximise return from their investment in professional sport, while the resultant outlay on building and rise in fixed costs - maintenance, capital depreciation, and ground rental - demanded that additional revenue be received from spectators.' (1979 p. 22.) The willingness of spectators to become involved in, and consequently pay for, sporting performance was generated by two further characteristics of sport - the increasing salience of technical criteria of accomplishment, and partisanship, to the point of fanaticism, in support of teams and individuals who are felt to represent a locality. By technical criteria I mean the use of standardised forms of measurement such as stopwatches, points for victories in competitive leagues and yards rushed in American football to mention some examples. These measures frame individual pain and effort and provide a comparative dimension to specific occasions and in turn generate a parasitic industry of recording and critical interpretation. Stadia as the grounds for records are necessarily

sited in a specific locality and thereby provide a base for a 'home' team who represent that locality in competitive struggles with visitors. The complexity of this concept of representation will be taken up again but for now it is sufficient to note that such is the strength of identification that individuals often identify themselves by affiliation to a team or a club etc., as thereby standing for a community. A mode of cultural identification displayed through colours, chants, insignia and a panoply of symbolic integration.

Sports stadia dramatically display the size of the audience that can be generated for this type of performance; it is, however, important to note technical and/or environmental constraints and how the ways in which they have been overcome feed into the modernity of sport. For example, sports stadia required innovations in engineering design and transformed construction techniques before the huge crowds could be accommodated in safety and yet be given adequate line of sight. A related factor of comfort and convenience stems from the significance of the weather. Stadium design has attempted to tackle the engineering difficulties of roofing sufficient areas to accommodate both sport and spectators and to allow something approximating 'natural' playing conditions. Innovations in designing artificial turf for certain games have been another step along the road of subordinating the unpredictability of the ecology of sporting performance to the type of reliability appreciated by accountants. Similarly, restricting sporting performance to the hours of daylight was a constraint on both capital and the character of leisure. There are enormous technical problems in illuminating the playing area in ways that do not litter the stage with equipment, that enables spectators to see and yet do not dazzle the players. The solution to these problems has again meant that sport can be abstracted from its roots in games and become an

elaborately staged piece of artifice. The attraction of large numbers of spectators has involved problems of physical access as well as environmental control. There was therefore an early interaction between sports entrepreneurs and transport companies.

What one might call the administrative grounds of sport therefore consist of environmental and communicative facilities which structure the modes of performance and the character of the dramatic occasion. In addition to these factors of staging we have to consider the commercial organisation of performance and the professionalisation of sports performers. A brief comparison of the early commercial organisation of two massively popular sports, football in England and cycle-racing in France, offers some interesting points. Football clubs are not essential for playing the game of football but are for a modern sport organised in leagues based on competition. The origins of clubs are various but stem from established forms of association: 'The three major pre-existing institutions that spawned football clubs in our period were churches and chapels, public houses and places of employment.' (Mason 1980 p. 21.) Such clubs could act to stimulate local enthusiasm and provide training facilities for players, but it quickly became apparent that the management of the organisation of a club, arranging fixtures and controlling finance etc., was a time-consuming and sophisticated exercise. It is therefore unsurprising that, in conjunction with the emergence of professionalism amongst the players, and taking advantage of the opportunity of limited liability, large numbers of clubs became business enterprises. Given the class character of the sport, both amongst players and spectators, one might have expected working class control of these new enterprises. There were attempts to recruit working class shareholders, but such clubs were largely unsuccessful

and the majority of clubs by 1915 were controlled by a middle class directorate whose background was: 'Wholesale and retail is the largest single group followed by the professions, the drink trade and manufacturers.' (op. cit. p. 43.) Although some made large profits it seems unlikely that the dominant motive was profit as many clubs struggled, and more salient seems to have been a desire for local prestige possibly mixed with a degree of paternalism.

While the commercial organisation of the sport was therefore essential for its emergence as a mass spectator sport, the impetus for commercial development remained with the clubs whose interests lay in controlling players and recruiting spectators. Cycle-racing in France was based from the beginning upon a distinction between amateur relaxation and professional entertainment: 'The relatively small profit margins of manufacturers meant that the volume of sales had to be increased wherever possible. In order to do this producers were prepared to invest large sums of money in cycling as a competitive sport.' (Holt 1981 p. 85.) In addition to bike manufacturers other entrepreneurs who had an interest in developing the sport as entertainment were speculators in building and managing cycle-tracks and newspaper publishers who used cycle-racing as a stimulant for sales. Indeed the most famous race the Tour de France was started as a promotional gimmick for a new sporting newspaper. The interests of each of these groups were best served by what can be described as the ancillary consequences of the sport rather than the management of performance and relying on gate receipts. This became absolutely true when road racing became popular as it is impossible to control access by spectators and therefore the finance of the sport was accomplished through a mixture of sponsorship and associated advertising. It is against this background that the spectacular character of sport developed differently in these

two activities.

The difference is made clearer by contrasts in the attitudes towards professionalism in the two sports. In the context of very clear commercialisation of competitive cycling in France where: 'sporting entrepreneurs invested in special cycling stadiums and used every means open to them to draw in the crowds; and cycle manufacturers shamelessly exploited the economic opportunities' (Holt op. cit. p. 82), it is unsurprising that from the beginning: 'Professional cyclists openly admitted to being professional.' (ibid.) In English football the emergence of the professional game was a more hesitant process and was marked by the curious restriction of an agreement amongst the clubs to impose a maximum wage, after several attempts had failed to get the necessary majority, from the 1901-2 season. Despite widespread flouting of this rule it stayed in operation until after the Second World War, when, it can be said, that football finally came of age as a mass spectator sport. Of course some professional footballers did become popular heroes and did acquire some of the charisma of stardom particularly in the inter-war years. They were for example recruited for advertising endorsements from around the turn of the century. The control of wages allied with the infamous system by which clubs could retain or sell players against their will did, more importantly, perpetuate attitudes in which amateurism was seen as characteristic of gentlemen and masters while professionalism was appropriate to their servants. Professional cyclists did not come from more elevated social backgrounds but the encouragement to stardom by the managers of the sport meant that the patronising prejudice which ran through the administration of British football, as in many other sports, was not appropriate.

We have been led to what is generally seen as the central

contradiction in sport - that the essence of play and games is an almost disinterested pursuit of excellence within particular conventions while the organisation of sport bespeaks features of the social structure such as class tension and overwhelming commercialism. The distinction between amateurs and professionals which has been of such significance in both legitimating the administrative structure of particular sports, with amateurs forming an elite stratum as in English cricket, or in underlying the creation of separate leagues or the relative status of different versions of the same game, as in the distinctions between rugby union and rugby league in England, has been powerful because of the amateur's claim to embody the essence of sport. This ideological legitimation has served to disguise the extent to which sport, as with other emergent forms of leisure, has been effectively socially segregated and restricted by stratification, (c.f. Cunningham 1980), and yet seem to support a view of sport as a form of leisure which could transcend class divisions and lead to greater social integration (c.f. Bailey 1978). This ideology has not, however, inhibited a widespread recognition that different sports have a distinctive class character, and not always of the form that socially superior groups attempt to restrict access, for example some radical critics have bemoaned what they see as the dilution of football from working class culture into mass entertainment (e.g. Taylor 1971).

Cross-cutting the social stratification of sport, and a full account of the inter-relationships between the social organisation of sport and ideologies of performance would have to include racial and sexual stratification at least as prominently as class culture, there has been a moral rhetoric about the purpose of sport. Several elements can be summarised as: benefits for the individual, a combination of discipline, aesthetics and natural-ness which is complex to characterise



but received a significant early exposition in the muscular christianity of the late nineteenth century; benefits for the national culture, as in the curious continuities in language between the ideologists of Empire in Edwardian England and the justifications of investment in socialist physical culture in contemporary East European societies (c.f. Riordan 1978); and benefits for international life so that the common humanity of people is rhetorically stressed against the arbitrary conflicts between the politics of nation-states. These moral benefits which are held to encapsulate the true purpose(s) or meaning of sport are patently undercut by an emphasis upon competitive success at all costs; and/or an explicit recognition of the commercial character of the staging of sporting performance, as when the traditional uniform and some of the rules of cricket were changed in Australia to make the sport suitable for televising as evening entertainment.

The mixture of deep moral concerns with practical matters concerned with staging and performance is characteristic of writing about sport; a sense of greater cultural significance is often signalled by reference to concepts of national character or mythic dimensions to sporting contests. Some features of the invention of American baseball as a type of modern sport and subsequent explanations of its popularity should help to clarify the cultural significance of sport. The first point is that in the mid-nineteenth century along the Eastern Seaboard cricket was the most popular summer game rather than baseball. Within twenty years the positions had been reversed so that by 1876 it was: 'the creation of the National Baseball League in that year by a group of astute businessmen which marked the final emergence of organized baseball. No longer simply a game, baseball was now big business.' (Tyrell 1979 p. 206.) The intervention of enterprising entrepreneurs

is at once marked as important in generating systematic rules, coherent organisation and public interest to sustain a mass spectator sport. More importantly, however, it can be argued that the entrepreneurial activity of transforming game into business laid the basis for that mixture of moral rectitude and nationalist fervour which we have begun to see is characteristic of sport as a cultural form. Cricket failed to retain its position as a popular sport in North America because for English immigrants and status-conscious members of the American upperclass there was no incentive to adapt the game to changing conditions, interests and circumstances of lower and middle classes. Exclusive practices and prejudices created a vacuum which baseball could be adapted to fill. But not only did the game have to be shortened to become a mass spectator sport, its moral character had also to be resolved. In its initial years of popularity: 'baseball came to be known as a sport in which, ... riots were not uncommon, gambling was endemic, and drunkenness was widespread.' (op. cit. p. 219.)

Entrepreneurial promoters investing in the sport sought profits, city rather than ethnic affiliation and the respectability of organisational decorum, to these ends they: 'introduced contractual relationships, business principles, and labor-management separation, and they attempted to enforce the paternalistic morality or respectability prominent in the larger society.' (op. cit. p. 223..)

Overlaying this combination of the invention of a new form of entertainment with a cultural rhetoric of appropriate norms for membership of an audience (in ways consistent with processes traced in the third chapter), was a mythology of the cultural distinctiveness and significance of this type of entertainment. It is true that popular explanations of the mass following for baseball in America: 'demonstrate a will to believe which gropes hopefully toward almost

any explanation.' (Guttman 1978 p. 97.) There is, however, a regression to the norm that the game: 'is peculiarly American, fitted to American conditions and to the American character.' (op. cit. p. 95.) It is too easy to debunk facile equations of elements of cultural mythology, such as the suggestion that baseball triumphed because it satisfied frontier-bred demand for speed, excitement and action. (Guttman's suggestions of the salience of pastoral imagery and the facility of the game for quantification are more sophisticated but do not have any greater inherent validity.) The crucial element is the search for national distinctiveness, a search which is consistent with the development of nationalistic fervour discussed earlier. Also consistent with the transcendental claims of nationalism is the folk-ist search for meaning: for sport as national culture and a tendency to hunt for mythological significance. This folk-cultural sense of authenticity and renewal is the rather chilling core which underlies the salience of sport in both fascist and communist ideologies of nationalism.

Accounts which postulate a deeper meaning to sport do not have to be as elaborate as Porter's discovery that, based upon Propp's morphological scheme for the analysis of folktales: 'baseball shares a hidden structure with the Russian fairy tale, as well as with such popular modern genres as Western and detective stories', (1977 p. 156). There is a more wide-spread vocabulary in popular journalism which regularly borrows ideas of myth, ritual and symbolism to describe the importance of sport to players and fans. This hyperbole is not entirely misplaced. While it is true that folkisms reinforce the timeless claims of nationalism there are features to sport which transcend the business of profiting from entertainment. For example, as Porter points out, while baseball is not a form of narrative art it does have many of the

features of drama: 'Yet because it is both nonverbal as well as nonmimetic and its operations relatively fixed, it would seem to be closer to ritual, were it not for the important fact that the course of every game is different and the outcome unpredictable.' (op. cit. p. 155.) Spectators are caught up in the vicarious excitement of the outcome precisely because it cannot be known in advance - each performance is a revelation for all those concerned. It is perhaps less surprising therefore to find that the players, and managers etc., seek to propitiate the caprice of destiny by innumerable superstitious rituals and formulae. An awful lot of the writing about sport mentions these little practices which are often put down to the idiosyncrasies of the performers concerned. If for no other reason though they do seem significant as pointers to the ways in which sport as reiterated drama touches on the dark edges of social order - the edges of uncertainty and potential chaos which religious beliefs are conventionally held to be attempts to control.

The availability of sport for quasi-religious rhetoric also helps to explain the phenomenon of the deep identification between fans and their team. Ostensibly based upon a team representing a locality, in an era of mass broadcasting geographical communalism has increasingly been supplemented by other sources of affiliation. At the level of the nation there seem quite strong expectations for appropriate behaviour by national representatives. Strong political affiliations by players seem to violate the 'spirit' of participation and across the political spectrum it is intermittently deemed reasonable to withdraw from international competition as a show of disapproval of the policies of another nation. It seems that for the imaginary communities of a culture of mass entertainment sport provides a potent and increasingly salient mode of symbolic identification.

One can therefore argue that in the light of the ways in which sport has been institutionalised over the past century it is integral to our sense of social order. It seems possible that we could excavate a discourse of sport in the Foucauldian sense paralleling other modes of discourse. Such a claim seems liable to the charge that the trivial is being imbued with unwarranted seriousness - it is after all only a game(s). Initially the centrality of sport to contemporary social order can be seen to stem from what was necessary for its development. I have noted that sport was seen in the nineteenth century as a peculiarly English innovation, not because of idiosyncrasies in the English character so much as that England was a leader in industrialisation which generated both leisure and increasing leisure-time, rising standards of living and the necessity of a new culture of secular hedonism. Guttmann argues that: 'It was inevitable, therefore, that England, the homeland of industrial capitalism, was also the birthplace of modern sports', (1978 p. 60), and further, that: 'The receptivity of a nation to the ecological invasion of modern sports is in itself an index of that nation's industrial development.' (p. 61.) This can be seen in a correlation between the development of sports associations and countries 'taking off' into sustained economic growth, a correlation which would not hold for post-colonial development. More significantly, perhaps, it can be argued that the staging and performance of modern sport expresses an essentially modern rationality both in organisational form and in an attitude of secular empiricism. The thesis is persuasive but it makes what is often seen to be the 'anomaly' of violence, both amongst players and by spectators on each other and the world in general, more intriguing.

Two points need to be made at the beginning of any discussion

of the anomaly of violence in sport in contemporary society. The first is that what is conventionally reported as a shocking innovation, an instance of how established values are being undercut, does have a much longer history than such responses would suggest. As I have noted the history of nineteenth century leisure can be written as a persistent struggle to 'civilise' the 'barbaric' behaviour and entertainments of the lower classes, and late twentieth century sermonising on the delinquencies of football hooligans, particularly in tone and style, could often have been written at any point in the previous two hundred or more years (in addition to the work on nineteenth century leisure I have already cited Holt, 1981 Chap. 7, has some interestingly comparable material on France). The second is that the rationality of sport should not be exaggerated. A strong element in the moral benefits to be derived from sport has always been an indoctrination in the 'manliness' of participation. The equation of masculinity with physical prowess has been functional for patriarchal ideology in ways that take us to fundamental themes in the ideology of social order (c.f. Willis 1982), and which require detailed exploration in the context of gender relationships and the mystique of violence in contemporary society. Both points having been made, however, should not allow any fudging of the fact that particularly, but not solely, in relation to football in Britain the staging of a game is frequently a source of fear to the locality and the threat of violence actively discourages many spectators.

The problem of violence is then as much a problem of its representation as of its occurrence - the ways in which different aspects are constructed as more or less legitimate. Taylor points out the ambivalencies in this process whereby the sensationalism of the popular press both glamourises while condemning exciting behaviour: 'What is for

male working-class youth its own, relatively autonomous "life-world", soccer, the people's game, is increasingly depicted as being a world in which "violence" is a means both literally and metaphorically to goal.' (1982 p. 164.) The 'traditional' features of this rowdiness have as long a pedigree as the consistently hostile attitudes of social commentators to crowd behaviour and the two strands are to that extent interdependent. Working class sport has become an important crucible for the playing out of structural tensions around attitudes towards violence and orderly behaviour. Attempts to use sports stadia as stages for the dramatisation of these tensions is of course deplored by both those who wish to use sport as a form of social engineering and those who merely seek to make a profit from it. They are right, in their own terms, to stress the inappropriateness of crowd disorder because it runs against the grain of spectacular consumerism of which sport is a part. A failure to adapt to the norms of mass entertainment, particularly by young spectators at sports identified with a class culture, is in this sense an outrageous display of a conviction that both the working class and its cultural forms have been or are being marginalised: 'I would insist that the key to the current decomposition of working class spectator sport lies in the decomposition of the working class itself.' (Taylor 1982 p. 181.) Transformations in social structure and the ecology of urban life can be dramatised through a refusal by particular groups to be incorporated into the orderly rationality of mass society.

Although I have argued that the development of sport as a form of mass entertainment should be seen as an agency of modernisation this does not mean that all types of sport are modern in the same ways or that in their integration into other features of class and communal culture sport might not effectively serve to stabilise elements of traditional culture - aspects of patriarchalism being the most salient

example. We should expect then sport to be the continued occasion for moral panics particularly as new forms of class differentiation are being drawn. The problem of violence is also not just a feature of crowds - some sports either encourage, as in ice-hockey, or are dependent upon, as in American football, violent interaction between players. The American football example is sometimes seen to be worrying both because it is so extremely tough on performers and because it has become the most popular American spectator sport since it has been effectively televised and could therefore be seen as a harbinger of the future. It is also not dependent upon lower class support but is most enthusiastically followed by suburban, better-educated and better-off audiences. Is it popular because the violent play offers a cathartic release for those who do not have much violent excitement in their everyday lives? Or because spectating through television mediates and distances the violence so that it is transformed into fantasy and spectacle? Or because the nature of the game means that the violence is contained within such a precise and elaborate formulaic structure that it is effectively neutralised and recuperated into everyday life-worlds: 'But, as even the simplest play diagram reveals, football's temporal and spatial confinement demands the most regimented and complexly coordinated forms of activity. The segmentation of time and space recalls the predictable regularity and externally imposed demands of other familiar American sights - assembly lines, tract homes, and superhighways.' (Real 1977 p. 107.)

An explanation of football's popularity would probably have to include all these factors, as well as aesthetic pleasure in the intrinsic skills of the game, but rather than attempt such an analysis here I am more interested in the interdependence between sport and its means of diffusion to a mass audience. Mandle has suggested that two



crucial processes need to be considered as the context for the development of organised sport, first that there is: 'a clear correlation between suburban as distinct from urban growth and the development of sports and games. The other is to consider the rise of comparable forms of entertainment, particularly the music hall where the incidence of heroes (and heroines), class tension, wonder and spectacle, were at least as evident as in organised games.' (1973 p. 512.) I hope that my framework for interpretation fulfills at least in general terms, the implication of these recommendations. A third process, however, has to be added to these two and which has made both of them possible and that is the development of the dominance of mass media of communication in constituting a sense of shared culture.

I have drawn attention throughout this discussion to the significance of national media of communication in constituting sport as mass entertainment, but in this concluding section on the spectacular character of contemporary sport the mass media have to be the central focus. As each new phase of technological innovation, such as wire and cable services, popular journalism, national radio broadcasting and television, made reports of events more quickly and more intimately available to mass audiences sporting performances were consistently featured as a reliable bait for audience interest: 'by 1867 the New York Herald had only twice paid eight hundred pounds for dispatches: the first, to record the King of Prussia's speech after war with Austria; the second, to provide readers with a blow-by-blow description of the boxing match between Mace and Goss.' (Shergold 1979 p. 30.) This balancing of priorities has been adhered to throughout the history of mass communication. It is a degree of interest that has of course been welcomed and strongly encouraged by promoters of fixtures and managers of teams. There have been warning

comments that the more effectively the media could recreate the atmosphere of performance the less willing spectators might be to turn out for the show; and that the centrifugal tendencies of mass communication will encourage interest in stars and outstanding teams to the detriment of lower-order performers; but in general the media have made sport modern but have not necessarily affected the rules and character of a match or contest.

In this respect the development of television technology can be said to be an innovation in that television re-constitutes the performance. Two aspects to this process are: if television finds a suitable sport it abstracts it from its particular class culture and gives it a mass intelligibility - the examples of show-jumping and snooker from opposite ends of the social spectrum are instances of sports being given a new cultural ambience; and television through editing, play-backs, commentaries, interviews and its own discourse of interesting moments and highlights so shapes games that they are effectively re-cast for broadcasting: 'It is no longer possible to describe television as relaying the event. Rather, it is producing an elaborate, entertaining show based upon the event.' (Whannel 1984 p. 35.) Television can be said to be providing a narrative through its codes of presentation for a non-narrative cultural form.

The reconstruction of sport through television ('The last twenty years have seen a second transformation of sport in this country, as dramatic as that between 1870 and 1900,' (Whannel 1983 p. 63)), can be illustrated through both British and American football. The essays in the British Film Institute monograph on the presentation of football on television include a number of rather detailed analyses of the codes used in framing, editing and commentating on televisual football. One example is a comparison of the frequency of cutting

between British and West German film of football. The British style is both more fragmented and interrupts the course of play more and seems to have been developed to heighten visual/dramatic impact and to increase human interest on the supposition that a male audience of experts is accompanied by less interested wives and daughters (Barr 1975). An approach that can be described as a concern with incident, the dramatic, the sentimental and spectacular, rather than necessarily with a skillful playing of the game by a team. A similar process of importing cliches and stereotypical features of entertainment rhetoric can be seen in the nationalism and derogatory internationalism of commentators' presentations: 'The stereotypes, the ethnocentrism, the self-conceptions, form a cultural pattern characteristic of this branch of the medium. It is through persistent and unquestioning repetition of these evaluations, diagnoses, and assertive claims that television creates the world which it then claims to reveal to us.' (Tudor 1975 p. 65.)

For both British and American football, and increasingly for other sports, the balance between presentation and performance has shifted in favour of the former. Real has recorded a Super Bowl match and deduced that only three per cent of the total telecast consisted of actual live play. The context of presentation, advertising, entertainment and analyses etc., all contribute to the profits of the broadcasting channel and to the 'family' character of the total show and cumulatively blur the significance of whether it is actually an interesting match or not: 'Although mass mediated culture tends to profane a civilization's most sacred and powerful words and images, in the process it manages to elevate otherwise mundane events of no real consequence to the status of spectacles of a powerful, quasi-sacred myth and ritual nature.' (Real 1977 p. 96.) In expressing sexual,

racial and consumerist prejudices and ambitions Superbowl is the creation of television, with some help from press and radio, which dialectically confirms the significance of media culture in constituting integrative forms for the nation state.

What I have described as cross-cutting contradictions in the representation of sport come together paradigmatically in the regular staging of the Olympic Games. Although they are commonly described as having been re-started in 1896 I think the rationales then, and how they have subsequently developed, are so different to anything we know about the Games in classical Greece, that they are effectively an innovation of the twentieth century (c.f. Kidd 1984 and Tomlinson 1984). The Olympic spirit owes more to attempt to ideologically resolve tensions in nineteenth century social structure than to classical scholarship; origins which have themselves created problems in their appropriateness for late twentieth century audiences. What began as attempt to recapture a mythical purity, or at least attain a state of grace modelled on mythical antecedents, is commonly held to be corrupted so that it has lost its transcendental status (like so many of these falls from grace each generation seems to discover that it happened to its immediate predecessors).

The two reasons for this process are commercialisation and excessive nationalism, and perhaps the mythical consciousness is the imagination which believes that these need not be dominant characteristics. The Games are held to have become more commercial because of the advantages of staging them: 'By the Los Angeles Olympics of 1932, it had become widely recognised by state and civic officials in Western nations that the Games had considerable utility for the promotion of national prestige, civic pride, tourism, urban development and commercial growth.' (Gruneau 1984 p. 6.) And yet the

costs of constantly exceeding the predecessor have either beggared urban corporations or led to a 'privatisation' as in Los Angeles '84 where skilfull marketing and sponsorship has actually led to massive profits. Nationalistic fervour in relation to the Games may take the form of seeking to stage them in order to display either racial or political elitism, for example the Berlin Olympics of '36 or Moscow Olympics of '80, or more prosaically as a display of national maturity although both forms will have the effect of stimulating the scale and extravagance of the occasion: 'holding the Games and performing well in them had become such powerful symbols of national character and economic stature that expansion of the Olympic spectacle was inevitable.' (Gruneau op. cit. p. 8.) Both reasons for corruption then are antithetical to the 'Olympic spirit' because they encourage emphases upon elaborate facilities, star performers, record-breaking occasions and further bureaucratisation of national team preparation and management.

What is particularly relevant for this thesis is that developments in the scale and character of each Olympic occasion are so frequently described as a slide into 'mere spectacle'. The sticking point for the Olympics has usually been presented as the defence of amateurism as the core characteristic of the type of the occasion it should be. The gradual but seemingly inevitable recognition that a combination of state subsidies, commercial sponsorship and media publicity have rendered amateurism at this level virtually meaningless is one index of an acceptance of spectacular rationality. I have tried to suggest, however, that amateurism has always been so ideologically charged that to give it totemic significance is to be deceived about the cultural character of sport. It is more useful to draw a distinction between spectacle and festival: 'While the Olympic Games are our grandest spectacle, they

are simultaneously a festival, and much of the character and history of modern Olympism is contained in the dialectic between these two genres of cultural performance', (MacAloon 1984 pp. 247-8), and consider why: 'the hierarchy of the Olympic Movement has persistently declared itself against spectacle and for festival.' (ibid.) MacAloon suggests that festivals are characterised by balance, harmony and periodisation qualities which are undercut by the logic of spectacular expansion and aggrandisement; and perhaps because of their scale and grossness spectacles are always potentially tasteless - maybe even morally incoherent; and that in festivals the distinctions between performers and audiences are harder to sustain than in spectacles where the emphasis upon visual display generates spectators. (I think that MacAloon sees these as essential differences whereas I have tried to argue that in different modes of dramatisation these differences would either not be true or have the same significance.) The core of the distinction between spectacle and festival is that the former is based upon vicarious participation: 'There may be media festivals, but a festival by media is a doubtful proposition. Festival means being there, there is no festival at a distance.' (op. cit. p. 270.) Or, as Whannel concludes: 'If what is wanted is a return to idealised myths and to the staging of a communal festival where athletes of the world mingle, caring more about participation than victory, then there is little point in expecting television coverage or commercial sponsorship.' (1984 p. 42.)

The Olympic Games have become a spectacular occasion, the most regular source of international spectacular entertainment, because of their dependence upon mass media of communication principally television. And the media have become constitutive of the occasion because the Games are inherently spectacular. The key to this cycle of dependency is the rhetoric of nationalism. The cultural form of sport presumes a community which it represents, but as this community is an audience of

spectators their collective identity is a fiction of performance. This is not to deny the possibility of aesthetic grace and moral purpose in sporting accomplishment, but our pleasure in personal achievement has taken on a wider cultural significance. The ways in which the rationality of sport is disguised in personal ambition and hedonistic pride are paralleled by the incorporation of nationalism in individualised heroism and our privatised identification with such heroes through media reports. Simultaneously more and more people take up some form of sport as part of their leisure life-style with technological sophistication which has made access possible on an ever-increasing scale combined with increasing personalisation and immediacy of vicarious participation. The consequence is a dramatisation of life-style in conjunction with a dramatisation of community in a culture of mass entertainment. To the extent that a nation is an imaginary community constituted by representational forms, then sport as a dramatisation of community is an appropriate form for the expression of national identity. The nationalist fervour of the Olympic Games is not therefore an unfortunate corruption but inherent in the type of drama being enacted, and as that drama is performed for and through its media presentation the display of physical prowess becomes a spectacular icon of a culture of images and the imagination of community.

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P A R T   T W O

In an urbanised culture the city, or metropolis, has largely ceased to be a place and is instead a way of life propagated and made possible by media of mass communication. The world of mass culture is inescapable and we are all therefore members of a mass society. In the first part of this chapter I described some of the implications for our understanding of community and identity of a culture of mass entertainment. I used the public drama of sport as a potent source of spectacular imagery in contemporary culture to illustrate the construction of one rhetoric of communal identification. In this part of the chapter I shall extend my account of the significance of spectacular drama for a language of community and identity in contemporary culture by pointing to some forms of dramatic performance staged quite outside the cultural form of theatre as it developed in the last century. In important respects indeed, these forms of performance draw upon styles of dramatisation characteristically associated with pre-theatrical drama.

A culture of mass entertainment is different in important respects from any other cultural era. This does not mean that certain styles of entertainment such as processional forms, entertainment environments and indeed much of the signifying imagery of 'entertainment' will not survive from previous eras. Spectacular forms and imagery will be part of this inheritance. Spectacular drama is not, therefore, a primitive stage in drama and/or entertainment which is overcome as either audiences and/or modes of production become more socially complex. In certain respects new spectacular dimensions are introduced in a culture of

mass entertainment. The scale of the enterprise means that audiences are usually enormous and this can be used to justify and might be said to necessitate enormous expenses on production. And further, the voracious demands of continually needing to service production schedules, which are both very time-consuming and in which there is a high premium placed on novelty, mean that producers rely heavily on narrative formulae and institutionalised modes and sources of production (Fishman 1980). The mixture of novelty and tradition in mass entertainment can be illustrated through some features of the dramatisation of identity in contemporary culture.

An identity is a convenient portmanteau term to convey all the ways in which an approximate meeting-ground between others' expectations and our own sense of self is practically described. Identity is a descriptive device by which members of a society differentiate each from one another, and simultaneously a framework for order through which each individual marshals a vocabulary of signs to put together a package which is, more or less adequately, a self they wish to present. It is tempting to be influenced by a naive psychology of identity-types into thinking of identity as a thing capable of specification and definition, but the necessity of negotiation means that it is more usefully conceived of as a structure of framework of possibilities. Our identity is rarely constant across the whole range of audiences with whom we interact in the course of any one day or week, and most certainly identity is something we would expect to change and develop in the course of a biography. The concept of a framework of possibilities suggests that although identity is something that is necessarily personal to an individual, that is it is how that person claims distinctiveness, in practice identity becomes recognisable through a set of cultural conventions about how the

semiotics of identity are to be understood. It is part of this broadening of the concept that features of identity need not be restricted to individual attributes, but can include relationships, settings and even collective mores as part of the material for sense of self. Mothers are an example of people who may be expected to subordinate themselves to members of their immediate family to the extent that mothers' identity may become dependent upon family accomplishments.

The ways in which identity is expressed through social and cultural conventions means that it is potentially as much a problem in how it is to be understood as how it is to be accomplished. A problem that becomes more salient if we introduce a distinction between public and private identity. A public identity may be said to be those features attributed to an individual in certain settings as opposed to those features which would be considered most salient by members of the family and other close intimates in more private settings. This contrast exists in traditional social formations but it could be assumed that the private self would be subordinate to public role. For example, a village priest is ascribed an identity by the nature of his role and although his performance would give that role some personal characteristics, in relatively stable societies the vast majority of individuals will adaptively conform to the normative prescriptions of the role. In more socially complex urban-industrial societies the impossibility of limiting the range of settings for role performance means that a greater premium is placed upon personal conviction and consistency. To the extent that private identity becomes more autonomous and the public more explicitly conventional in character, then the latter becomes potentially more suspect in tensions over criteria of authenticity and deceit.

Authenticity has become a central dimension of identity in contemporary society because it is at least possible for the cynical to exploit the semiotic vocabulary of identity and to mislead others as to their purposes or 'true character'. We have become particularly vulnerable to sceptical doubts in an urbanised culture because of the anonymity of communal experience, what Sennett has called 'the erosion of public life' over the past two centuries. Sennett argues that to fill the vacuum created by a decay of common concern there has been a: "'mystification" of material life in public ... caused by mass production and distribution.' (1976 p. 19.) This process of attributing material matters with undue cultural significance works on two levels. The first can be described as using material possessions not just as marks of status but as symbols of purpose and sense of self; the possibility is a consequence of mass production and distribution and is for Sennett particularly relevant to clothes, although I think it applies equally to all forms of material possessions. Mechanisation, in both production and distribution, has meant an increasing homogeneity in appearance and life-style throughout society, but this standardisation has been balanced by making the process of acquisition and choice more spectacularly entertaining. Parallel developments such as palaces of consumption, department stores, mass advertising and: 'the investing in material things of attributes or associations of intimate personality.' (op. cit. p. 20.) These ways of glamourising the acquisition and display of material commodities, what we have come to call consumerism, provide forms and meaning to collective interaction, an essential basis for a semiotic of identity in anonymous settings, and norms for the culture as a way of life: 'the promise of abundance, luxury, unlimited pleasure and happiness does have a peculiarly compulsive quality ... the dream of unlimited

satisfaction of needs and desires.' (Featherstone 1983 p. 4.)

The mystification of consumerism is that the display of taste or wealth in one's possessions give you a recognisable social identity which is also personally satisfying; at the level of the community the promise of material satisfaction uses the fantasy of entertainment to transcend function. I will discuss the spectacular character of consumerism, particularly as it relates to imagery of the body, in the third part of this chapter. The second level of mystification Sennett identifies is a commitment to secular accounts. Secularism as a belief that in the material here-and-now can be found an understanding of why things and people are as they are. A commitment to secularism obviously promotes a concern with objective circumstances, facts are the stuff of practical accounts and as such all facts are at least potentially relevant - including the facts of differential perceptions, responses, sensations and understandings. Sennett sees this commitment leading to mystification because the passion for objectivity could not be contained: 'To fantasize that physical objects had psychological dimensions became logical in this new secular order ... (thus) there broke down distinctions between perceiver and perceived, inside and outside, subject and object.' (op. cit. p. 22.)

The contradiction of late nineteenth century materialism was that: 'The celebration of objectivity and hardheaded commitment to fact so prominent a century ago ... was in reality an unwitting preparation for the present era of radical subjectivity.' (ibid.) The implications of the working out of this contradiction have not only been central to the development of sociology over the century, but can also be said to have underlain the central paradox of public life. This is that the more effectively we subordinate the material world to our interests, and thus liberate the self for growth and development, the

more we seem to have become dependent upon fantasy.

The interdependence of the material promise of consumerism and imaginative excess has been apparent since urban entertainment took on its modern characteristics in the closing decades of the last century. Commenting on Zola's novel, Au Bonheur des Dames (1884), in which the department store is used as a key metaphor for modernity Williams points out that the essence of the store's promise is that while: 'The merchandise itself is by no means available to all, ... the vision of a seemingly unlimited profusion of commodities is available, is, indeed, nearly unavoidable.' (1982 p. 3.) The substance of entertainment in consumer society is not what you do, own or experience but what the artefacts of experience tell you and significant others about the promise of experience. In the international shows which became more frequent at the end of the last and in this century, and which offered a characteristic mixture of technological promise, nationalistic fervour and commercial acumen: 'The expositions and similar environments (such as department stores and automobile trade shows) displayed a novel and crucial juxtaposition of imagination and merchandise, of dreams and commerce, of collective consciousness and economic fact. In mass consumption the needs of the imagination play as large a role as those of the body.' (Williams 1982 p. 12.) The significance of fantasy, or controlled imaginative excess, is that it lies at the heart of the rhetoric of modernity. Fantasy, like identity, is something private that is necessarily expressed through cultural conventions: 'Novels, films, television narratives are all also various forms of public fantasies.' (Coward 1983 p. 202.) In a culture of mass entertainment the promise of fantasy has become the substance of mundane experience.



I hope it will be clearer now in what I mean by saying that the drama of public life in a culture of mass entertainment has become fantastic. In a context of public alienation we have come to utilise a language of authenticity in relation to identity, almost as if we could find essential qualities free of dramatic artifice. All of which contributes to making the idea of spectacular entertainment rather ambiguous. As the spectacular is necessarily pure contrivance and artifice it seems to represent all that is exploitative in the consciousness industries. And yet of course spectacular entertainment is enjoyably direct and stimulating, and as collective experience there is the emotional resonance of being caught up in shared feelings. Even the most resolutely cynical individualist can find it hard to resist the exciting contagion of celebrations of group identity. Which all means that the forms of spectacle will survive but adapting to become more firmly knitted into our imagery of everyday experience. As our sense of a shared social world becomes harder and harder to sustain, the dramatisations of community become more insistent and the boundary between reality and illusion more radically eroded.

I have stressed the importance of conventions in formulating identity, particularly public identity. There is, however, a class of public figures who seem to succeed by being unusual and in important respects violating cultural norms. These we somewhat loosely refer to as charismatic figures. The ideal type of charismatic leadership taken from classical theorists is of an individual who, either by the possession of some divine attributes or through a willingness to act violently, is able to focus resentments and offer the promise of anew order through the redemptive grace of the force of their personal vision. A stress upon transformation is not irrelevant to democratic political orders, but seems unnecessarily

restricted, even in relation to political leadership, and does not really address charismatic status in other institutionalised areas such as religion, sport and entertainment. In all these areas it seems more appropriate to suggest that the nature of charismatic appeal is to forms of re-communalisation - ways in which an individual can feel his/herself to be a member of a collectivity with recognisable norms, order and existential validity. This is another way of saying that charismatic inspiration offers imagery through which surrogate identity can be seen to be possible. The fantasy quality of this promise does not mean that it is irretrievably inauthentic. To the extent that a radically secular society is inextricably concerned with the dramaturgy of identity, then those who can hint at the bones, the manufacturing process, of identity construction are speaking to substantial concerns: 'The star phenomenon orchestrates the whole set of problems inherent in the commonplace metaphor of life-as-theatre, ... because what is interesting about them is not the character they have constructed ... but rather the business of constructing/performing/being (depending on the particular star involved) a "character".' (Dyer 1979 p. 24.)

Stars are usually associated with the history of the cinema and then with a particular phase and a particular form of economic organisation - the studio system. The distinctive characteristics of this production process have led some theorists to make a distinction between film as a form of representation and cinema as a social institution, with stars as a defining feature of cinema. This distinction is useful in capturing an important aspect of cinema as a cultural form, but stars are not unique to cinema. Rather, they seem to be characteristic of industries of mass entertainment providing an important marketing device between anonymous mass

audiences and production organisations. The phenomenon of stardom is functional for producers because they offer some hedge against the insecurities of public taste, but this does not explain their appeal to the audience at large. It seems that the celebrity's work at sustaining their identity offers an analogy for how we in the audience might be: 'We do not only see stars - we see with them, and the longer we do so the more brightly they shine.' (Afron 1977 p. 10.) In the previous section I noted that film stars are often patronised as theatrical performers because specific roles are subordinated to the overarching star persona, but they are not actors who seek to submerge themselves in a part. If the persona is the focus of dramatic force then the role performed, the story which contains the role and the work of all other players and technicians are all oriented towards sustaining that public identity. It might therefore be more helpful to say that stardom is a form of narrative which is articulated through a number of story-telling occasions: 'It should not be surprising, therefore, to find each of these stars making basically one film during her entire career.' (Welsch 1978 p. 34.) Similarly, all the parasitic media of publicity which blur and play with distinctions between star as public identity and how they are 'in private life' are part of how we see them, part of the story they are telling.

At the height of the studio system film stars were a particularly fantastic example of celebrity, the work of their successors at being public figures is consistent with other forms of celebrity. Sports stars, television personalities, politicians and even terrorists etc., constitute a galaxy of public figures who share many of the features of traditional spectacular dramaturgy. That is, they are highly stylised, rather conservative once identity has been formulated, and

are in essence figures of display rather than introspection. Although stardom is a marketing strategy for mass entertainment industries, this does not explain the appeal of particular stars and it seems contemptuous of the audience to assume that the constructed character of stars' identities works solely as a fantastic escape from reality. One could go further and say that it is the wealth of tangible detail we know about the lives of celebrities, it is the consistency with which their personal relationships are caught up in the web of public identity, all of this gives them an existential reality which is perhaps more substantial than everyday experience. It is the essential paradox of fantasy entertainment, as it is of consumer culture in general, that the utopian dream is not articulated through other-worldly experience but is very firmly grounded in recognisable features or ordinary life. Each celebrity's work at the real/unreal transforming divide is distinctive and it is therefore hard to generalise from individual examples, what seems generally true is that style is the key to identity and style works through a compelling mixture of tangible detail and persuasive rhetoric.

In discussing public identity two important dimensions have been identified - authenticity and fantasy. The pairing is intriguing because they are not opposites and yet in this context they make a revealing contrast. In looking for celebrities whose identities can be trusted as authentic the audience can be said to be looking for people who really mean their actions and words. That is, although we might recognise that they occupy an unusual position in the sense of being, metaphorically, on a public stage, the celebrities' use of that stage stems from motives, ideals and attitudes which are essentially ordinary. Politicians usually strive to sustain a common touch and like to be seen to be able to speak to the vulgar and undertake vulgar

actions. One of the best studies of this appeal is provided by Merton's study of Kate Smith's bail-bond drive, itself one of the first studies of mass persuasion. Merton argued that Smith's extraordinary success was possible because: 'For many, she has become the symbol of a moral leader who "demonstrates" by her own behaviour that there need be no discrepancy between appearance and reality in the sphere of human relationships.' (1949 p. 145.) To unquestioningly accept that stars are popular as figures who exist out-of-this-world is to take one form of publicity too literally. As Dyer, amongst others, has pointed out the ideology of popular success usually attempts to reconcile the uniqueness of the star with an emphasis that their ascent to greatness involved a mixture of luck and hard work and that the celebrity maintains a popular perspective (1979 pp. 48-50). In its historical development the character of celebrity appeal has shifted as popular entertainment has gradually changed from spectacular theatricality, best exemplified by the cinema, to spectacular dramaturgy, best exemplified by television.

In order to clarify my argument I need to refer back to the account in the concluding section of Chapter Three concerning the audience for film shows. I argued then that the cinema audience is an imaginary crowd, collected by their common attendance they seem to constitute a form of social gathering, although all that is shared are stirred emotions physically they rest in passive solitude: 'In the moviehouse the characteristic socialibility of environments of mass consumption is taken to its limit in ordered rows of silent, hypnotized spectators.' (Williams 1982 p. 82.) To some extent the struggles over public space and over appropriate forms of behaviour in public settings that marked the history of leisure in the nineteenth century can be said to have culminated in the production of audiences

who accepted their role as spectators. The development of broadcasting poses new problems in that the audience is no longer a crowd in any sense. Members of the listening public had to learn how to listen and later to watch the new technologies, but producers also had to learn how to address this new form of social entity. The development of notions of public service broadcasting in the early years of the history of the BBC was not a simple battle between educationalists and commercialists - it was more an attempt to utilise a new type of leisure as a means of communal integration (an attempt that is of course entirely consistent with the nineteenth century ideology of rational recreation) a: 'model of how entertainment could work to bind together a community that underlay the BBC's vision of a "common culture" in the 1920s and 1930s. BBC ideology too implied that membership of (and exclusion from) the listening "public" was, in fact, a matter of right attitudes, shared interests.' (Frith 1983 p. 113.) The appropriate attitudes and interests were very clearly held to be those supposedly characteristic of the middle-class family.

The listening public was therefore normatively characterised as a collection of families - abstracted from the strains of the public world, this privatised form of leisure becomes a zone of utopian release: 'Leisure is not merely the realm of acquirable beauty and health (the holiday sun-tan etc.); it is also the removed and anodyne realm in which gratification is offered for dissatisfaction developed in relation to work, contemporary urbanism etc.' (Bommes and Wright 1982 p. 296.) The novelty of this version of the public and its taste is that as an ideal type it did not offer a fantastic alternative to reality but an indigenous, recognisable suburban ideal: 'We should drop the idea that mass culture has to be American, Hollywood, "popular".'

The BBC was central to another process: the creation of mass, British, middle-brow culture.' (Frith 1983 p. 120.) A happy family sharing their pleasures and hidden from public gaze in their private property is the essence of this culture where nothing is excessive and the turmoil of the world outside should be filtered by responsible broadcasting. The values of the culture often appear infantilist in that the innocence of the child is the irreproachable criterion of authenticity, but there is an equivalent concern with intimacy. Communicating with this conception of a family it is obviously inappropriate to address them as a crowd, a personal tone of commonsense: 'confirmed the "ordinariness" of public performers (the new definition of "personality") but also structured the "ordinariness" of the listener ... Ordinariness became the measure of authenticity, confirmed listeners' sense of belonging.' (Frith op. cit. p. 122.) In a mass audience, as an abstract association, the celebrity has to find a way of sharing the imaginary world of the audience - and thereby confirming each listener's membership of that world.

It seems that in a culture of mass entertainment the dramatic metaphor of stardom is speaking to how the collectivity is experienced. Public identity is deracinated because means of communication make performances accessible in ways that cross communal boundaries and other social divisions; and yet, possibly consequently, the very accessibility of public figures makes them more liable to suspicion. Sennett argues that there is a paradox of open-ness in twentieth century communication: 'We deny, again, that there ought to be any barriers in communication between people ... we are surprised that the "media" result in ever greater passivity on the part of those who are the spectators.' (1976 p. 262.) The reason for the paradox is that involvement in relationships, communication and political

perspectives etc., depends upon engagement which in turn requires a civilised constraint in our dealings with one another. The effort of tailoring and curtailing expression is itself respectful and implies that others are capable of a complementary engagement. It is not that what we know of public figures is often, possibly always, misleading but that our means of knowledge both isolates us as atomised recipients and accentuates our dependency upon the means of knowledge and communication: 'The mass media infinitely heighten the knowledge people have of what transpires in the society, and they infinitely inhibit the capacity of people to convert that knowledge into political action.' (Sennett op. cit. p. 283.) Whether we are told truths or lies, the telling has increasingly become our experience of the collectivity and yet the telling seems oblivious of whether we listen.

Our understanding of the several usages of public may be seen as a practical thesaurus for how the collectivity is experienced. In attempting to explore the dynamics of relationships between representations in mass culture performances and the politics of mass audiences we have identified a double ambiguity. On the one hand there are the tensions between authenticity and fantasy particularly for public identities and there are equivalent tensions between consumption, as the pursuit of endless gratification, and alienation, as the fear that interpersonal interaction cannot be trusted and that the area beyond the private zone is threatening and hostile. These four terms, authenticity, alienation, fantasy and consumption or consumerism can be modelled to constitute a circle which frames contemporary cultural forms. The dynamics of interaction between the terms mean that there is not a simple reading of any performance and its implied representation of social relationships. Escapism and



reflexive awareness are not mutually exclusive and a quest for the real as an antidote to inauthentic illusions is not restricted to the politically self-conscious; indeed the real can be argued to have become the most spectacular illusion in contemporary mass culture. A particularly powerful example of a form of dramatic entertainment which exploits spectacle to model a social world is the theme park particularly Disneyland.

The idea of an area set aside for entertainment, more precisely entertainment which is engrossing while you are inside and clearly marked off from the world outside, was, as has been noted, common in the nineteenth century. The core idea of the pleasure-garden in which patrons take pleasure in their own sociability is more complexly packaged through more sophisticated technology of thrills and amusements but persists as an urban source of pleasure. The significant shift in style and meaning comes when the drama of entertainment in the park becomes more than the common carnivalesque inversions of normal social experience of entertainment areas (Thompson 1983), and deliberately exploits imagery of the future and the past to reproduce those aspects of contemporary life which are normative aspirations rather than normal experience. Areas created for pleasure, or Disney's goal of happiness, will necessarily offer some sort of commentary on the constraints of mundane experience which have to be overcome for their goal to be accomplished. The nature of the transcendence is obviously fantasy if either producers or audience were to believe that the constraints could be permanently abolished, but the forms within which liberation is described are not necessarily fantastic. Disneyland is a dream world in that within a tightly circumscribed space it self-consciously offers a playful mastery of sensations and experiences which are entertaining and therefore, at least within the logic of

the dream, happiness-creating; a plaque over the entrance to Disneyland reads: 'Here you leave today and enter the world of yesterday, tomorrow and fantasy'. And yet the fantastic is only one of the areas within the world/dream of the park - predominately the world outside is idealised rather than denied. (The subsequent discussion of Disneyland almost entirely relates to the original in Anaheim, California, but later versions by the Disney Corporation and others, as far as I am aware, have not substantially modified the ambitions which inspired the original.)

The range of possible experiences within the amusement park is far too great to be described in detail: 'It is possible, in a single day in Disneyland, for the visitor not just to see but to enter into time and experience past and time and experience future, to recapitulate not only his own memories and fantasies but those of the race as well. He can visit, impressionistically, every continent of the globe, its mountain heights and ocean depths as well as any historical epoch, including the prehistoric.' (Schickel 1968 p. 325.) It is unsurprising, given the basis of the Disney empire in films, that although the means of such cosmic travel are rides through simulated environments, the framing of the customer's perception and experience is essentially cinematic. (And given the roots of film in the legerdemain of magicians the circle of illusion is nicely complete.) The narrative construction of any particular sequence is accomplished through skilful editing combined with resources of great technical skill; and in the same way that the classic Hollywood style has exploited conventions of naturalism as a story-telling framework, the elaborate fantasy is very acutely naturalised. It has frequently been noted, for example, that although the buildings on Main Street purport to be life-size the scale of the upper storeys

has been proportionately reduced in order that visitors can gain comfort from a slight disruption of perceptual order which should increase feelings of mastery and significance. Naturalistic fidelity has not been violated merely amended in order to facilitate idealisation. This is the key to the fantasy of this dream world - it is not the experience that is other-worldly but the normative framework which structures that experience.

I have described Disneyland as a fantasy because it aspires to be a region where happiness is accomplished through mechanical ingenuity. It might be reasonable to describe such an ambition as utopian - a persistent aspiration in spectacular entertainment. The concept of utopia also joins together the pragmatic devices for pleasure with the normative organisation of imagery within the park. In one of the more interesting readings of Disneyland Marin has argued that Disney's utopia can be understood in two ways. The first is in terms of the organisation of space so that the architectural scheme is to be understood as a model for a possible social order. This model necessarily differs from social reality and yet it can only be experienced in terms of existing categories and experiences. The resolution of this tension, inherent in all utopian representation, is in this case accomplished through the topography of the park: 'From this vantage point, the possible tour which the visitor commences when he comes to Disneyland can be viewed as the narrative which characterises utopia. The map of Disneyland ... can play the role of the description; it performs the part of the representational picture which also characterises utopia.' (Marin 1977 p. 53.) The idea of utopian imagery in which the 'real world' is framed and idealised to become a normative abstraction is also explored in Bommes and Wright analysis of Shell advertising. In images

which Shell has been using for fifty years: 'The countryside is a goal now, a place of strange allure, a utopian zone which in its "historical" capacity still holds residues of a former world: ... History, progress, the time of travel all lead to a timeless Gestalt of earth with "nation", and the consumerist "visit" is sublimated in advertising.' (1982 p. 282.)

A second sense of utopia in Disneyland is a move away from the park as abstract, autonomous social world towards the experience of the park as a way of talking about the world outside: 'the utopian representation can be entirely caught in a dominant system of ideas and values and, thus, be changed into a myth or collective fantasy.' (Marin 1977 p. 54.) The myth of Disneyland is an idealisation of how the American way of life ought to be: 'As a morality play of secular American values, Disneyland utilizes entertainment, education, mythology, and utopianism to typify, strengthen, and spread a patriotic American's idealised vision of nation and world, of the past, the present and the future.' (Real 1977 p. 76.) More precisely Gottdiener has identified nine codes or systems of signification which provide significant contrasts between the world of Disney and the wider American society. They are: transportation, food, fashion, architecture, entertainment, social control, economics, politics and family. In each case the style of Disneyland represents a generalised freedom from the constraints and exploitation of contemporary society, and in particular a freedom from an alienating urban environment. Visitors flock to Disneyland because there: 'they return to the city ... that has used ... "imagineering" to transform space into a highly organised and smoothly run operation devoid of the many pathologies common to the urban places of our society.' (Gottdiener 1982 p. 146.)

In part an ideological reading of this amusement park is possible because from its inception, design and development it has been so closely associated with the vision of a particular individual who is himself politically transparent - at least in certain respects. And in part the reading is facilitated by the schematic organisation of the park into several clearly labelled zones, each with a distinct identity and a not particularly subtle ideological perspective e.g. Frontierland, Adventureland, Tomorrowland, New Orleans, Main Street, Bear Country and Fantasyland. I am less interested in the 'message' of each space than in an organising theme which works through denials of purpose. I mean by this that although the park was conceived as a commercial venture, and has been enormously successful, the park has been organised so that the business of paying to gain access to utopia is glossed over. An immediate example is the line of ticket booths which stand between the car park and the entrance so that rides are not paid for in cash but with these pre-paid tickets which can be bought in bulk at a discount. Less immediately obvious is the ethos which Disney insisted in for the park in which customers are treated as guests - there is a tremendous emphasis upon friendliness amongst attendants, access to the rides is designed so that queing is kept to a minimum and you are constantly helped to negotiate access and exit. Space is used wastefully in a commercial sense in that there are many restful spaces with trees, fresh flowers and running water, and, above all, everything animate and inanimate is constantly being renewed so that everything strikes the visitor as being freshly created for them. It is easy to find the atmosphere synthetic, and almost paradoxically the effort of responding to so much charm and friendliness can be very wearying and alienating; but it is the essence of consumerism that the effort of parting punters from their money is dissembled in an atmosphere of freedom and naturalism.

A visitor's ideological blindness to real relations of production and consumption is constituted at a deeper level as well through what Schickel calls a rage for order. The 'natural' open-ness of setting and service is in practice articulated through normative standards which are tightly worked at and constructed. Schickel quotes a director of personnel on standards for staff: "'No bright nail polish, no bouffants. No heavy perfums or jewellery, no unshined shoes, no low spirits. No corny raffishness, yet the ability to call the boss by his first name without flinching. That's a natural look that doesn't grow quite as naturally as everybody thinks.'" (1968 p. 318.) The standards are not reserved for staff but are as far as possible imposed upon visitors in terms of dress and deportment. (A quest for respectability which leads park administrators into the same problems as school teachers - after years of prohibiting hair which is too long a change of fashion has recently led them to prohibiting visitors whose hair is too short.) Real reports a study of student responses to Disneyland as part of which they were asked to list virtues and vices approved and disapproved in Disney presentations. The two lists were clear and the contrasts unambiguous: 'No-one mistook for a virtue what someone else thought was presented as vice, and vice-versa. Whether respondents thought Disney influenced them or not, they knew what Disney presentations approved or disapproved.' (1977 p. 74.) A utopian vision may be attractive because it is extra-ordinary but it is a mistake, I believe, to take the impossibility of fantasy too literally. The conventions of 'middle-American' norms stabilise, almost legitimate, the pleasures of an occasion for transcendence. Real reports that his respondents searching for comparisons for Disneyland: 'seemed concerned with the sensation more than the

symbolism, with the medium more than the message of the park. Almost without exception, the comparisons reveal Disneyland as an experience entered into for its own sake.' (op. cit. p. 72.)

I have noted Marin's point that the utopian narrative is one that is constructed by visitors in the course of their tour and I think we can go further now and say that the dramaturgy of the amusement park is performed by the visitors. The essence of the spectacular imagery in the park is not the technological artifice used in construction, although there is no need to deny being impressed by the skills and enterprise involved, but the willingness of the audience to collaborate with sensational invitations. What we applaud is our own pleasure at being caught up with what makes our reactions possible. If 'its like being in a film' the pleasure is in the drama of performance. It is for these reasons that it is mistaken to criticise the insincerity or inauthenticity of the versions of the world being offered. The representations are not an opportunity for identification that might threaten an individual's sense of self, but a collaborative reassurance that what is already known can be participated in and enjoyed through faith in the dramatic conventions of representation. The realism is enthralling but it is an extension of less adequate forms - not for any aesthetic sense of unanticipated possibilities; and the stylisations of realistic representations therefore express our prejudices. The paradox of engrossing naturalism is that we are not shown what things are 'really' like but the conventions of what is going to count as engrossing naturalism.

Such an unambitious, almost prosaic, imagination of utopia might seem paradoxical if it is assumed that utopias are progressive, even if unrealisable, dreams. The utopia of Disneyland is

retrogressive in that it: 'is the myth of small-town America if advanced industrial society would have articulated with this settlement space without changing it, except by leveling its class and racial distinctions.' (Gottdiener 1982 p. 159.) It offers then a vision that has already been overtaken by its future, a sense of urban community which is denied by the technological and marketing skills which bring it into being. The contradiction is not anomalous, however, in a culture in which there is little faith in our ability to control the future. We may believe that engineering problems can always be solved and thereby share a fascination with the possibilities of discovery, but this does not contradict a widespread fatalistic powerlessness in controlling our technological wizardry: 'Fatalism doesn't mean people cannot dream of utopias; ... it does mean that it is virtually impossible for it to be a force catalysing change, ... Fatalism and caesurism [a belief that time is uneven rather than lineal] both contribute to utopia being a realm of possibility or fantasy, rather than a realm of potential actuality.' (Levitas 1979 p. 30.) (Even our spectacles of science fiction vacillate between smooth, modernist, almost abstract narratives and gothic mythologies of fairy-tales transposed from time-past to time-future.) Disneyland is not exceptional in conjuring an imagery of nostalgia to display modernity, it is a characteristic trope in entertainment continually engaged in manufacturing dramas of community. Our public culture is dominated by representations of the past as imagery for a world we would like to inhabit (Horne 1984). Tourists ~~as modern pilgrims~~, and visitors to Disneyland are quintessential tourists, are voyeurs of the uncontroversial: 'tourism is one of the two poles of modern consciousness. The other pole, revolution, is the desire to transform things; tourism is the inclination to venerate things as they are.' (Schudson 1979 p. 1251.)



I have argued that public facilities in the institutions of popular culture have become ambiguous experiences in a culture of mass entertainment (these facilities may be made available by public bodies such as local government or private commercial entrepreneurs). While sources of entertainment can be spectacular displays of what a consumer culture makes possible, they are also sources of tension through our deep fears over what is authentic and legitimately meaningful in such contexts. By public facilities I mean the social organisation of the physical environment into different types of places whose identities vary in terms of the values of the audiences who do or could utilise these settings. Thus the meaning of a well-known place, such as the Tower of London or Disneyland, is not a universally shared set of attributes but varies according to different normative expectations which are in turn reflexive upon the perceived expectations of other more or less positively valued audiences. The associations which are signified by 'places' such as historical sites or the countryside are therefore both displayed in the semiotics of their physical manifestation and articulated in the public imagery and discourses of mass media of communication through which the meanings of place are continually developed, sustained and changed. The cultural resonances of different ways of using a place are significant because it is at least in part through contrasting expectations of public space that a social structure is displayed and concretised. In: 'decay, refuse, human and industrial derelicts, monuments, museums, parks, decorated plazas and architectural shows of industrial virtue ... (we find) ... public representations of social structure found in public places', (MacCannell 1977 p. 39); and in negotiating such places the visitor is necessarily becoming, even if probably inarticulately, a connoisseur of representational forms.

Places for holidays carry a distinctive baggage of expectations because a holiday is, initially, an other-worldly period of time. For their visitors, places for holidays are in general to be travelled to, there is no contract of employment, no formal organisation of time although in practice the conventions on how pleasure ought to be generated are as strong in this world as the reality of everyday life. The visitor, or tourist, is therefore a temporary hedonist buying a brief excursion into a more privileged form of existence. But in the same way that the amusement park instructs us as to what is to count as happiness so that we end up enjoying each other's pleasure, so the tourist learns what tourists seek by seeing what others have found. On a sun-soaked sandy beach we can see more clearly that we, in the mutual admiration of browning bodies, are the performers in this dramatic spectacle of pleasure. In practice, of course, a distinction between tourist and resident cannot be sustained. Public places are populated by visitors, those who are employed to maintain the facility, and who therefore have some degree of access to practical problems of staging, and those who are 'normal' inhabitants, and even if not involved with their maintenance will use relevant features as unremarkable aspects of their everyday world. Although the residents will be more cynical about their particular place, it is unlikely that they will be completely oblivious to or uncomprehending of the experiences visitors seek; and such cynicism as exists will not prevent them in turn becoming visitors to other places. And not only are we all visitors but also every place is capable of becoming an attraction. It may be because of some spectacular feature, or because of famous happenings, or because of connotations, however bizarre, which make it remarkable - such as a bridge which is visited to see the spot used by suicides. It is pointless to describe tourism in terms of the content of tourist

attractions, any typology would only marginally abbreviate the list of attractions; we have instead to interrogate the dramatic iconography of public life which is being collaboratively accomplished in the processes of visiting and admiring.

The fallacious belief that the pleasure of tourism can be explained by reference to what is to be found when the tourist gets there, is analogous to the equivalent fallacy that one can escape the inauthenticity of tourism by acting in some way such that one experiences the 'real thing'. Because a public place is necessarily produced and managed it is tempting to believe that it is possible to see it or participate without the artificiality of production. MacCannell uses and significantly extends Goffman's distinction between front and back regions to argue that a touristic search for authenticity is an attempt to get further to the conceptual back. To do so may mean a better sense of what it would have been like to have been there before it became a public place, but there is no point at which the search ends and the visitor arrives. Schudson cites a telling example from the development of tourism in Tonga when: 'the Tongan Visitors Bureau found tourists disappointed that Tongans knew little of their own culture and history, so the bureau published a pamphlet for local consumption to improve on this score.' (1979 p. 1255.) It is because somewhere is a public place that all the ways of being there are grounded in its public character. That which makes it attractive, something to be visited or done, is what frames the initial interaction between visitor and resident: 'Adventuresome tourists progress from stage to stage, always in the public eye and greeted everywhere by their obliging hosts.' (MacCannell 1977 p. 106.) However much we may value getting off the beaten track we are all ultimately aware of this. Between different audiences there will be

great variations in styles of what is to count as visiting a place, but uniting them all there will be a more or less self-conscious willingness to collude in the drama of ways of making a place meaningful.

Tourists are paradigmatic consumers in that they are looking for something that will be in addition to all that is available in everyday experience. It is a search that cannot be exhausted as the dream of consumerism cannot be satiated. It might be objected that a tourist is not a consumer in that what is sought is not a commodity, unless one were to count souvenirs but these are markers or symbols of what has been experienced and are not intrinsically desirable. The commodity in tourism is the possession of knowing that the individual has engaged with the appropriate norms of perception and appreciation: 'touristic shame is not based on being a tourist but on not being tourist enough, on a failure to see everything the way it "ought" to be seen.' (MacCannell 1977 p. 10.) Accumulation is a primitive stage of consumerism, even the conventional commodities of consumer culture, such as possessions for the home and car and body, transcend being indices of wealth and more tellingly become displays of style and thereby taste and status. To profess a disinterest in one type of consumer possessions is not to leave the game but to make a different type of bid for normative integration. The moral vision of tourism is based on an acute sensitivity to cultural diversity. What makes mass travelling possible is not only vast increases in transport and accommodation facilities, but a belief that a diversity of experiences can be incorporated into a style of life. It is through working at our languages of style that we find others that we can recognise as like-minded members of an identifiable group. A world view or ideology is no longer simply an inheritance

but is simultaneously an accomplishment: 'Modernized peoples, released from primary family and ethnic group responsibilities, organize themselves in groups around world views provided by cultural productions. The group does not produce the world view, the world view produces the group.' (MacCannell op. cit. p. 30.)

In the chapter on the nineteenth century I located the origins of tourism, as a popular as opposed to an elite cultural form, in the city becoming a spectacular attraction in its own right. One has to take account of what we can call the infrastructure of tourism - reliable transport facilities, hotels and other forms of accommodation, public dining places and an interpretive framework of guide-books, management staff etc., - but these are forms of staging. The touristic quest is to discover a tangible feel to alien, and yet comprehensible, social experience. An explorer is a traveller in a place whose meaning is autonomous as opposed to the tourist for whom the meaning has already been made accessible. The idea of playing with difference from normal life may involve only slight adjustments to normal codes of social conduct. For example, visitors to central London from Northern England remain secure within a shared culture and yet there are a sufficient number of 'sights' to be collected and things to do to constitute 'a real break from it all'. This sort of example also reminds us that difference will often be highly routinised so that the many millions who go to the Niagara Falls for their honeymoon are confirming the world they have and to which they return as much as the experience they are currently enjoying. Tourism is a form of public drama for which the traveller is both audience as spectator and, in a crucial respect, performer. Of course a place inhabited by a celebrity can become a sight - Schudson cites an early example of Voltaire becoming irritated at gawping visitors

but correctly points out that their stares should not be necessarily interpreted as arrogance but 'may be as much from humility' (1979 p. 1257) - but however the public places we inhabit as tourists derive their interest, as with all forms of stardom our pleasure is based in a reassurance of living and sharing a world in which they (it) are possible as well as ourselves.

The more I stress the ordinariness of dramatic experience in mass entertainment the more inappropriate it may seem to frame it in the style of spectacular drama. One reason for calling them spectacular forms is that publicists' blurbs for stars, amusement parks, famous entertainments and tourist attractions etc., frequently use spectacle or spectacular as a way of indicating the extraordinariness of the attraction. Another reason is that, as I have noted at several points, there are persistent features to the organisation and presentation of these attractions which echo themes and styles from earlier cultural forms. It seems that despite the sophistication of contemporary entertainment technology the vulgarity of spectacular imagery retains a potent appeal and is a meaningful descriptive attraction. Indeed for a number of commentators on contemporary culture the force of entertainment technology, and implicitly media of information, is increasingly used to exaggerate the significance of fantasy: 'The attempt to "civilise" the masses has now given rise to a society dominated by appearances - the society of the spectacle.' (Lasch 1979 p. 137.) The basis of this argument is two-fold: first, for several reasons work has increasingly diminished in importance as a basis for identity and as a means of exploitation and it has been replaced by an ideology of consumerism in which the powerless collaborate in their oppression because of the dream of potential prosperity; and

secondly, the plenitude of mass communication provides an illusion of participation so that political perspectives and judgements are not formulated through communal interaction but atomised through a dependence upon mass media. Although both trends accentuate a 'fantastic' attitude to experience, cultural representations do not need to work through fantastic imagery but instead transform our sense of the real: 'The illusion of reality dissolves, not in a heightened sense of reality as we might expect, but in a remarkable indifference to reality. Our sense of reality appears to rest, curiously enough, on our willingness to be taken in by the staged illusion of reality.' (Lasch op. cit. p. 160.)

The paradoxical crux of this perspective, and it is also the core of my account of the dramaturgy of a culture of mass entertainment, is that massification i.e. a re-formulation of the public sphere or the discourses of public life, and more particularly the transformation of spectacular drama in mass entertainment, remembering that the spectacular is essentially a public performance, has led to a privatization of cultural experience. Another way of putting the thesis is to say that the development of popular democracy, which is supposed to provide for the participation of the masses in political decision-making, has led to- or been accomplished through - the erosion of political publics.

The concept of privatization in this context is to be understood as referring to three processes which although analytically separate are interdependent and mutually reinforcing. The first is the process whereby public figures and entertainment forms can be seen to be providing opportunities for individual engagement with an implied collectivity. Pragmatically, this process is exemplified by techniques of mass distribution which have been developed in a

variety of media so that public performances are available in private settings at the discretion of the individual consumer. The number of occasions at which we have to gather as a group to appreciate a performance are becoming less and where they persist are becoming more markedly tribalised. Secondly, the ideology of consumerism has developed in conjunction with and been dependent upon the techniques of mass advertising. These techniques which utilise the distributive facilities of mass communication attempt to engender desires for new acquisitions on the part of the individual. While an advert is indiscriminate in appeal and presumably ideally would hope to persuade all who see it, in practice each purchase is an individual act and it is at that moment that a complex of personal associations and connotations is brought into play. Thirdly, a process which can be characterised as intimate access to ritual and ceremony. The process of urbanisation, if that is understood as cultural homogenisation throughout a nation, has meant that collective social formations cannot be experienced tangibly by individuals. It has been a truism of sociology that the gap between the macro-collectivity and individual experience is bridged by secondary associations and a language of ritual and ceremony which concretises abstract collective notions. The formalisation of collective life has not disappeared but it has been made intimate by the dissolution of the distance between audience and performer. That which is awesome is concretised and trivialised by the personalisation of the performers and the implied invitation to sympathetic identification.

The spectacular dramas of a culture of mass entertainment are not therefore being staged to display a community but rather the absence of community. Barthes has argued that myth in contemporary



society is a set of signifiers which transform indeed reverse their signifieds (1972). It is in this sense that we can say that the practice of privatisation is mythified by its inversion through a language of spectacle. A rhetoric of extravagance is used to mark a moral absence. Cultural forms are never accepted statically, however. I have throughout stressed the dynamics of power relationships in forms of expression and representation, the ways in which alternative meanings can be sustained. The profusion of signs in consumer society can be exploited by dissidents to dramatise alternative utopias. A language of style can be used to constitute a refusal of the implied values of the original imagery.

Although an ideology of consumerism involves more than an industry of popular fashion, an emphasis upon style and a concern with fashionable nicety are obvious ways in which a desire to purchase and to replace earlier purchases can be fostered. The language of fashion can therefore be seen to be one of the forms of spectacular imagery in contemporary culture. (An observation which is reinforced by the ways in which both spectacular imagery and details of stylisation are formalistic exercises.) In fashion, the signs of display do have metaphoric connotations but are more powerfully significant in relation to all the other elements in the ensemble - that is the meaning of dress, body, posture etc., is determined through metonymic relationships. One consequence is that it is frequently the case that the inclusion of an item in conjunction with others will deliberately work to subvert the conventional meanings of that item. Thus items of military dress have been taken over, adapted and exploited in a variety of subcultures to both subvert and intensify their traditional connotations. It is in this way, that style can be used to comment

upon cultural changes (what Hebdige calls 'a coded response' (1979 p. 80)) in a variety of ways. This is perhaps our most common understanding of contemporary cultural change - a stylistic profusion which sometimes present themselves as a flowering of counter-cultures.

This argument has been developed in Hebdige's study of the meaning of style in subcultures where he uses spectacular as a characterisation of the use of fashion as identity-display for youth groups. Their appearance may be spectacular in the sense of startlingly impressive but also through: 'an ability to symptomatize a whole cluster of contemporary problems.' (op. cit. p. 87.) The existence of this spectacle provides an opportunity for us: 'to discern the hidden messages inscribed in code on the glossy surfaces of style, to trace them out as "maps of meaning" which obscurely represent the very contradictions they are designed to resolve or conceal.' (op. cit. p. 18.) The spectacle is then an attempt to assert a collectivity, to articulate a 'we-feeling' which is simultaneously about the tensions between this collectivity and the institutions of the wider society. Although in doing so the ambiguity of the assertion may mean that it appears more powerful than it really is: 'translating frustration into spectacle has always been the function of rock n'roll.' (Frith 1984.)

Spectacular dramatisation of the self can be used then as a way of asserting oppositional grit in the bland consensus of consumer democracy. A form of opposition which works through juggling with categories rather than policies or achievements: 'style does have its moment, its brief outrageous spectacle, and in our study of style in subculture we should focus ... on the fact of transformation rather than on the objects-in-themselves.' (Hebdige 1979 p. 130.)

The limitations of this form of drama stem from its restriction to cultural imagery. The material organisation of social structural relationships can in certain ways be transcended by alternative cultural perspectives, but the transcendence is in itself a dramatic gesture, an iconic display. The drama can become a whole way of life: 'The stars (rock stars) must live out in their total lives (or at least in their very public display of their lives and persons) the liminality which for most young people is merely a framed and bounded leisure-time style', (Martin 1981 p. 155), but as Martin goes on to say the spectacle has at this level become 'useful metaphor' - another metaphor for a community to which we might aspire.

The recuperation of spectacular style into forms of leisure and consumer display is not solely due to the lack of pragmatic organisation of traditional politics. The use of spectacular drama as a mode of opposition is consistent with social formations which are held together by the illusions of collectivity. Authentic communal life has been supplanted by agglomerations based upon insatiable desire to consume which is fuelled by spuriously attractive appearances. It is a society based upon appearance which is a society of the spectacle, so that the spectacular is more than collective illusions - it becomes the ways in which we experience our lives: 'The spectacle is not a collection of images but a social relation among people mediated by images.' (Debord 1970 no. 4.) The spectacle is then more than a model of social life, it does not represent a moral perspective on how human relations could be but is the practical medium through which order is sustained and the collectivity given an appearance: 'the spectacle is the affirmation of appearance and the affirmation of all human, namely social,

life as mere appearance.' (Debord op. cit. no. 10.) The promise in the ideology of consumerism is a lie because although: 'The dictatorship of consumer goods has finally destroyed the barriers of blood, lineage and race', (Vaneigem 1979 p. 57), what is left is doubly impoverishing: 'it takes away life in exchange for things, yet it makes it impossible to hold on to these things, since they have to be consumed, that is, destroyed.' (op. cit. p. 157.)

The attraction of spectacle as an analytic device in this perspective is that the spectacular excites wonder through the use of artifice and illusion. In a culture of mass entertainment, based upon an ideology of consumerism, the rhetoric of the spectacle makes illusion an integral feature of everyday experience. Although consumption seems to be eminently practical in that it is concerned with the acquisition of things: 'The real consumer becomes a consumer of illusions. The commodity is this factually real illusion, and the spectacle is its general manifestation.' (Debord 1970 no. 47.) So overwhelming is the rhetoric of illusion that even spontaneity is recuperated into meaninglessness, and counter-cultural critiques are subverted into the fantasy of freedom: 'The spectacle, in ideology, art and culture, turns the wolves of spontaneity into the shepherds of knowledge and beauty. Anthologies are littered with agitational leaflets, museums packed with calls to insurrection; history preserves them so well in the pickle of their old age that we forget to look at them and hear them.' (Vaneigem 1979 p. 106.) To attempt to re-write **Situationist** tirades into academic discourse is of course another form of subversion. The critique is autonomous and untranslatable much as other strands in utopian radicalism (c.f. Mannheim 1960 esp. pp. 173-184), although there is an implicit sense of possible community in such utopianism which brings it back to the more practical sense of social experience in popular

entertainment. The salience of nostalgia in public discourse points to a contradiction in spectacular modernity - in celebrating what we believe we have made possible we mourn what we imagine to have lost.

A particularly interesting example of illusion in contemporary culture is provided in the significance of time. One way of describing the changes from a traditional, communal popular culture to the urbanised, commercial culture in the nineteenth century is in terms of the forms and social organisation of leisure. Partly through its definitional contrast with work, as time that does not have to be spent at work, and partly through its association with the freedoms of consumerism, in that leisure, in a crucial metaphor, is ways of spending time that individuals choose for themselves, the possession of leisure has become indicative of a form of cultural affluence. In this dense imagery of the inter-locking of private taste with public regularity time had first to be standardised in urban culture (c.f. Thompson 1967), and then 'liberated' as hedonistic indulgence. An infinite number of products are marketed as devices which will help us to 'save' time such as foods and transport and labour-saving devices and summaries of cultural performances. And yet of course we know that we have nothing to do with our time - the most time-consuming activity outside of sleep is on average now watching television. We feel our lives to be pressured by constraints upon time, and thus there are an equivalent number of products devoted to relieving stress, all in order that we can be freer for that most passive form of leisure. The most extreme form of this paradox is expressed through advertising products for saving time and relieving stress particularly at women. Advertising imagery does not visualise time saved as free to become different sorts of people, rather that the more time there is the more effectively women can service

others. The illusion of time is therefore that the more we seem to control it, the more effectively it is privatised, the more desperately we seem to idealise social relationships within which time might become meaningful. The family is time abstracted, going nowhere and idealised as the only authentic experience. Thus perhaps the attraction of family snapshots - fragmentary stills freezing time, displaying the illusion of controlling time.

The Situationist perspective is a culmination of an approach to a culture of mass entertainment which takes narrative representations as forms of social experience. The traditional debate over mass culture focussed on a conflict between what were called optimists and pessimists. Briefly, the optimistic school has argued that processes of mass production and distribution have provided enormous increases in real freedoms so that the elitism of aesthetic appreciation has been supplanted by a democracy of taste. In contrast, the pessimistic school has argued that the complexity of sophisticated representations is necessarily trivialised by a transformation of the context of presentation so that freedoms become worthless in a culture of bland mediocrity. The debate cannot be resolved by an appeal to evidence because the subjective appreciation of the audience for one is that which cannot be trusted for the other. They are therefore mutually incoherent and speaking to different concerns. The approach followed in this thesis accepts that there is value in both positions and attempts to build upon these strengths by a concern with what our cultural forms, as ways of talking about ourselves, make possible for collective experience. The spectacular as the representational mode which is the least introspective provides an excellent opportunity for studying this sense of implicit possibility. In the next part of the chapter I shall continue the theme of community and

identity in a culture of mass entertainment by exploring the significance of imagery and particularly sexual imagery in this culture.

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P A R T   T H R E E

A spectacular imagination has become dominant in contemporary culture in ways that underlie quite new forms of public drama. Spectacular drama has been defined by the central importance of display in representation and I have tried to introduce the particular significance of imagery and illusion in a culture of mass entertainment. In this part I will explore the spectacle of dramatic imagery in greater detail. The reasons for the visualisation of social life becoming so important can be summarised as: developments in urban ecology which have devalued the significance of place; structures of social relationships in which private, intimate, relationships are seen as more authentic and rewarding than public experience; a nationalisation of politics which has meant that the grounds for collective identification have to be imaginatively displayed and reiterated to mobilise popular commitment; and the development of an interdependence between consumerism and political democracy expressed most clearly, and dependent upon, a rhetoric of advertising. In this part I will discuss these themes through the particular example of everyday imagery of sexuality, more specifically female sexuality, as a spectacular dramatisation of imaginative norms.

I have chosen to discuss images of sexuality because they are such a raucous and insistent dimension of our landscape. It seems likely that a visitor transported across centuries from a previous cultural era, or perhaps the proverbial Martian, would find this the most immediately striking feature of our culture. Printed materials, roadsides, dramatic entertainments - everyday life is saturated with images of sexual display. More strikingly, these images employ a vocabulary overwhelmingly

concentrated upon female sexuality: 'Women's bodies, and the messages which clothes can add, are the repository of the social definitions of sexuality. Men are neutral. Women are always the defined sex.' (Coward 1984 p. 30.) Although this imagery occurs in many cultural forms, it is sufficiently standardised and homogeneous to constitute a specific mode of discourse. As a stylised form of display it treats sexuality as a form of spectacle, and it is clearly necessary to ask how this type of drama relates to other modes of imagery and illusion in contemporary culture.

Pursuing this question I shall try to put the iconography of sexuality in context. I have not reproduced examples of images or attempted to describe them as I have taken their ubiquitousness for granted, indeed that is the starting point. Even if we had become so habituated to women acting as icons of visual pleasure in our culture that we treated it as entirely 'natural', as do for example promoters of bathing-beauty contests, one of the most easily grasped lessons of feminism in recent years has been the political implications of structures of looking: 'The preoccupation with visual images strikes at women in a very particular way. For looking is not a neutral activity. Human beings don't all look at things in the same way, the look is largely controlled by men ... entertainment as we know it is crucially predicated on a masculine investigation of women, and a circulation of women's images for men.' (Coward op. cit. p. 75.) I have tried to do more than trade on the work of others, mainly women, to reproduce their insights. I shall try to show inter-connections between: developments in marketing; new forms of technology as a massification of popular culture; changes in the visual arts; and the development of an imaginative mode we have come to call pornography. Through these distinctive but interconnected strands

I shall attempt to locate a way of seeing which is characteristic of a culture of mass entertainment. Looking through the subject matter of cultural imagery, sexuality, we can see distinctive values - in this case dramatisations of identity as a utopian search for a collective sense of pleasure.

In exploring the character of spectacular drama in a culture of mass entertainment I have recognised a fundamental relationship between an ideology of consumerism and some forms of contemporary spectacle. The essence of consumerism as a form of life is that the economy is fuelled by an endless desire to acquire new commodities by the mass of the population, remembering here that commodity is used to include personal services as much as physical artefacts: 'The crucial feature of the role of modern consumer is the primary obligation to want to want under all circumstances and at all times irrespective of what goods or services are actually acquired or consumed.' (Campbell 1983 p. 282.) These duties can constitute an ideology if it is generally believed that such desires are natural and good, and if it is also believed that the stimulation and partial satisfaction of such desires is a defining characteristic of a democratic political order.

Consumer culture is an adaptation of the democratic rationality of leisure industries in the late nineteenth century to all spheres of family life and personal life-style. Adaptation does not imply a causal relationship, more that the norms of individualist egalitarianism in leisure are analogous to marketing strategies (Chaney 1983). Consumer culture necessarily lays a great stress upon being contemporary - it is the physical confirmation of modernity in everyday experience. It is therefore unsurprising that the mechanist ambitions of modern engineering should be adapted to personal life-styles: 'By 1939 the principal function of technological display

was to teach consumers to equate personal and social progress with technology, and technology with new products.' (Smith 1983 p. 182.) What is less often recognised is the significance of advertising as institutionalised rhetoric in translating collective accomplishments into personal possibilities. By providing a continually changing and developing symbolic imagery of competence, both communal and individual, the language of advertising is able to humanise technology and to make material social identity: 'More than any other institution, advertising by the mid-twentieth century had assembled and re-shaped the images through which all mass depictions of technology gained public recognition.' (Smith op. cit. p. 183.) The body has become a key symbolic resource in the materialism of contemporary imagination.

Desire is abstract in general, it has to be concretised through a person or persons feeling needs (however false we might independently believe them to be) which relate to everyday experience. It seems reasonable to assume that our bodies will be an important vehicle for generating such needs in that they are a necessary constituent element in the interaction which surrounds and is facilitated by consumer possessions. One can go further, however, and say that in consumerism our bodies are more than functional necessities, they are symbolically significant because they legitimate the centrality of desire: 'Consumer culture latches onto the prevalent self-preservationist conception of the body, which encourages the individual to adopt instrumental strategies to combat deterioration and decay ... and combines it with the notion that the body is a vehicle of pleasure and self-expression.' (~~Smith~~ <sup>Featherstone</sup> 1982 p. 18.) Indeed the significance of the body for consumerism is partly indicated by the name with its connotations of something being taken

into the body, being ingested or burnt up, possibly in the act of acquisition.

A realisation of the importance of body imagery in consumer culture also helps to correct the passivity implicit in the interconnections between leisure and consumerism. As areas of life ostensibly free of constraint they seem to stand in contrast to work or labour as physical engagement. But of course desire is a collective accomplishment as much as the constraints of the sale of our labour: 'Few people have sensibilities ahead of the capacity of the modern economy to produce discriminations of need in, for example, the consumption of hi-fi equipment.' (O'Neill 1978 p. 225.) The freedom to make certain discriminations both within a range of commodities and between different sectors of commodities, and thereby work to constitute a life-style, is not illusory but neither is it untrammelled individualism: 'I believe we need to speak of the work of consumption in order to begin to understand what is required of us in the collection, display and disposal of commodities that service the collective representation.' (O'Neill op. cit. p. 224, emphasis added.) The body is a central resource in this type of work in that we use it in relation with commodities to generate, produce, versions of ourselves that embody the value of desire. We work at consumption in order to transform instrumentality into expressivity: 'We might then treat surplus value as the fantasy we supply to give the commodity its life. Surplus value is increasingly the fantasy work that we contribute on behalf of the system to make the system appear in the service of individuals.' (O'Neill op. cit. p. 227.)

The work of transformation involved in turning acquisitions into desirable adjuncts of the self is not just directed outwards at commodities. It involves a complementary change in the body as a

semiotic of the self. The body as a physical organism, what Hepworth calls the inner body, remains important as something sufficiently cared for to be attractive and serviceable, but it is subordinate to the outer body through whose appearance we signify the self, norms of orderliness and relevant structural categories such as gender, as well as the style through which it is presented. The outer body is not therefore coterminus with the physical organism but is an element in the constitution of a social space - what ~~Hepworth~~<sup>Featherstone</sup> calls the material arrangements of social space. These have been re-structured in settings such as shopping centres, beaches and modern pubs in order to provide for the greater display of the body. This outer body is therefore integral to the development of the 'performing self' a conception which: 'places greater emphasis upon appearance, display and the management of impressions.' (~~Hepworth~~<sup>Featherstone</sup> 1982 p. 27.)

This discussion of the body as an index of changing values in consumer culture should not be read as implying that the socialisation of the body is a recent phenomenon. There is an important sense in which the body, and what can legitimately be done with it, is always and in all societies a fundamental metaphor for the individual's relation to the collectivity: 'in learning to have a body, we also begin to learn about our "social body" - our society.' (Polhemus 1978 p. 21.) We learn in this way because the body is a universal medium of transaction, we use it to express non-verbally messages that complement our speech, it can be the topic of particular situations, and rules for the use of the body exemplify norms for social structural integration and dynamics: 'In its role as an image of society, the body's main scope is to express the relation of the individual to the group.' (Douglas 1978 p. 300.) Mary Douglas' classification of types of social order, although drawn from very different source

materials (see also 1973 especially Chapter 5), is interestingly consistent with the major thesis of Norbert Elias' study of the civilising process: 'The "civilization" which we are accustomed to regard as a possession that comes to us apparently ready-made, is a process or part of a process in which we are ourselves involved. Every particular characteristic that we attribute to it ... bears witness to a particular structure of human relations, to a particular social structure, and to the corresponding forms of behaviour.' (1978 p. 59.) Grossly oversimplifying we can say that medieval society was less 'civilized' because the structural organisation worked through restraints which were violent, externally prescribed, and localised, rather than a combination of self-restraint in conjunction with an abstract imagined community of peers and contrasting social classes. Elias identifies the development of civilisation with self-conscious concern with behaviour in social interaction: 'above all, but not solely, "outward bodily propriety".' (op. cit. p. 55.)

The idea of a performing self is therefore a historically locateable process. Intrinsically linked to dominant metaphors of dramatic action and representation in different eras, in the same ways that I have argued that our concepts of public life and behaviour have been transformed by urbanisation and massification, so should we expect that the experience and meaning of individuality will have equivalently changed in contemporary culture. Consumer culture is built upon an existential search for experience, upon the generally shared belief that selfhood is continually being developed throughout life and that individuals have a right, indeed a duty, to seek out experience to enhance their selfhood. A sense of future happiness does encourage adaptability and experimentation but it also implies



infinite dissatisfaction. A ground of potential discontent that questions communal standards. Individuality is obviously at least in part worked through a sense of self, but it also implies a contrast with the conventional expectations of the collectivity. The body, as a medium of individuality, is then an iconic form in which apartness and integration are continually being displayed. The department of bodies is in this sense spectacles (as aids to vision) through which we see the working of social forms.

An essential part of the presentation of the social body is of course the way it is dressed. There are functional aspects to dress, the ways in which it is adapted to the environment and the work of the wearers, but as soon as we realise that the concept of dress has to include everything from the most minimal adornments of the body, such as a single string of beads and/or body paint, through to the most elaborate and highly symbolised garments of ceremonial office, then it becomes apparent that ways of dressing are structured by social relationships more than physical appropriateness. Clothes and adornment are a major resource for communicating role and status and the dominant modes of stratification in a social order such as age, gender, occupation and rank (c.f. Roach and Eicher 1965; Konig 1973; and Cordwell and Schwarz 1979). In the use of codes of dress as an iconographic display of social identity, as well as modification through idiosyncratic detail to allude to personal identity, members of a society have access to a type of spectacular imagery which is inherently contemporary, conventional (in the sense of being governed by conventions), and communal. It is a form of display which is invested with great emotional and symbolic significance at dramatic points in individuals' biographies and the communal calendar. Such ceremonial dressing as well as being particularly elaborate and

complex is likely to be framed in dramatic rites which help to elucidate the symbolic import of the display. More commonly, however, dress as something which one literally carries about is transported into social situations and thus helps to define what those situations will be understood to be about - self-evidently a dramatisation and reflexive framing of everyday interaction whether in public or private.

One aspect of the recent history of forms of dressing which is worth specifically noting as it relates to the succeeding discussion of the dramatisation of female identity in contemporary culture is the relative shift in the forms of display between the sexes in the mid-nineteenth century. In West-European industrial societies it became the norm for men to wear a highly standardised form of clothing which although comfortable and functional allowed almost nothing in extravagant display and was only distinguished by small variations in quality between social classes and occupations. At the same time respectable female dress, although in many respects equivalently drab, was also remarkable for being clumsy, restraining, elaborate and unhealthy in its demands upon the wearer (Roach 1979). It seems reasonable to associate the constraints imposed by this form of dress with the development of role demands for women which emphasised a distinction between public and private spheres so that effectively women became dependent upon men and were expected to acquire identity only through familial relationships. It is unsurprising therefore that those women who were insulted by presuppositions of passivity and dependence saw the reform of female dress as a prerequisite for some degree of social autonomy (Newton 1974). It is against this background that forms of dress particularly for women although also more noticeably for men from the mid-twentieth century have been

politicised as ways of expressing different types of nonconformity to what were perceived to be norms of respectability. To the extent that this stylistic heterogeneity has developed as part of the growth of mass merchandising of cheap varieties of clothing, a form of marketing which depended upon marked and frequent shifts in fashions, then radicalism has been intertwined with consumerism in ways that have posed awkward contradictions for those who would seek to reform contemporary culture but cannot endorse a return to more conservative standardisation (Wilson 1983A).

The use of the body in the performance of self works therefore through a language of images and impressions and it is for this reason that a number of writers have detected a close interdependence between a narcissism of the body and mass advertising. An advertisement is a public picture - designed to catch an audience who are in general anonymous to one another and to the advertiser. (I note that some advertisements consist entirely of text but they are a specialised genre; and the distinction between cartoons and photographic representations is not at this stage relevant to the general argument.) The picturing, and again we have to note that it can be a single image or a short sequence of images, works through what Goffman has called a 'scene' as a way of organising understanding. Scenes are fleeting opportunities for viewing which are necessarily truncated and: 'one in which almost everything can be located in broad categories only.' (Goffman 1976 p. 90.) The glimpses provided by the scenes of commercial realism have certain advantages over those of everyday experience in that they are: intentionally choreographed, to be informative; and that the perspective from which the audience views is necessarily part of the information to be conveyed; and that which is seen in an advertisement is warrantably seen - there is no suspicion of voyeurism. The public

pictures of advertising therefore invite an interpretive engagement:

'The point about an ad is what its composer meant us to infer as to what is going on in the make-believe pictures seen, not what had actually been going on in the real doings that were pictured.' (op. cit. p. 83.)

Advertisements show us a product in order to tell us about it. They are in this sense a source of information and can be faulted on grounds of inaccuracy - thus the Advertising Standards Authority and their Code of Practice. Although their effectiveness can be only marginally related to their credibility, indeed advertisements can be amusing, dramatic, shocking, offensive and even highly pictorially sophisticated in ways that are quite unrelated to the accuracy of the information communicated. The truth or not of an advertisement is not therefore part of its dramatic significance and it is this dramatic significance that I wish to pursue here. The 'telling' in an advertisement involves more or less explicit reference to context of use and the advantages to be derived from use. So, for example, a perfume might be advertised as something suitably preferred as a gift with the advantage that the recipient would feel grateful and flattered and therefore admire both the donor's generosity and taste; or it could be shown as something that when worn enhances sexual attractiveness with the advantage that the wearer is more likely to receive others' sexual attentions. (It is of course possible to attempt to combine both of these scenarios within a single narrative and the consequent complexity lead to very selective attention.) The form of a particular scenario will organise and express and direct our attention to dramatically significant features. We as viewers are therefore meant to infer the interaction between product, context and advantage both as and from 'what is going on'.

I have described some basic features of advertisements as representations of social experience in order to bring out their inherent complexity. The ubiquity of advertisements, and the fact that they are designed for only fleeting attention, might suggest that they are transparent - that which makes them meaningful is immediately grasped as the 'message'. If, however, we concentrate on their semiotic complexity this would seem to contradict their immediate accessibility. A contradiction which is only resolvable through the dramatic structures of advertisements being expressed through highly stylised social markers. That is a character, an attitude, emotion or a relationship will have to be represented through stereotypical features. (Such a 'tableau' quality is so characteristic of the several forms and styles of spectacular drama that this would in itself be sufficient reason for considering advertisements.) I have suggested that our social bodies act as immediately graspable iconic representations of many features of identity and it would therefore be reasonable to expect that bodily posture and the relationship of bodies will play a central role in resolving the contradiction of complexity and immediacy in advertisement narratives. In addition of course the use of bodies will humanise and dramatise narratives far more quickly than other more abstract forms of symbolism such as print.

This may seem a complicated route to a simple point that popular advertising works in general through images of actors. Its importance is not that actors use their bodies to tell us what is going on, but that in doing so they tell us how bodies are conventionally used to articulate social relationships, and thus at least potentially make problematic the dividing line between a descriptive and a normative representation: 'I want to argue now that the job the advertiser has of dramatizing the value of his product is not unlike

the job a society has of infusing its social situations with ceremonial and ritual signs facilitating the orientation of participants to one another.' (Goffman op. cit. p. 95.)

There is therefore nothing redundant in an advertisement, every detail of form and content speaks to the social practices within which those details become comprehensible. This means that the narratives of advertisements can be read as ideological descriptions of stereotypes which cramp identity as well as facilitating product identification (see for example Millum 1975 and Williamson 1978). But my main concern here is not to unmask the limitations of stereotypes by reference to an unproblematic reality: 'Since "image" is a term ~~that~~ has as its inevitable counterpart, this referent in the "real", we are likely to become entangled in discussions about the extent to which representations are "false" or "true" representations of "reality", to the detriment not only of debate about how those images are constructed but also of why these images and not others have such salience in ads.' (Winship 1981 p. 26.) The representation of the body provides a spectacular resource for the display of the cultural categories of gender and the integral structural relationships of sexuality; our use of these categories is part of the fantasy work we engage in as consumers.

The politics of images requires as Winship suggests a concern with the how and why of construction. There is a dialectic of individuality in our response to an advertisement. We see it with a flash of private apprehension and respond to what is often a very personal mode of address, but even in this personal response we are situated by the terms of the advertisement in abstract cultural categories: 'To ask of an ad as John Ellis suggests, "Who does this poster think you are?" (Ellis 1980 p. 88) is a central question politically. I want to add ...

How would the "you" be if it were that other "you", i.e. masculine not feminine and vice-versa?' (Winship op. cit. p. 29.) It may be, as Winship argues, that such a deconstruction is precluded for men by the patriarchal perspectives inherent in their masculinity, but I can offer some notes on the cultural context of mass advertising.

Mass advertising as pictures addressed to a public at large is dependent upon certain technological facilities such as the development of cheap printing, the sophisticated reproduction of images and national media of distribution including poster agencies, mass circulated newspapers and broadcasting networks. More fundamentally it only becomes economically desirable with the existence of standardised packaging of goods, national distribution networks and production lines oriented towards the production of uniform goods across a product range. These and other related characteristics can be summarised as the creation of a national market, and it is in this sense that advertising more than any other cultural form presupposes national integration, which in its turn both needs and generates the economic impetus of consumerism (a forcefully argued explication of this interdependence particularly in relation to the North American economy is Ewen 1978). In practice the development of consumerism as a form of life which legitimates the interdependence of these market changes was inextricably bound up with a sphere of interests which was held to be characteristic of a feminine life-world.

This makes sense if it is borne in mind that a number of metaphorical oppositions run through the language of consumerism - work/leisure, public/private, constraint/freedom, collective/individual. The world of consumption tends to be marked by strains towards leisure, privacy, freedom and individualism. These emphases are paralleled by

the cultural construction of the female gender which is equivalently articulated through structural oppositions, in this case: public/private, social/natural, rationality/emotionality, manipulative/passive and ascetic/hedonistic. As a normative description women's life-worlds are characteristically assumed to be marked by strains towards privacy, naturalness, emotionality, passivity and hedonism. Although each bundle of oppositions need not be internally consistent, and the lists are meant to be indicative rather than exhaustive, there is a self-evident interdependence between the characterisations of consumer norms and the female gender.

A cultural construct such as the female gender is not of course an unchanging universal form and the terms of any characterisation such as the one above are historically specific. The situation is more complicated than problems of periodisation, however, for, as Turner has recently argued, attitudes and preconceptions may persist beyond the socio-structural context within which they originally became dominant (1984 especially Chapters 5 and 6). The ideology of patriarchy, to the extent that it treats women as closer to nature than culture through their essential reproductive functions, has a long history. It was crucially developed and intensified in the era of early capitalism by the requirement of ensuring the regular distribution of property to legitimate heirs: 'Behind patriarchy, there lies the problem of paternity, namely the flow of property between generations according to male inheritance.' (op. cit. p. 117.) If this is a second determinant of patriarchal ideology, then if the economic centrality of property were to become less essential changes in the social relations between men and women should ensue. Turner's argument is that in late capitalism the socio-economic functions of the household have been significantly changed, and the re-articulation of



patriarchal authority into the prejudiced beliefs and practices of patriarchy is now a reactive or defensive ideology: 'my argument is that patriarchy is expanding precisely because of the institutional shrinkage of patriarchy, which has left men in a contracting power position.' (op. cit. p. 156.) The main changes have been the development of the household as the focus of consumption in late capitalism, and the growth in power of women as dominant figures in the household and as primary consumers. The complex re-structuring of relations between the sexes has, however, been articulated within and through a dominant rhetoric formulated for different structural relationships. This means that what is in one sense the empirical inappropriateness of an ideology which presumes women are socially dependent and absent from significant public spheres, in the light of changing work histories and decision-making about family relationships in the twentieth century, is in practice powerfully determining because the ideology has continued to inform and structure the imagery through which women are depicted as significant actors in public life. There is therefore a contradictory tension within the social identity of the female gender which makes imagery of sexual entertainment a spectacular display of utopian and normative idealisations.

Although the main theme of this section is not an inherently complicated argument it is made complex by a number of strands that have to be woven together. These are: the nature of consumerism as an ideology of public life; the ways in which advertisements work as normative depictions of social relationships; a patriarchal ideology which in articulating prescriptions for women uses a crucial distinction between public and private spheres; and the cultural construction of the body, particularly the female body, as a crucial

resource for displaying the attractive appeals of advertising, the hedonism of consumerism, and the tensions, contradictory tensions, of desire and control in sexuality. I have argued that in relation to each of these strands there is a complex of attitudes, prejudices, prescriptions and prohibitions relating to a sense of an essential female identity which overrides the particularistic affiliations of any other socio-structural category of which women are also members, and which is essential for sustaining the bonds which link the goals and norms of public imagery with personal experience in our contemporary culture of mass entertainment. To make such a claim for the language of gender is to treat it as a form of social cement analogous in integrative power to that of religion in functionalist accounts, and it is not therefore surprising to find the imagined community of gender concerns quite commonly described in quasi-religious terms: 'I have argued that women's magazines collectively comprise a social institution which serves to foster and maintain a cult of femininity.' (Ferguson 1983 p. 184.)

Women's magazines are defined by their target audience and through their success in maintaining one gender as their predominant audience and recruiting a very large proportion of their potential audience to consistently read their work, they will help to sustain how the members of that audience will define and attend to significant aspects of their life-worlds. A mixture of prescription and support which runs through the history of the cultural form. Thus Welter reporting an exhaustive survey of women's magazines and associated literature from mid-nineteenth century North America found a prescriptive framework for the cult of true womanhood: 'The attributes of True Womanhood, by which a woman judged herself and was judged by her husband, her neighbours and society could be divided into four

cardinal virtues - piety, purity, submissiveness and domesticity.' (1966 p. 152.) While Ferguson concludes her study of late twentieth century English women's magazines with a more solidaristic focus: 'They provide a public platform and a symbolic social order which consistently offers a woman a cheap and accessible source of positive evaluation, alongside practical directions for fulfilling her potential as a cultist - and as a consumer.' (op. cit. p. 185.)

In pointing to the importance of women's magazines as a medium of expression for a cult of femininity, and as a catalyst between the several strands of patriarchal ideology, expanding consumerism and the significance of advertising, I do not want to suggest that periodicals for women were an invention of the late nineteenth century. In several crucial respects, however, the character of publishing for women changed very markedly in the latter years and particularly in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. First, the number of magazines increased greatly, forty-eight new titles in twenty years, and this not counting family journals and all-fiction journals which were predominantly read by women. Secondly, the socially elitist character of publishing for women in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries was dissipated by new magazines deliberately aiming at women from lower and less well educated social classes; a policy made possible by great reductions in the purchase price of magazines. Thirdly, as a part of this social diffusion a recognition that women's interests were heterogeneous and that increasing numbers of women expected to be involved in more egalitarian relationships and to be independent earners for at least part of their adult lives.

Integral to all of these changes, both in terms of making the publishing strategies they involved possible and in terms of

contributions to tone and style was an increasing reliance by publishers upon advertising revenues to keep the magazines financially viable. Advances in the technology of illustration, for example the invention of half-tone photo-engraving in 1882, and the transcending of cultural constraints on the size and prominence of advertisements meant that they grew bigger, more daring and out of the ghettos of the back pages and: 'now enjoyed more advantageous positions, interspersed throughout the content or given special placings by arrangement.' (White 1970 p. 67.) The advertisers benefitted, but they did not only subsidise magazines they became integral to their style: 'with every feature encouraging women to spend more on beautifying themselves or their homes, or suggesting new leisure time activities or publicising new entertainments, and increasingly it came directly, through editorial mentions and recommendations, and the incorporation of advertising matter indistinguishable from editorial content.' (op. cit. p. 68.)

Advertising was, and has remained so, more than an essential economic prop for this form of publishing - it can be argued to be intrinsic to the relationship between cultural identity and personal experience that these magazines, in their variety of ways, were articulating. The final key we need to bring the several strands of the account together is the increasing reliance advertisers placed upon, particularly as advertisements got bigger and more striking, the use of the body, particularly the female body, as a medium of display. As a highly stylised and dramatised mode of representation women in advertisements became a genre of spectacular imagery for many of the themes of a culture of mass entertainment. Two points have to be noted at this stage although they will be clarified in the succeeding discussion. The first is inherent in the account given, and perhaps

now a hundred years on we take it for granted, but the images of display through female bodies are not only for female audiences but have become increasingly sexually explicit: 'For it is not just the look, but the postures in the advertising or display of fashions which directly parallel pornographic criteria of attractiveness. General fashion now frequently shows women in postures drawn directly from pornography. Shots emphasize bottoms, or reveal women lying in inviting postures, legs apart.' (Coward 1984 p. 59.) Secondly, the impersonality of mass advertising means that women as models are being presented on a public stage as figures inviting our attention. They become public property transgressing the boundaries of protective male security.

Both points involve paradoxes in how women are to look at themselves. As objects of desire they are always performing for male audiences and remaining within a framework of pleasure defined by men. And yet norms of sexuality are defined by patriarchal relationships, principally the norm that female sexuality should be passive unless contained within the privacy of the family, so that to flaunt desire or even desireability is to lose public respectability. The depth of the paradox is to some extent indicated by a representative example of advice in response to a reader's query published in a magazine for young women by the Religious Tract Society in 1881: 'Never look at any strange man as you approach him in passing by, for sometimes a look may be taken advantage of by forward and impertinent men. Look straight onwards, and do not speak loud nor laugh in the street. It is generally a girl's own fault if she be spoken to, and, as such, it is a disgrace to her, of which she should be ashamed to speak.' (Quoted in Forrester 1980 p. 160.) In this perspective women should not only be excluded from public life because of its inherent dangers, but

carried the further burden that they were the prime cause of those dangers. The disciplines of control of sexual behaviour and normality will set out the frameworks of expectations for distinctions between public and private spheres, in a sense the agenda of gender politics; while the forms of display of desire and pleasure will be ways of relating the materiality of physical experience to cultural norms of legitimacy and normality.

Although women's magazines have been and are an important mode of constraint through the terms in which they have provided a public arena for women to relate personal experience to cultural identity, it is necessary to recognise that in certain respects their view of the world has been liberating. They did provide important forms of support for individuals defying parental expectations and local prejudices about the legitimacy of education and different types of occupation for women; even within a dominant focus on domesticity and the natural-ness of feminine concerns they reassured their readers that it was feasible and desirable to have interests in a larger social context and to combine several types of role; and much of the secrecy of isolated experience, both medical, sexual and domestic, could be to some extent alleviated by reading discussions, correspondence and editorial advice in public print. These were and are important gains but the ideological framework they address remains the ground of contradictory tensions because, at its core, there is the overwhelming supposition admirably summarised by Berger that: 'men act and women appear.' (1972 p. 47.) To the extent that the cultural construction of gender is necessarily defined by sexuality then the ways of articulating, seeing, sexuality will have a crucially determining role in relation to all other aspects of identity.

The iconography of sexuality was not of course invented in women's

magazines and/or advertisements. There were established traditions of nudity in the popular cultural form of photography which was itself largely dependent upon conventions established in oil painting (c.f. Clark 1960). The naked body is a genre with a history that stretches back to the origins of sculpture and painted images. It is therefore a mode of imagery which carries different meanings in different cultural contexts, but if it is possible to generalise across these variations Walters has summarised a fundamental distinction: 'The male nude is typically public: he strides through city squares, guards public buildings, is worshipped in Church. He personifies communal pride or aspiration. The female nude, on the other hand, comes into her own only when art is geared to the tastes and erotic fantasies of private consumers.' (1978 p. 8.) The market character of images of female sexuality, what Berger has characterised as a fundamental interdependence of sexuality and ownership (1972), becomes particularly marked in the nineteenth century when in many respects the socio-economic organisation of art production facilitated and changed in response to an unprecedented individualisation of artistic style: 'It is precisely in the nineteenth century - at a time when older prototypes and motifs were transformed by new needs and motivations - that the social basis of sexual myth stands out in clearest relief from the apparently "personal" erotic imagery of individual artists.' (Nochlin 1972 p. 9.) This might at first seem puzzling because the popular conception of nineteenth century sexuality is that it was repressed from public expression and confined to exploitative relationships and covert salaciousness. It is, however, within a climate of male eroticism and female passivity that we can begin to tease out some of the constitutive paradoxes of imagery of female sexuality.

As an illustration I will refer to a study of a popular cultural motif (Hyman 1976). Hiram Powers' statue 'The Greek Slave' was first made in 1843 inspired by the recent Greek War of Independence. Altogether six copies were made and they quickly became very popular touring most American towns and cities and being exhibited in European capitals. The statue was based on a story that Greek girls had been sold into slavery and depicts a young naked woman manacled at the wrists with one hand resting lightly on a draped pillar. Hyman argues that the statue's nudity was not an offence to public morality but was rather an occasion for seeing her as symbolising a desexualised purity: 'This was done quite simply by clothing the figure, as it were, in a veil of moral sentiment. By attributing to the young woman a lofty purity, a saintly spirituality, and a heart of gold, and then by endowing her with a certain air of haughty pride, they were able, in a sense, to bypass her nakedness and see beyond to her purity.' (op. cit. pp. 218-9.) The popularity of the image was, however, more complex than this as Hyman is able to show that in contemporary praise and reports of responses to the statue there were strong themes of erotic arousal. In both male and female response stress was laid upon her virginity, her passivity and her bound state as well as her physical beauty. The erotic charge was as much her inaccessibility as that inaccessibility symbolising a transcendence of the physical constraints and demands of her existence. In the complexity of the interdependence of purity, eroticism and passivity it is not difficult to see the constitutive paradoxes of female sexuality.

The 'Greek Slave' statue is a good illustration in another respect in that her nudity is clothed by a cultural distance. She could seem relevant and abstract from the here and now of her audiences in the West because she symbolised an alien culture and because she echoed the



imagery of classical Greece. Pearsall argues that nudity could be made respectable in a repressive environment such as Victorian England by being set in a mythological narrative. In addition to themes taken from religion and recent history the classical discoveries of the early nineteenth century put a cloak of scholarly respectability around erotic themes: 'and throughout the nineteenth century the nude in art was reluctantly accepted - if it was served up in a religious, classical or mythological setting.' (Pearsall 1981 p. 22.) The idea of a distance between an erotic image and its meaning, in the sense that nudity could be masked and made respectable by a spurious classical setting, is consistent with a strong theme of voyeurism that runs through nineteenth century sexuality. The voyeur is as stimulated as a more active participant but his participation is both less public and more easily repressed or disguised within his own self-consciousness. It is this sense of both being there and not being there that I think helps to explain the force of conventions which effectively constituted a boundary between art and pornography. Pearsall cites a prosecution brought in 1892 of an artist called Rudolf Blind for exhibiting an obscene work. Blind's defence was that obscenity lay in the minds of the beholders and in support he summoned as expert witnesses who attested: 'that the picture was painted "in accordance with the conditions of the representation of the nude" - presumably Blind had not made the mistake of depicting pubic hair, which would have made the picture obscene.' (op. cit. p. 126.) Blind's acquittal licensed a more popular diffusion of nude imagery in magazines, advertisements and as decorative imagery on a range of functional artefacts.

What Nochlin calls the sexual myth of eroticism was then well established, although not uncontroversial, in academic art and it is unsurprising that it strongly influenced the iconography of the emergent

cultural form of photography. The technical limitations of the new medium of representation such as the necessity for long exposures, cumbersome equipment and difficulties in controlling variations in light and shade, meant that until the closing years of the century there were major constraints on the innovative creativity of photographers. The cultural restraints of established genres of imagery were at least as significant, however. In practice this meant that the subject fields of portraiture and landscapes, as well as essays in social discovery and reportage, were the most common themes in both commercial and artistic photography and the structure of images in these fields was typically drawn from academic painting (Thomas 1978). The emphases upon portraiture, clarity and realism in initial conceptions of photographic virtues meant that the nude was in an important sense a 'natural' subject matter for the new medium, and it is unsurprising to find that the history of West European painting of the nude was pillaged and taken over wholesale by photographers (c.f. Sullivan 1980). Interestingly, when photographers began to experiment with opportunities for distorting the image for greater aesthetic effects in the last two decades of the century, images of the nude became particularly salient as a subject that seemed to embody their artistic pretensions.

The flow of influence was not just in one direction, however. The camera quickly became an important resource for art. One reason of course was that the camera provided reliable images which could be used as surrogate sketches: 'Used by painters as different as Delacroix and Eakins, these art studies, by Braquehais, Vallou de Villeneuve, Durieu and others, functioned as surrogate models to draw from and to help in determining the general composition and lighting in the larger work.' (Sobieszek 1980.) More importantly, it can

be argued that the camera provided a new way of seeing. In relation to images of the nude there are at least three discernible aspects to the impact of the camera. The first, noted by Needham, derived from stereoscopic pictures. Viewed through a stereopticon they acquired depth and often showed images of women dressing or at some household task partially clad (1973). Seen other than through a stereopticon each image appears flat - a stylistic form adopted by Manet perhaps most famously for his shocking nude Olympia, an innovation taken up by other artists later in the century (c.f. Gay 1976 on Manet's influence; see also Hudson 1982 esp. Chapter 7). Secondly, these photographs of nude or semi-nude women subverted whatever academic rhetoric they borrowed through rupturing the hypocrisy of distance mentioned above: 'It is clear from the Victorian responses that early photography had an enormous impact ... The erotic imagination was especially stimulated by the thought that the photographs were posed by an actual woman, and not the purely fanciful figure of the erotic drawing.' (Needham op. cit. p. 82.) And thirdly, increasing commercialisation encouraged artists to make connections between art and more subterranean traditions of popular illustration and titillation. An eighteenth century tradition of images of women leaving their bath or dressing attended by their servants was democratised in early nineteenth century lithographs by showing subjects who were everyday girls. Borrowing from the iconography of these popular prints the work of artists such as Courbet became controversial because 'in a deeper sense than even he would have claimed, it "translates the customs and the ideas of my epoch" through its cryptic closeness to truly popular imagery of a kind unthinkable at the Salon, but smuggled in under the disguise of high art.' (Farwell 1973 p. 79.)

There was therefore a close interdependence between erotic

imagery in painting which aspired to be art, popular prints and early photographs. This is more than saying that sexuality was defined by images of women, rather that they interdependently reinforced a different attitude. One way of illustrating this shift is to point to contemporary criticisms of photographs of the nude which: 'was not that the figures were unclothed, but that they were ugly and imperfect. The human was not perfect enough to meet the expectations of art.' (Sobieszek op. cit. p. 170.) The moralising hubris of academic art was subverted. Shifts in the rhetoric of the image were consistent with a more widespread struggle to articulate different relationships between representation and social experience: 'It's striking that photography and free museums were more or less concurrently born and nurtured but their coincidence is not mysterious; their common cause was the democratic ideal.' (Maddow 1980 p. 185.) Another aspect of inter-relations between imagery and democratic rationality is the use of nude photography to aid pragmatic, functional explorations of social difference: 'Anatomical studies for the military, ethnographic daguerreotypes of slaves, medical photographs of deformities and time-lapse examinations of physiologies in motion were part of the new vocabulary of categories and typologies developed during the second half of the century.' (Sobieszek op. cit. p. 172.)

There seems to me to be in practice a more fundamental continuity between the photographic vision, as a way of representing human experience, and the interdependence of consumerism and sexuality. At this stage I can only briefly note the connection as to fully explore it would deflect the thrust of the chapter towards differences in modes of imaging and away from the drama of the social body. The camera purports to be a transparent medium of representation, it records that which is and given a minimum of technical reliability and

photographic competence there should be no distortion of the subject matter. Of course we all know that the material image is really an imaginative projection onto a possible reality, but despite a profusion of semiological re-readings photographs stand for us as instant social observations much as they stood for Victorians as tangible proofs of how a secular democracy could bend reality to its will. The material pragmatism and positivism of a photographic culture through its neutral egalitarianism substantially subverts the individual autonomy it seems to promise. This works both at the level of public discourse: 'photography in popular journalism ... perpetuates even more effectively restricted codes of communication. These rely on readers being passive, their assumptions exploited rather than stimulated and challenged. Photography in the tabloids becomes a form of spectacle' (Webster 1980 p. 222); and at the level of personal appreciation: 'Whatever the moral claims made on behalf of photography, its main effect is to convert the world into a department store or museum-without-walls in which every subject is depreciated into an article of consumption, promoted into an item for aesthetic appreciation.' (Sontag 1978 p. 110.) In its indiscriminate voyeurism the photographic vision can be argued to be essentially consumerist.

A democratisation of both image production and the stance of the seeing eye, that is a change in the social relationships which are predicated in a particular type of looking, leads to the topic of pornography. Although pornography existed prior to 1800 the development of mass media of entertainment, and in particular the impact of photography, transformed the social significance of pornography. Changes that can be characterised as democratisation by which I mean that in addition to a staggering increase in quantity, the narrative

stance of pornography is essentially that of the common man, the anonymous man in the street: 'Pornography is usually anonymous - not simply to avoid prosecution but because it aims to record rather than to understand or interpret.' (Faust 1980 p. 19.) It has often been pointed out that there is no narrative development in pornographic representation, climaxes are piled one upon the other with only minimal regard for character and situation. This is not solely due to the inadequacies of authors and producers or the rigidities of the conventions of what might be described as type of folk art. Rather, it is that the pornographic imagination is a record of display: 'pornography resembles the Masters and Johnson sex films, records of animal behaviour, and police forensic photography or medical illustration.' (Faust op. cit. p. 17.) Models are usually posed so that penetration can be seen to be taking place, realism is reassured through literal if unlikely forms of coupling. The disregard for conventional modes of narrative ordering contributes to the tableau quality of pornographic depiction and thereby gives it a spectacular quality. A quality which is well captured, and is consistent with a theme of idealisation in spectacular drama, by Marcus' coining of 'pornotopia' for this imaginative mode (1966).

The issue of pornography is more serious though than something which can be contained within the terms of academic debate over distinctions between modes of drama. Pornography is necessarily part of a broader language for female sexuality and therefore displays and reinforces cultural conventions in which women are the objects of male sexual exploitation. Pornographic displays sustain a climate in which female sexuality is hedged with male violence and thus render conventionally illegitimate forms of violence such as rape both more likely and more routine (Wilson 1983B). The solution to pornography

therefore becomes, as certain feminist groups have attempted in despoiling advertisements, a total transformation in sexual imagery, which in turn depends upon a complete re-casting of the structure of relationships between the sexes. I do not think it pragmatic liberalism to say that such a goal is not amenable to legislation by the State, although certain steps towards that goal can be. The issue then becomes one of censorship, of criteria for legitimate representation. In a liberal democracy it seems obvious why political debate will appeal to various types of 'effects' research to help resolve conflicts between threatened individuals and artistic autonomy. In addition to quite fundamental difficulties in measuring effects though, this type of research individualises a structural problem. (I should also say that any set of rules are necessarily arbitrary and artificial, as well as continually being subverted by blackmarket trading with consequent corruption of enforcement agencies.) The issue is how our community wishes to dramatise the constitutive relations between groups of members. In making images of women a spectacular display we have necessarily confined our public sense of ourselves to private fantasy and disabled certain possibilities of collective respect and pride.

I noted above that some types of radical dissent have tried to subvert consumerism from within by taking advantage of the profusion of fashionable display to dramatise nonconformity. A difficulty for those who would seek to outlaw dramas of sexuality as inherently exploitative, is that it becomes difficult to distinguish their attempts to formulate appropriate rules from the activities of moral reformers who are not concerned to transform patriarchal ideology, but rather sustain it in some more dogmatic fashion through an idealisation of female sexuality which is ultimately possibly more repressive. Analogous to dissent through fashion there is a long

history of a seeming alliance of interest between liberal-radicals and pornographers. An alliance which has sometimes taken the form of treating a discounting of the conventions of sexual description and representation as a mode of political dissent. I think this alliance is mistaken in that liberation of relations between the sexes in personal terms cannot precede the cultural dramatisation of sexual imagery. The morality of how we order relations between the sexes is therefore inextricably intertwined with the politics of public life and the ways in which we countenance differences in private and public forms of interaction.

Before pursuing this point further I think it necessary to note a hybrid form which undoubtedly contributed a great deal to the general iconography of female sexuality, and which provides an interesting series of connections between stylised eroticism, display, advertising and consumerism and images of women. The pin-up is an image designed for mass reproduction and is inextricably part of a massification of culture: 'A pin-up is a sexually evocative image, reproduced in multiple copies, in which either the expression or the attitude of the subject invites the viewer to participate vicariously in or fantasize about a personal involvement with the subject.' (Gabor 1972 p. 17.) The key element in the idea of a pin-up seems to be that it is intended for display, from this flows an adaptation to the medium of reproduction, the use of fairly rigid conventions of sexual allure, and an infinite adaptability not just to settings in which to be pinned up, but to be reproduced on and in thousands of types of objects, usually to render such functional items as cigarette lighters with greater glamour or exoticism. Sexuality is obviously fundamental to the idea of a pin-up: 'they appeared where men gather without women, in more or less tribal (professional,



recreational) groupings' (Hess 1973), but it is a mediated sexuality not the raw incoherence of pornography. Indeed Gabor argues that the rigidity of the range of permissible poses and the functional necessity of style and props which: 'comprise jewelery, makeup, carefully arranged hair settings, and an endless assortment of props - ranging from sashes, belts, shawls, towels, and pillows to toys, sports equipment, and bric-a-brac - all carefully arranged to cover particular vital areas of the anatomy' (1972 p. 21), all work to make these images symbols 'rather than manifestations' of femininity.

The cultural form of the pin-up derived from several developments in publishing in the last years of the last century and early years of this. They were, first, the development of magazines reporting sensational stories and scandalous sexual activities. As in the American National Police Gazette these were supposedly based in fact and were liberally illustrated. These also included advertisements for sexual objects and images and by the end of the century were at least as concerned with the doings and images of actresses as crime. This type of publication developed relatively late in Britain and it was not until 1898 that the magazine Photo Bits was founded and 1903 before the Daily Mirror began publishing details of beauty contests with illustrations of the contestants: 'In 1906, when Photo bits became Photo Fun, it showed drawings of semi-nude chorus girls and actresses in bathing suits, and only later included photographs on the "nude-in-art" theme' (Gabor 1972 p. 43). Secondly, and obviously closely related was the development of a publicity industry around stars, starlets, chorines etc., a form of publishing which was greatly stimulated by the development of an international film industry. Thirdly, the potential of another form of mass communication was realised when somebody had the idea of printing images of women on postcards. Although

the postcard had existed since the 1850s it was some forty years before the medium was exploited for sexual titillation. The two predominant genres in postcard images were actresses and dancers etc. and bathing poses which legitimated degrees of undress and sexual innuendo.

And finally, as I have already mentioned the idea of a pin-up as an attractive image was fundamental to the iconography of advertising and became inherent both in promoting products and as decoration on products.

The pin-up is undoubtedly a salacious cultural form in that although the images are often framed by the conventions of art or news or holiday fun, the subjects are essentially sexual images displayed purely for the enjoyment of their audience. It is possible to argue that the pin-up, as defined above with its relatively binding conventions on how much and what parts of subjects' bodies can be shown, reached its peak in the middle years of the twentieth century and has since been in decline: 'By the 1940s, the pin-up image was defined with canonical strictness ... the image tends towards an almost Byzantine rigidity, and assumes some of the symbolizing force of an icon.' (Hess 1973 p. 227.) These conventions have been abandoned during succeeding decades through a process of: 'the literal undressing of the pin-up: the emergence of naked breasts and buttocks and, today, the unabashed exposure of pubic hair and vulva' (Gabor 1972 p. 50). Accompanying this physical exposure has been an abandonment of a legitimating narrative frame and an increasing concentration upon sexuality in and of itself. What seems to me to be particularly significant is that this trend towards greater sexual exploitation was not part of a ghettoization of voyeurism, indeed the reverse - greater respectability: 'By the late sixties and early seventies, the pages of international fashion magazines became the

principal forum of the erotic chic and the openly provocative', (Sobieszek op. cit. p. 177), and a broadening of the audience from men to the homes of a general female audience: 'Advertisements using nude or semi-nude models were initially confined to the more fashion-oriented glossy magazines, but had spread across the majority of the woman's magazine field by 1968-9.' (Millum 1975 p. 65.)

There seem then to have been two trends in the development of what I have called the iconography of female sexuality; trends which might be seen as mutually contradictory although I believe that they are in fact consistent. The first is a relentless progression towards greater and greater physical explicitness, in part through greater exposure and in part through the gradual abandonment of legitimating narrative frames. The second is that cultural developments in a gradual relaxation of repressive taboos about bodily exposure and bodily processes have not led to a lessening in the significance of sexual imagery, rather the reverse in that it has become more widespread and more pervasive. I have felt it necessary to undertake a history of some forms of sexual imagery in order to ground my account of our contemporary situation. There are two reasons for going back to the last half of the nineteenth century. The first is that, as will have been apparent, all the developments I have described were associated with innovations in the massification of communication and entertainment and to that extent prefigured twentieth century forms. The second, although hardly separable reason, is that a national popular culture was established in those years essentially secular and democratic in tone and form. The socio-political order had to develop new cultural forms in order to display stability and legitimacy - and I believe that the rhetoric of sexuality has been a crucial constitutive feature of that order. I hope to develop these points

through a brief discussion of shame as a way into the disciplining of sexuality.

Why do we wear clothes? One answer would be their function in keeping an individual warm, while another would be their social function as a display of status. There are, however, many occasions when clothing might be superfluous and yet there are strong cultural prohibitions on nakedness or total nakedness. Such taboos are likely to be related to rules about the public display of bodily functions as well as parts of the body, and seem to turn on conventions drawing distinctions between intimates from whom the body need not be shielded, and those for whom respect requires that the shameful aspects of the body be dissembled: 'The feelings of shame, roused by consciousness of one's bodilyness and "existential unworthiness", always create some cover ... This does not mean that we see in the emotion of shame the cause of all human, or of all Nuer clothing. In shame we see one of the manifold origins of (some specific) clothing, while at the same time many feelings of shame find their origin in the fact of clothing itself.'

(Fischer 1978.) The differential relevance of shame does not parallel a simple continuum of intimacy and familiarity but often seems to involve considerations of status as well. We know that those of lower status may be culturally invisible to their superiors so that their overlooking bathing, defecating and sexual relations need not be a cause of embarrassment as it would if done by a social equal. This may of course be why rules of decorum are frequently relaxed in front of children, as only half-humans their viewing does not count. All this would suggest that the rules for what is or is not going to count as shameful will change through time and between cultures; and, more importantly, that changes in the cultural codes of shame will be interdependent with other forms of change in the character of public and private spheres and the types of rules governing performance in

social interaction (Elias 1978).

Elias' thesis is that as the civilising process has advanced there has been a gradual shift in the balance between prescriptive controls by others towards internal control over deportment in public, this personal inner control being displayed through elaborate codes of civility particularly concerning the management of body processes. In bourgeois society restraint on the display of sexuality: 'is enforced less and less by direct physical force. It is cultivated in the individual from an early age as habitual self-restraint by the structure of social life, by the pressure of social institutions in general, and by certain executive organs of society (above all the family) in particular.' (op. cit. p. 188.) One way in which this restraint is demanded is over displays of the naked body as we can see in the campaign by moral reformers in Victorian Britain to prohibit nude bathing. The corollary of this new form of shame is that: 'the unconcern in showing oneself naked disappears, as does that in performing bodily functions before others. And as this sight become less commonplace in social life, the depiction of the naked body in art takes on a new significance. More than hitherto it becomes a dream image, an emblem of wish-fulfillment.' (Elias op. cit. p. 165.)

An inverse correlation between increasing shame over letting others see our bodies and a greater cultural significance of representations of the naked body would be consistent with the growth in iconic nudity I have described, except that in the twentieth century taboos governing body display have been relaxed and should we not therefore expect images of the nude to have less force? Elias, however, argues that our greater permissiveness is not a retreat from the civilising process but an index of personal discipline: 'Only in a society in which a high degree of restraint is taken for granted, and in which women are,

like men, absolutely sure that each individual is curbed by self-control and a strict code of etiquette, can bathing and sporting customs having this relative degree of freedom develop.' (op. cit. p. 187.) The body has not lessened in significance as a zone of interpersonal tension but, almost paradoxically, has increased in significance.

I have described a context for the growing significance of the iconography of sexuality to argue that dream-images of women are not only a fantasy for men but also assert an identity for women which is utopian in its concentration upon sexuality and oppressive in its constituent tensions of vulnerability and domination. Public imagery of women is therefore fundamentally inseparable from other forms of government of the body institutionalised in particular cultural forms, remembering that: 'Since the government of the body is in fact the government of sexuality, the problem of regulation is in practice the regulation of female sexuality by a system of patriarchal power' (Turner 1984 p. 91). The ideology of patriarchy is not a straightforward consequence of relations of production within the household and waged occupations, but attempts to reconcile the contradictions of traditional female exclusion from public spheres with the generative power of women in consumerist ideology. In negotiating the normative disciplines and expectations concerning appearance, behaviour, skills and interests it is unsurprising that in a framework for identity based upon the body, displays of pathological contradiction are expressed through dis-orders of the body: 'Anorexia like other "women's complaints" is part of a symbolic struggle against forms of authority and an attempt to resolve the contradictions of the female self, fractured by the dichotomies of reason and desire, public and private, body and self.' (Turner op. cit. p. 202.)

Another example of a female disorder is the complex of feelings

of shyness, inadequacy and hyper-sensitivity in public settings, often expressed in a reluctance to use public forms of communication such as the telephone, which at its most pathological becomes agoraphobia. The problem of the regulation of bodies in public settings relates to changes in drama with pressures of urban heterogeneity and population density. It has been a central theme of this study that mass urbanisation has transformed the character of theatricality, and to the extent that the performing self is an integral feature of urban identity then city life renders individual coherence and dignity particularly vulnerable. Agoraphobia, as fears about public competence in urban not rural spaces, was diagnosed in the last quarter of the nineteenth century as a peculiarly female complaint. It therefore emerged as a display of female inadequacy in public life when various forms of impersonal control and regulation had made public space comparatively less threatening for women, and as such displays a collusive fiction between men and women which reaffirms the necessity of patriarchal repression (however benign the protective paternalism): 'Agoraphobia in wives expresses the anxiety of husbands with regard to their control over the domestic household, but it also expresses the wife's dependence on the security and status of the bourgeois family setting.' (Turner op. cit. pp. 107-8.)

The narcissistic indulgence of hedonistic consumerism does not lessen the implicit threats of public visibility but rather possibly heightens the security and reassurance of intimate relationships. (In describing women's fears of public life as dramatic I do not want to imply that public life is not saturated with implied and manifest violence towards women. Patriarchal ideology, however, disguises the extent to which this violence is an extension of rather than a contrast to domestic violence: 'Far from being abnormal behaviour, the violence of men towards the women they live with should rather been

seen as an extreme form of normality, an exaggeration of how society expects men to behave' (Wilson 1983B p. 95).)

Disciplines of sexuality do not solely concern public display and behaviour but stretch into the most intimate areas of women's pleasure in their bodies. The activities of giving birth and suckling which pre-eminently define the female gender, and which in patriarchal ideology sustain a prescription of women as falling at the natural end of a nature-culture continuum, have not been left as areas of instinctive competence but have been colonised by professional medicine and para-medical expertise to deny women their autonomy in performance. As illustrations I can mention: the writing-out of normative diets for babies which in addition to imposing rigid schedules promoted reliance upon commercially produced foods rather than the mothers' own milk; the use of injections and surgical techniques during birth both to ensure a time-scale which is suitable for hospital schedules and to act as a service for subsequent male pleasure; and in general the hospitalisation of birth and in particular partial or total anaesthatisation during birth as a liberal protective measure on 'behalf' of the mother. These forms of control are obviously consistent with an ideology in which women are presumed to be inadequate and need to be helped by impersonal male competence. More fundamentally the mechanisation of birthing has acted to deny the sensuous eroticism of the process, thus it is not publicly recognised that suckling is erotically stimulating. Niles Newton has gone further and argued that the significance of the hormone oxytocin to orgasm, labour and suckling means that they share a common erotic spectrum (1973). She has charted fourteen points of similarity between undrugged labour and orgasmic experience and seven points of similarity between suckling and orgasm. The comparative neglect of



'the more varied sexual heritage of sexual enjoyment'(p. 95)  
of women than men has been interdependent with the exaggeration of  
female sexuality as dream-image.

A useful illustration of qualities of the dream-image of female sexuality consistent with many of the themes raised so far is provided by Fischer's study of images of women in Busby Berkeley's production numbers. Berkeley, responsible for the most famous song-and-dance routines in Hollywood musicals in the '30's, used pretty women, who were strikingly alike and who need possess no ability to dance, as iconic elements in fantastic patterns motivated by virtuosity in camera technique and staging skills: 'Clearly those compositions are more than just pictorial; and from their physical arrangements of the female form can be read covert assumptions about the female "norm".' (Fischer 1979 p. 44.) The identities of individual chorines are subsumed in kaleidoscopic patterns which in one sense treat them as plastic decorations and in another through the surreality of their transformations imbue them with an aura of the marvellous. This double movement is articulated through an insistence upon the act of viewing both of women as objects physically available to be seen and through montage in which the theme of vision is the central stylistic motif: 'The implicit thesis of cinema as voyeuristic enterprise (as spectacle) is advanced on many levels in Berkeley's production numbers.' (op. cit. p. 59.) Imagery is here being celebrated both as a source of voyeuristic pleasure and as the quintessential feature of female sexuality: 'For it is not so much the feminine presence that is glorified or celebrated in Dames as much as her synthetic, cinematic image. And ultimately the privileged status of that image and its mode of articulation propose it as a virtual substitute for woman herself.' (op. cit. p. 60.)

The purpose of my argument throughout has been therefore to argue that women in public, literally embodying their sexuality, have, in a culture of sexual display, become a spectacle for themselves. They embody a utopian community whose normative force is indexed through the profusion of imagery. As a spectacular display images of women dramatise a community we can only imagine.

It is true that Berkeley's chorines as vehicles for their manipulator's imagination are only in a very limited sense actresses, but even in their extreme objectification they point to a more general truth about the profession of acting for women. The actress is required to represent women from different cultures and eras, to use the appearance of her external body as a vehicle to portray subjective experience: 'the vocation of actress ... is unique in our culture in that it reverses the usual associations of women and their labour with private domains: she works in a public place where she is seen acting in ways that most women reserve for a private context.' (Blair 1981 p. 205.) The actress, however sophisticated the texts she has been asked to perform, is: 'occupied with herself as her art object' (op. cit. p. 208), and although chorus girls, strippers and models have been reduced to their bodies as the sum of their selves they share a continuum with actresses and women in general in which the representation of interpersonal relationships, the private sphere, is the content of social identity and personal individuality: 'Unlike a man's, this private interior cannot be expressed in private relationships, because her body has been born into a world in which its value and significance is as an object for exchange between men, and she has lost control of it. As an object given to men, her choice is between giving herself or acting that she gives herself.' (op. cit. p. 213.) This dramatically performed character to female identity speaks directly

to the relative paucity of successful women in the several branches of the arts. It is not that women have a different rationality which makes it difficult for them to handle complex compositions or public themes, but that the centrality of performance to identity will make it more likely that their art will be concerned with the representation of performance - the intimacies of accomplishment rather than a more distanced, impersonal symbolism.

I have argued that consumerism is an ideological imperative in which stress is laid upon the acquisition of commodities in order to display wealth, status, happiness and ultimately identity. Consumers use goods to perform themselves. Advertising is fundamental to consumerism as a display of values and is therefore equivalently a performance of aspirations. Advertising is a cultural form of urban anonymity - it assumes that members of the audience are a world of passing strangers, the images through which they work are public appeals. To the extent then that advertising can be argued to be particularly salient to the grounds of female identity in a culture of mass entertainment, forms of consumer display can be seen to be a distinctive mode of access to public life for women - a way of transcending the interpersonal. And yet of course the essence of consumerism is not a quest for uniformity (unless it is a uniformity of desire), but the manipulation of goods to generate distinctiveness. Dichter, a motivation researcher in the advertising business has commented on his research in selling alcohol: 'We found that the real reason for the large number of brands in existence is not the fact that they are truly different ... The reason for this insistence on a special brand is partly to cover up the true reason of promiscuity in drinking and to substitute for it the illusion of individuality.' (Quoted in Berger 1980 p. 132, emphasis added.) Advertising like

fashion is a way of privatising public norms and styles.

This surely is the key to the paradox of consumerism. It is not just ideological mystification that encourages people to believe that a fairly consistent progression of increases in the standard of living for the majority of the population, a greater open-ness about and sensitivity to the difficulties and pleasures of sexual relationships, and a more widely-shared belief that authority has to be justified and cannot be prescribed from traditional forms of status, all constitute an increasing autonomy for the individual in mass society. The hedonism of contemporary spectacular drama might therefore be described as representing communities of achievement rather than more traditional prescriptions. Particularly when it is borne in mind that a sense of greater individual autonomy has been intertwined with struggles for 'liberation' by many groups, struggles which, for example, have made an analysis of sexual imagery as objectification a cliché rather than an insight. These gains are real and substantial but their existence does not mean that our ways of picturing or talking about ourselves have become more consistent or coherent: 'Popular culture can accommodate progressive images of women as well as images of women as passive sexual objects. But if women are presented to themselves and to men as simultaneously property, commodities and person, this produces a situation of great tension.' (Wilson 1983B p. 53.) We have yet to find an adequate language for our own possibilities.

The body as a site for spectacular imagery in a culture of mass entertainment is not confined to its use as an icon of female sexuality. Obviously for both men and women and children it acts as vehicle for fashionable display but more importantly it is a personal, private, resource in a public world which is increasingly seen as alien and threatening. Our bodies are naturally ourselves and stand as a

natural contrast to the artifices of social convention. They can therefore act as a mode of authentic experience and be used to express values of intimacy, directness and personal autonomy and authenticity. In a democratic culture a body is an egalitarian resource and while of course not all bodies are equally well-made and some have irreparable flaws, the political imperative to make the best of what you have and bring your body as close to the norms of the cultural ideal as you can is only resisted by self-indulgent deviants and the culturally ignorant and inadequate. A narcissistic quest for salvation through exercise and health is therefore symbolic of a political culture of secular egalitarianism, is fundamental to the norms of hedonistic consumerism, and functional for bureaucratic authorities responsible for social welfare services. The profusion of determined ascetics pounding suburban lanes and the proliferation of exercise clubs and leisure centres, these individual pursuits of renewal are echoes or extrapolations of the dominant discourse of sexuality.

I have tried to argue that some aspects of the ways in which female sexuality has been and is constituted in our culture are massively disabling for female identity in public life, but this is not a simple process of repression designed and engineered solely to the advantage of men. Set in the context of a broader account of the abstraction of community in mass culture it becomes apparent that men are involved in equivalent, although different, searches for grounds for identity. The body as a vehicle for hedonistic consumerism seems through sensuous play to offer a spectacular transcendence of public inauthenticity: 'Sexuality has come to be the main vehicle whereby we assuage to some extent this longing for the extraordinary and for a heightened experience of life', (Wilson 1983B p. 38 ); and simultaneously a means of private integration: 'we unendingly and frustratingly go in search of ourselves through the genitals.'

(Sennett 1976 p. 7.) Ultimately the freedoms of contemporary culture are illusory because they consist of images of experience and individuality. Couched within a culture of spectacular display our bodies are looking-glasses for images of identity.

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CHAPTER FIVE - CONCLUSION

'The spectacle produces and consists in images, and the triangular relationships between the spectacle, its contents, and its contextual cultures is "about" the relationship between image and reality, appearing and being.'

(MacAloon 1984 p.270)

In concluding this thesis I shall briefly take up some of the major themes I have addressed. I shall summarise what seem to me to be defining characteristics of spectacular drama and elucidate the ways in which I see the dramatised culture of contemporary Britain to significantly differ from what has held before. I shall then describe some areas for future work which seem to me to develop from the perspectives I have employed. I shall begin by going back to a fundamental consideration of the notion of spectacular drama by considering two studies of processes of social control.

I referred in Chapter **T**hree to Spierenburg's study of the gradual elimination of public punishment from the armoury of social control in European societies. The various types of public punishment, such as humiliation through procession to a ceremonial spot, and the various forms of pillorying, torture and execution, constituted 'a spectacle of suffering' (1984). The use of spectacle in relation to these punishments is justified by various factors. First, the punishments were designed to be a deliberate display of legitimate power - it was not wanton cruelty but something that clearly showed the awfulness of social constraint; and therefore, secondly, the suffering had to be made manifest, it had to be ceremonialised in order to be given its due significance; and, thirdly, it was important to ensure that the public both had access to the sight of punishment and could be persuaded to attend so that they could be appropriately impressed, and therefore there were pressures to make the process of punishment as dramatic as possible; and finally, the degree of punishment was clearly linked to the seriousness of offence in that the more dreadful the crime the more the victim suffered. **T**he iconography of pain was also an index of communal values. This form of social control disappeared over a period of roughly one hundred and fifty years. From the elimination of public torture early in the eighteenth century to final abolition of public execution - in

Britain in 1868 - punishment ceased to be a public performance.

The disappearance of this form of social control might be explained by a change in sensibility - that people became more civilised; certainly that is the dominant explanation of the success of campaigns to abolish blood sports during the same era. An evolutionary view of civilisation is not compatible with a broader historical perspective and does not explain the persistent and enormous popularity of public executions up until their abolition. Other factors that are relevant would cluster around the twin themes of, first, the opportunities public punishments provided in a political order increasingly stratified by social class to mobilise opposition to established power - ultimately on occasion to rescue the victim and transform them from outcast to cultural hero; and secondly, a dislike, particularly amongst Evangelicals and their sympathisers, of the carnivalesque aspects of the occasions for displays of punishment. Sober reflection upon the wickedness of wrongdoing was held to be impossible in such an atmosphere, In both respects it can be said that it was not that the idea of suffering was no longer tolerable, rather that the dramatisation of suffering was no longer appropriate. It was still legitimate for those who exercised power to punish wrongdoers, but now the punishments were individualised and privatised: 'At one time the spectacle of punishment had been self-evident for all.' (Spierenburg 1984 p.199). The dramatisation of punishment shifted from being something performed upon a public stage for the benefit of the community to something exemplified by a building and the social isolation of those within.

The second study of social control is concerned with a modern form of criminality which the author characterises as corporate crime: 'Corporate crime refers to those activities which are defined by legitimate political authorities to be acts committed against the interests and purposes of the corporate nation-state.' (Bergeson 1984 p.7). It is a form of social control

because the criminality is a political judgement, an example of manufactured subversion. In political systems as different as McCarthyite America, Maoist China and Stalinist Russia: 'there appeared groups who possessed the common characteristics of being understood to be somehow acting against or undermining the very essence of the corporate nation itself.' (ibid). I have cited Bergeson's principal examples but the list could be enormously extended; what seems to be important is not the content of the subversion, the characterisation of the victim, but the dramatisation of individual betrayal of the collectivity: 'if the mere removal of individuals or even groups is all that is at stake then the accompanying elaborate charges, public confessions, and self-admissions of deviation that inevitably accompany these purges seem unnecessary.' (Bergeson op. cit. p.2). The detection and conviction of subversives does more to mobilise the political rhetoric of the nation-state than exclude harmful wrongdoers.

I can identify four features to this form of social control which make it relevant to a study of spectacular drama. The first is that it is intrinsically modern. The processes of creating, exemplifying and vilifying the crimes are conducted through the mass media. This is empirically so and necessarily so if we link subversion as crime against the nation-state with our more general understanding of the nation as an imaginary community, something constituted through mass media of communication. Corporate crime is an offence against an implied community but the punishment is now denunciation for a failure to think and feel correctly. Secondly, the criminality is a creation of the public sphere: 'By "the public sphere" we mean first of all a realm of our social life in which something approaching public opinion can be formed. Access is guaranteed to all citizens. A portion of the public sphere comes into being in every conversation in which private individuals assemble to form a public body.' (Habermas 1974 p.49). Indictment for subversion is a means of mobilising public opinion through public bodies. Another aspect of the public

character of these crimes is that they are usually committed by public servants, officials, community leaders etc. Thirdly, the essence of this type of social control is a dramatisation of subversion. It is the failure to be fully committed to the goals and values of the national-state that is the offence and it is this failure that has to be shown not the particular action which is usually trivial. Finally, the salience of drama suggests formulaic features to denunciation, confession and humiliation so that in a sense the manufacture of subversion becomes ritualised. In all these ways a failure to be an adequate citizen becomes a spectacular display for the benefit of the public.

Although I have described both processes of social control as essentially dramatic performances, I shall discuss the differences in types of drama more fully shortly. Immediately I want to bring out the ways in which they both illuminate our understanding of the notion of the spectacular. Listing their shared features rather baldly we can say that they are both dramatic but not theatrical. That the values they are designed to display are intended to inspire awe amongst their spectators. That the imagery of performance is iconic in that the victim of social opprobrium models their evil within themselves. They literally embody the process of social control through their manifest guilt. Linked with this feature is the quality of verisimilitude. These are the actual wrongdoers and if one cannot see their crimes one does have the actuality of being made to account for wrong-doing. Therefore the audience in observing these performances is getting to see something that would otherwise be impossible. They are being flattered through their privileged perspective. Finally, the performances clearly articulate a prescriptive morality. There is no fudging or relativism in the outrage being displayed. The frameworks for communal citizenship are understood and taken for granted so that they can be employed in specific situations. The spectacular

can legitimately be borrowed from the world of entertainment to describe these displays of power, because the enactment of power employs these qualities.

This list does not exhaust our understanding of the meaning of spectacular. It needs to be supplemented by features of spectacular entertainment which are not appropriate for the dramatisation of political power. First, there is a strong emphasis upon an extravagance in use of resources or in feats attempted. The spectacular performance excites our admiration and wonder, even awe, through the excessive transcendence of practical function. The staging of a firework display exists while it lasts for its own sake. Secondly, there is in spectacular entertainment a celebration of imagination principally the visual imagination. This need not take the form of fantasy, the pleasure is in what is sumptuous for the eyes. Both features can be said to combine in a third, that the spectacular is literally extra-ordinary. It may be an extraordinary natural phenomenon such as a waterfall or lightning storm, but in entertainment it is most often artificial. It is something created by human endeavour to mimic a natural event. The theme of artificiality, and the artifice is often heightened and featured as has been noted before, does not violate the quality of verisimilitude. A chariot race is clearly something performed and its dynamics therefore calculated but it must still resemble in authentic detail what a contest between charioteers would be were it for 'real'. The contrivance in spectacular display does, however, mean that such displays are often dismissed as specious or meretricious by critics committed to naturalist aesthetics.

I believe that by combining the association of spectacular derived from its use in different worlds we can arrive at what we call a master-list of fundamental ideas conveyed by the term. The sense of display as in a tableau is intrinsic. What is shown is the essence of a social type,



a model of beauty, authority, magnificence or whatever the form. This sense of typifying if not idealised then archetypal features clarifies the utopian connotations of much that is spectacular. Roland Barthes in a recently published essay on the series of Carry On films argues that they fulfill the twin characteristics of utopian narratives - the world shown is enclosed and the stories told are repetitious (1985). It is this sense of utopian as pragmatic reassurance rather than exaggerated ideal that the spectacular so frequently offers. The idea that the spectacular is a public performance is also intrinsic. The social purpose of such excess is to go beyond intimate gratification to a form of pleasure that is shared with others. Even a spectacular love affair is not just overwhelming for its participants but an assertion of its own possibility that shocks and gratifies the onlookers. The last example with its sense of actions beyond personal volition connects with a third idea that the spectacular is author-less. We may know that an individual is ultimately responsible, as was Inigo Jones for Stuart court masques, but the display is on such a scale and is governed by generally shared conventions that an author, if they can be identified, is the mouthpiece of a broader understanding. The comparative insignificance of authorship of course violates much in European post-Renaissance aesthetic ideals, once again consistent with the widespread attitude that spectacular drama is vulgar. Finally, each of these ideas combines in the most significant association that in spectacular drama a sense of community is being celebrated and confirmed.

The importance of a sense of community is exemplified by the two studies of processes of social control discussed above, but an implication that the community remains the same in both processes flies in the face of all our understanding of why they differ. Of course the community dramatised is not a timeless essence, and we can understand how it changes better through a clearer grasp of dramatic representation.

It would be consistent with an evolutionary review of social change to describe the increasing technological sophistication of dramatic performance as constituting an increase in effectiveness. Through the several centuries covered in the material described in this thesis dramatic representation has become more complex if we use a criterion of verisimilitude. That is, the illusion of participation can with artifice be made so engrossing that members of the audience perhaps forget that it is only a show and participate as though it were really happening. I believe that such an evolutionary perspective would be inappropriate. The main reason is that complexity is not equivalent to engrossment. There are of course many forms of drama in which formal devices are employed in order to emphasise the difference between performance and spectating paradoxically such alienation of emotional sympathy does not preclude intellectual fascination and involvement. Such drama is not less complex than those forms in which audience involvement is actively encouraged. Similarly, I imagine that we would want to say that drama is not more complex because the ways in which it is framed, marked off from, routine social experience are more rigid and clearly defined. The illusion on a medieval guild-cart may have been more threadbare than in a Hollywood epic but the drama is not less complex. The complexity in drama derives from the inter-relationships between performance, appreciation and setting.

Through dramatisation we search for a way of seeing what would otherwise be unseeable. Our life-world can be compared to our bodies in that only half of it is available for inspection, however much we twist and turn there are bits that remain inaccessible. Drama can be said to literally stage, provide a platform for, the relationship between performance as social action and the cultural props and resources employed in meaningful behaviour. In so doing dramatic representation makes visible what we otherwise could not see. More precisely, we can say that drama provides a set

of metaphors for the experience of a world that is shared in common - holding a mirror up to society. More precisely still, it seems to me that dramatisation operates as a set of architectural metaphors, as a vocabulary for framing space, so that strips of social reality can be seen as appearance.

I have approached forms of spectacular entertainment as a type of public drama and have tried to show how different ways of articulating private experience, in particular the meaning of community in different types of urban life, have generated different expectations for public drama. The spectacular will not disappear from popular culture but in all the ways in which the ideology of leisure has re-formulated notions of private choice, then the sense of public life in contemporary society displayed through spectacular forms will be very different from that one hundred or five hundred years ago - even if the dramatic structure such as a procession or entertainment environment or ritual humiliation remains constant.

The dramatisation of social control in a spectacle of suffering and in what we can call, a subversion of nationalism involves analogous forms of spectacular display but articulate a very different sense of community. The logic of public punishment involved a dramatisation of a ceremonial setting. Through a number of associated devices such as the use of a traditional route to the place of execution, the formulaic pronouncements of authorities and confessions of the condemned. and the carnivalesque celebration by the crowd, a particular social space was transformed and given a highly dramatic almost ritualistic force. I have argued in Chapter Two that in a traditional culture, even when there are no theatres, it is appropriate to speak of the forms and patterns of social life as highly dramatised: 'Social life, then, even in its apparently quietist moments is characteristically "pregnant" with social dramas.'

(Turner 1982 p.11). Through a lack of consistent framing of performance and through an imbued allegorical perspective the community, as a shared social world, authored complex representations of its own moral force.

The manufacture of subversion dramatises a different kind of fictive experience. Stemming from the institutionalisation of public as image it is the possibility of a collective voice, a collective view, a public opinion, that is being brought into being. Because a sense of community need be nothing more than its dramatic representation, an icon of its own possibility, its substantive experience becomes largely irrelevant. In mass politics, as Orwell was one of the first to so clearly detect, truth is superfluous in relation to political impact, and public opinion need be no more 'real' than medieval ghosts and demons although equally effective. The core of my argument, then, is that spectacular drama in a culture of mass entertainment has become a means of vicarious participation. The resources for spectacle may have become more extensive, more authoritative, more inclusive in the sense of democratic extension and thereby more public, but the cooperation which grounds communal participation has in practice become privatised, atomised, become a mosaic of fragmented participation.

To say this is not to say that we have become freer, through individualisation, or to say that our culture has become less dramatised. Indeed there are good reasons for saying the opposite and I will take some points from Raymond Williams' inaugural lecture to clarify the argument (1975). He argues that in the twentieth century we have come to inhabit a dramatised society: 'we have never as a society acted so much or watched so many others acting. ...It is in our own century, in cinema, in radio and in television, that the audience for drama has gone through a qualitative change.' (op. cit. p.4). The basis for this spread of drama is that new media of communication have extended drama beyond the confines of

theatres, with all their attendant social formalisation: 'It means that for the first time a majority of the population has regular and constant access to drama, beyond occasion or season.' (op. cit. p.5). The significance of these changes is more than an extension of audiences or new social composition: 'It is that drama, in quite new ways, is built into the rhythms of everyday life.' (ibid). I can put this more forcefully than Williams and say that as our culture has become more dramatised it has, in effect, become de-theatred. Following a commercial rather than technical logic, illusionistic devices have been liberated from their particular settings, whether theatres, cinemas or whatever, and are now predominately enjoyed at a personal whim. Drama, even spectacular drama has been naturalised into everyday experience.

These processes of de-institutionalising drama, particularly through television, work to broaden our understanding of the ways in which contemporary culture is a dramatised society in two respects. The first is that television is not framed as art or drama: 'Television happens every day in the same way. It forms part of "real" life, and merges with it in the way that drama most effectively does.' (Hawkes 1973 p.232). The boundaries between different sorts of occasion, information, entertainment become much harder to sustain in these circumstances. This is seen by some critics as a source of institutional hegemony for controllers of media resources, this does not, however, preclude the dramatic experience in itself being changed. Programmes bleed into one another to form a mosaic through the course of the evening, they take on the character of their domestic reception, and they are rarely repeated - transitory moments of entertainment. In all of these ways television programmes are less important as specific items and more as units in a perspective, a ubiquitous way of seeing: 'Television's ephemerality in fact forms part of its nature, as an element in its "grammar" that relates directly to the structure of

its "units".' (Hawkes op. cit. p.237). This approach to television as a unique form of entertainment leads onto the second respect in which television dramatises mundane experience. Rather than represent reality television constitutes its own reality. The flow of programming, both within a specific unit and through a multiplicity of units (Brunsdon and Morley 1978; and Williams 1974 especially Chapter 4), discredits dramatic highlights by neutralising their significance but creates in turn new autonomous forms of dramatic modelling and integration. In some ways this dramatisation of everyday experience is analogous to the weak framing of drama in late medieval culture (see also Fiske and Hartley 1978 on 'bardic television').

Why should this be so? Why should a society with a higher standard of material prosperity more widely shared than ever before need more dramatisation and, intriguingly, more naturalistic representations? The answer that I have tried to develop is that the more the boundaries of our social world have expanded, expressed most concretely by urbanisation with its anonymity and freedoms, the more we find ways of imagining a world we share. The history of popular entertainment, as I have tried to emphasise throughout, is a record of competing definitions of public as opposed to private provision and performance. In the struggle over culture the sites and places of performance have been significant signs, and often literal battlefields, for contests over norms for public deportment and desirable relations of production. There are, therefore, important senses in which popular culture is embedded in the organisation and labelling of social space: 'Popular culture may best be understood as the symbolic expression of common values and meanings. As I began by emphasising, townscape is the solid embodiment of such meanings: the meanings themselves can only be grasped as the defining conditions of the intersubjective world.' (Inglis 1977 p.511). In a world in which the

townscape has become ubiquitous and standardised, in a world in which all relationships are transitory and impermanent, dramatisation operates as townscape, as the defining conditions of the intersubjective world.

Not only have we failed to become emancipated from drama, it can be argued that the communal grounds of personal experience have remained dominating and oppressive. The boundaries between fiction and reality, drama and advertising breaks, news and political broadcasts, image management and reality construction are hard to sustain and are continually being subverted by an unholy alliance of commercial acumen, political chicanery and modernist glorification in metaphoric excess: 'One had seen it all done so many times and so much more slickly in the colour supplements, and adverts and the television programmes: Dada had become a taken-for-granted part of the commercial world'. (Martin 1981 p.114). A pervasive sense of impermanence, insecurity and a recognition that elation is followed by despair and vice-versa, is inescapable in metropolitan culture: 'To to modern, I said, is to experience personal and social life as a maelstrom, to find one's world and oneself in perpetual disintegration and renewal, trouble and anguish, ambiguity and contradiction: to be part of a universe in which all that is solid melts into air.' (Berman 1983 p.345). In one scenario the unreliability of social convention is radically liberating (and in an extreme form sexuality becomes a revolutionary tool) but in others there are more fundamental suspicions: 'Beyond what many people can see as the theatricality of our image-conscious public world, there is a more serious, more effective, more deeply rooted drama: the dramatisation of consciousness itself.' (Williams 1975 p.15). It is not that impermanence is necessarily personally destructive, although for many it obviously has been, more that it underwrites predominant moods of powerlessness: '"I speak for Britain" runs the written line of that miming public figure, ...we may even say "Well I'm here and you don't

speaking for me". "Exactly", the figure replies, with an unruffled confidence in his role, ... "you speak for yourself, but I speak for Britain". "Where is that?", you may think to ask, looking wonderingly around.' (ibid).

The freedoms of consumer democracy are real and incontrovertible but they must be seen in a context of more insistent and inescapable awareness of others. Individualism through style can be a display of personality but it is illusory if the conformity of consumption precludes any more substantial deviation from communal acceptance. A gloomier interpretation of the ambiguities of modernity in the relations between individual and community has recently been offered by Milan Kundera (1984). Talking about modernism in the novel he says it is usually represented by the trinity of Joyce, Proust and Kafka. He asserts that this is an inappropriate conjunction in that Joyce and Proust are the culmination of a long evolution while Kafka, and possibly Broch and Musil, is a new departure. Kafka's novelty is missed if we place him in the romantic tradition: 'that man is threatened by solitude, that solitude is purely negative, that the tragedy of the intellectual is that he has lost his roots among the people.' (op. cit. p.37). Kundera argues that Kafka's real significance is rather the reverse that community has become overwhelming to the extent that solitude is impossible. The crisis for the protagonists in Kafka's novels does not come from their personality jarring with social context but rather that the social context, our sense of community, is only tolerable when we renounce solitude (individuality) and totally succumb to the expectations of others: 'In Kafka, those who find their place in society do so by renouncing their solitude and, in the long run, their personalities.' (ibid). In this perspective the spectacular dramas of the culture of mass entertainment are both nostalgic imaginings of a communal world and attempts to express



new forms of conformity and social control.

In attempting to elucidate the inter-relationships between forms of dramatic representation and the sense of community in different cultures, I have been led to note a number of parallels between the theatreless drama of pre-modern culture and the de-theatred dramatisation of mass culture. Of course the central difference I have been trying to describe is that in the former a sense of community functioned as a ground for collective imagination, while in the latter the imagery of community is an aspiration - a continually re-asserted display of collective reassurance. There are, however, sufficient continuities in dramatic forms to tempt the unwary into a mythology of performance and representation. The significance of my distinction between the implications of spectacular drama in different cultures lies in the meaning of participation for audience and performers, in the relationships between image and reality. In a culture of mass entertainment however authoritative, dominant and insistent a spectacular image is it cannot entirely suppress the reflexivity inherent in the modernist consciousness: 'Today, evidently, we live in a stylistic melting pot, a world of transforming social, sexual and epistemological relationships, a world in which new stylistic negotiations have a significant social function. ...The foregrounding of style has led in discussion of art and writing to much talk of meta-art, para-criticism, sur-fiction. But the same time the emphasis on style has tended to acquire a certain character as irony.' (Bradbury quoted in Martin 1981 p.237). It is through the possession of an ironic consciousness that, ultimately, differentiates us from our predecessors' cultures. In its potential for fragmentation and alienation modernity may be condemned as a curse, but it is inescapably our future. As such must celebrate and exploit all our possibilities, must develop Berman's injunction that: 'the deepest modern seriousness must express itself through irony. ....to

show how, for all of us, modernism is realism.' (1983 p.14). If we are to take responsibility for the emergent culture the resources of spectacular drama should not be passively given over to illusions which act as forms of social control. They can dramatise a more spectacular reality.

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