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## Anarchist Strategy and Visual Rhetoric in Brazil, 1970: The Living Theatre as "The People in the Street"

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ANARCHIST STRATEGY AND VISUAL RHETORIC IN BRAZIL, 1970:

THE LIVING THEATRE AS “THE PEOPLE IN THE STREET”

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A Thesis

Presented to

The Graduate Faculty

Central Washington University

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In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

Theatre

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by

Chelsea Rose Roberts

June 2015

CENTRAL WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

Graduate Studies

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## ABSTRACT

ANARCHIST STRATEGY AND VISUAL RHETORIC IN BRAZIL, 1970:

THE LIVING THEATRE AS "THE PEOPLE IN THE STREET"

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Chelsea Rose Roberts

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The dominant narrative of the Living Theatre: an anarchist-pacifist, activist performance group, situates the company within a historical framework of the "New Left". Implications of this strategy are identified and critiqued. Both due to the simplification of historical time periods between the fields of theatre and politics (Postlewait's "periodization"), and because of the ways in which the "New Left" is identified as American, historicizing the Living Theatre as "in-line" with the New Left has resulted in the erasure of the Living Theatre's Anarchist and Pacifist politics. The visual implications of these findings are explored via the theatre's advertising materials for a 1971 lecture tour titled, "Theatre and the Revolution". The posters were meant to market revolutionary ideas and drew their vocabulary from imaging strategies on the more far-radical left, evoking Mao, Guevara, and Stalin. The strategy and visual-rhetoric of this campaign is compared across two advertising images.

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I am grateful to the subjects of my research, Ms. Judith Malina, Dr. Mark Hall Amitin, and Thomas Walker, for their patient and helpful answers to my questions, and their spirit of generosity. Images included in this work are reprinted with the expressed permission of Dr. Amitin.

I would like to thank the community of scholars and artists I connected with during this process, especially those I met at the Comparative Drama Conference in Baltimore and at ASTR 2014.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I INTRODUCTION .....	1
II LITERATURE REVIEW .....	3
III THE PEOPLE IN THE STREET: THE LIVING THEATRE IN BRAZIL.....	20
IV THE LIVING THEATRE'S PERFORMANCE PUBLICITY: VISUAL STRATEGY IN "THEATRE AND THE REVOLUTION" .....	57
V CONCLUSION.....	91
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	103

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure		Page
1	Press photo taken by Esko Murto, 1971.....	57
2	The official flyer for “Theatre and the Revolution” .....	63
3	Universal Movement Repertory Theatre catalog, 1972.....	71

## CHAPTER I:

### INTRODUCTION

Early political influences on the Living Theatre include the individualist-anarchist philosopher Emile Armand, Catholic Worker founder Dorothy Day, and the writer and therapist Paul Goodman. Judith Malina co-founded the theatre as a peace activist, first arrested in the late nineteen forties for refusing to participate in air raid drills. She and her theatre co-founding husband, abstract painter Julian Beck, were arrested again in 1963 during a controversial production of a show featuring drug use and interpersonal violence in the military (*The Brig*). Fleeing charges of “tax evasion,” they closed the theatre and left the United States to spend five years of voluntary exile in Europe. They continued to create theatre abroad, living in a collectivistic manner, and exploring anarchist ideas.

In 1968 The Living Theatre returned to the United States, now as a 40-person collective, and toured another controversial show. During the eight-month national tour of *Paradise Now!* the Living Theatre’s (LT) notoriety reached new heights. Negative implications of this were the on-going harassment by the police, beginning with the arrest of the company during their second or third performance of the tour in New Haven, Connecticut. More positively, the LT performed across the country, gave lectures to hundreds of college students, sold out venues, and in anticipation of the tour they were interviewed by major news outlets in New York City including NBC’s *Tonight Show*, Channel 5 News, WBAI, *Newsweek*, and *The Times*. Of course, the positive merits of appearing on television were debated by the company at that time.



Also during the 1968-1969 tour, the Living Theatre met with members of the Black Panther Party and Black activist groups. These meetings influenced the theatre's next steps. Upon ending the tour the large collective split into four cells, producing a manifesto stating that they would not perform for the privileged elite anymore. Judith Malina and Julian Beck returned to Europe to pursue overtly political aims.

Then, in 1970, the Becks traveled to Brazil with a small group and worked with an impoverished mining community. They created theatre performances and cooked large amounts of food to feed the community. After approximately six months in the community of Ouro Preto, the communal home was raided. Eventually the Becks were charged with sedition and possession of marijuana and deported back to the United States. The theatre's costly decision to work in Brazil was influenced by their anarchist politics and their regard for the Black Power movement, influenced by their regard for Jean Genet.

Some analyses of the Living Theatre's life-altering experience in Brazil links their political goals to the New Left, influenced by the Students for a Democratic Society, and the reformist aims of 1960s. However, assertions regarding the Living Theatre's identification with liberal politics lack in evidence. Specifically, in 1968 the Becks were, in their early forties, unimpressed with white American student activism. Judith Malina's record of Nixon's election displays her lack of allegiance, "No one cares very much. The general opinion is that one would be as bad as the other."

I was privileged to meet and interview Judith Malina before she passed away in 2015. Inspired by her inimitable spirit, the following pages tell a story imbued with my own curiosities, and anxieties surrounding the viability of Anarchist philosophy as well as other realities of capitalism such as audiences reception, and ticket sales.

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Commentary: This book (this writing of mine, *The Life of the Theatre*) is it a seduction to bourgeois values, this appeal to the elite (in the language of the educated elite)? Do we cut ourselves off from the people when we speak to each other in such coded symbols? Is it in effect reactionary and barren?

It is in finding the answer to these questions that my life rises and sinks.

-Julian Beck, *The Life of the Theatre*, 1970

#### **Introduction**

Autobiographical information on the Living Theatre is not very difficult to come by. I have benefitted greatly from the published work of Julian Beck (above) and Judith Malina's multiple diaries. Whether ordered off Amazon or dug out of a library, the theatre's self-reflections have provided me with an outpost during a sometimes harsh and incongruous slog through the academic literature. In these pages I will summarize (and poke at) the established body of knowledge regarding the Living Theatre, while also attempting to briefly contextualize the theoretical frameworks referenced in the ending discussion on publicity and visual rhetoric.

The Living Theatre is overwhelmingly described in academic scholarship as first "avant-garde" and later, "radical." Throughout the literature their early association with prominent Beat poets and artists transmutes into political activism throughout the sixties, and unfortunately culminates in a lack of scholarship bordering on relative obscurity throughout the 1970s-1990s. The largest chunk of written history

roots the Living Theatre in “The Sixties.” Notably, The Living Theatre was absent from the American theatre scene from 1964-1968 but as Karen Malpede Taylor wrote, “When they returned to the US in 1968, almost directly from the barricades of the general strike in France, they were the publicly acknowledged theatrical leaders of the movement that had grown up in their absence, out of the civil rights and peace protests they helped pioneer.”<sup>1</sup>

Because of the deep roots of Old Left anarchism and peace activism that Judith Malina participated in, it just seems incorrect to call the Living Theatre a “Theatre of the Sixties.” While they can’t very well be called a Theatre of the Late Nineteen Forties, their association with the Sixties seems to be much of what has damned them to historical irrelevance while creating an unnecessary divide between the “political” vs. “artistic” contributions of the company.

### **Political or Artistic? Or Both?**

For Karen Malpede Taylor the Living Theatre is always already political. She eschews the distinction between art and politics, and for her, the distinction is obviously significant. It seems as though the Living Theatre's loyalties were already up for debate when Taylor’s book *People's Theatre in Amerika* was published in 1972. She writes about the Beck's choices to protest the Vietnam War and to lead the General Strike for Peace in 1961 New York City as if refuting an existing assertion,

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<sup>1</sup> Karen Malpede Taylor, *People's Theatre in Amerika*, (New York: Dramatists Book Specialists/Publishers, 1972), 222

"They were never torn between a commitment to art or to politics. Their dilemma was always how to combine them both."<sup>2</sup>

Strong context and storytelling related to peace protests and anarchist meetings is absent from the otherwise very helpful *Beyond the Boundaries: American Alternative Theatre* (Theodore Shank). The chapter on the Living Theatre (LT) follows the narrative of poetic-to-political while providing a detailed version of many LT productions through 1978. Shank also provides a lengthy section on the Living Theatre's Brazil Period. Although these detailed readings contribute immeasurably to a history of the Living Theatre, the company continues to defy clean segmentation into historical periods related to art and politics. Shank highlights the issue of categorizing the company under umbrellas associated with other experimental performance groups of The Sixties.

In many of their productions there were elements from *Happenings*. Some of their work can be considered *Political Theatre* in that it was concerned with social and economic problems. Many of their later productions were *Street Theatre*, being performed out-of-doors, going to the audience rather than the audience coming to them. Some of the work in Brazil was *Guerrilla Theatre* (a term popularized by R.G. Davis of the San Francisco Mime Troupe) in that they arrived at a site unexpectedly, performed illegally, and could get away quickly . . .<sup>3</sup>

Shank spends less time trying to fit the Living Theatre into a set historical framework, he is more concerned with documentation. However, his account of their evolution echoes Malpede Taylor's points, even if Shank writes with less clarity on that particular point. Of the Living Theatre he writes, "Their theatre work and their political convictions were at first separate."<sup>8</sup> He then goes on in the same paragraph

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<sup>2</sup> Taylor, *People's Theatre in Amerika*, 241.

<sup>3</sup> Theodore Shank, *Beyond the Boundaries, American Alternative Theatre*, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002), 36.

to note that Julian Beck had dedicated himself to anarchism before the Living Theatre ever produced their first show. Additionally, Shank states, "From the beginning the Living Theatre have adhered to an anarchist objective and have practiced their message as much as they have preached it."<sup>9</sup> This strange chronological debate over political ideals of the company continues to haunt theatre historians. It is as though we are afraid to ask, "When did they become anarchists?" But, historians know that answer. So, perhaps it is that we are afraid to look long and hard at what anarchism bears out in terms of achievement and legacy.

In a striking work that avoids anarchism less than most, John Harding and Cindy Rosenthal's *Restaging the Sixties* sheds light on the legacies of radical and collective theatres beginning (I like to think in deference) with three essays on the Living Theatre. First, a historical overview, second a "critical essay" and third, a "legacy essay". The historical overview begins in the founding year of the company, 1947, and provides descriptions of the Living Theatre's early works through 1975. It contributes that the years from 1975-1984 were spent touring theatres in Europe. A few productions from 1984-2006 are named, however they are not described in as much detail as earlier and 'more defining' works. Although the historical overview alludes to the Living Theatre's touring show at the time of publication, "A Day in the Life of the City" (2006), no critical attention is given to it, nor to any piece staged after 1975.

The second article is called "Critical Essay". Harding and Rosenthal,

The critical essays build upon the historical overviews by providing readers with a theoretical framework with which to understand the dynamics and significance of a given collective. They posit, specify, and define a critical discourse that they argue is crucial to conceptualizing the significance and (and potentially the problems) of a given collective. Although the contributors pursue this goal with some variation, each essay grounds its discussion and focus on the major individual productions of a given collective. This grounding ensures continuity between the historical overview as well.<sup>4</sup>

The Critical Essay is titled, "Only Connect: The Living Theatre and Its Audiences." In this essay Erika Munk provides detailed readings for the company through the 1970s but she ends, in part, by saying, "Those productions I saw in the eighties and nineties failed to find an American audience, because that audience didn't exist-it had become primarily a theater of, and for, almost- vanished ideas and people." <sup>5</sup>

The productions she saw in the 1980s and 1990s are not named or described. Although Munk's article is short, I analyze it significantly in the first chapter of my thesis. Her authority within the community of theatre scholars is something that I respect and so it seems almost odd to take a whole thesis chapter's worth of issue with such a short article. However, because I believe her article may be part of a growing body of work positioning the Living Theatre as understood through the aims of the New Left, conflating them messily (which is less important) and while nearly erasing their interrogations into Anarchism, I find myself delving in.

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<sup>4</sup> *Restaging the Sixties: Radical Theatres and their Legacies*. ed. Harding and Rosenthal (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008), 4.

<sup>5</sup> Munk, "Only Connect", 53.

The first two Living Theatre essays in *Restaging the Sixties* emphasize the theatre's popularity from the late 1950s-1970s and the way that they, "address some of the most important contemporary social and cultural movements in the United States." Clearly, a group which is now centering 1960s collective theatre scholarship deserves a legacy essay befitting of an Anarchist prince. Alisa Solomon's article transcends many established narratives related to the Living Theatre and fills in a transnational view of the Living Theatre's audiences and by extension a more global perspective on Anarchism. "Four Scenes of Theatrical Anarcho-Pacifism: A Living Legacy" compares audience reception to the LT production *Utopia* in New York City and Italy. It goes on to compare audience participation in a workshop of *Not in My Name* conducted both in New York City and Lebanon (both?) in the year 2000. This is one of very few articles that gives critical attention to post-1980 living Theatre productions. Even so, the legacy of theatre is contested, and Solomon's findings conclude with a discussion of student debate related to the performances. She beautifully paints a picture of the Living Theatre's legacy as a conflict about meaning readers are invited to commune with, just before it drives over the horizon in a van.

If *Restaging the Sixties* is an anthology which attempts to uncover the legacy of collective theatre groups, its findings related to the Living Theatre are inconclusive. But this is not the fault of the contributors or editors, as this is new territory altogether. In describing the lack of rigorous, theoretical inquiry into collective theatre groups Harding and Rosenthal state,

It is the theoretically informed exploration of this deceptively simple question of legacy that ultimately distinguishes *Restaging the Sixties* from *The New Radical Theatre Notebook* and *Beyond the Boundaries* and from subsequent scholarship as well. While Sainer provides us with an important collection of historical documents, and while Shank documents the performance history of major American collective theaters, we have sought to provide reader with a complex, historiographical inquiry into the work of those collective theaters. We commissioned essays that would take critical stock not merely of the history of American collective theaters but of the models one uses to construct those histories, to assess their significance, and to weigh their impact on how experimental political theater is understood today.<sup>6</sup>

Even while it squarely positions the Living Theatre in “The Sixties” by virtue of its title, thus relegating a working company to the past, *Restaging* has remained good company in parsing the ‘origin-story’ debate surrounding the Living Theatre’s political and artistic aims.

### **The Brazil Period**

For theatre and performance scholars the Living Theatre’s “Brazil Period” (1970-1971) is regarded as an odd turning point for the company, historicized as anything from an act of solidarity, to an act of cultural imperialism. Cindy Rosenthal's essay, “The Living Theatre's Arrested Development in Brazil: an Intersection of Activist Performances,” is to my knowledge the only piece of scholarship that deals exclusively with The Living Theatre in Brazil. She describes, “street theatre that was based on movement, gesture, and ritual -and less on text”<sup>7</sup> as a performance style strategically employed used to avoid censorship from the Brazilian authorities. Reflecting on the Living Theatre’s methods she states,

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<sup>6</sup> Harding and Rosenthal, *Restaging the Sixties*, 5.

<sup>7</sup> Rosenthal, “The Living Theatre's Arrested Development”, 65.



Self-censorship became an increasingly common-but never any less difficult -practice for the LT. Because of the torture scene, the Living Theatre was censored and arrested when they performed *Seven Meditations* in Italy years later. As time went on, the company (and especially Malina and Beck, as they grew older) often had to make decisions to avoid arrest, which involved changing the staging or language in their works-softening or cutting sections-in order to satisfy local authorities.<sup>8</sup>

Rosenthal's account of the Living Theatre in Brazil refreshingly takes into consideration the Living Theatre's relationship to and engagement with the prison system, including the public nature of their arrests, prior to Brazil. Indeed the commitment of the Living Theatre to go to jail for their principles was part of the perceived authenticity of the company's performances. Theodore Shank describes the effect of the Living Theatre's unwavering politics on their audiences,

At all times there were those who ridiculed the Living Theatre- even other revolutionaries who were prepared to exchange one violent oppressive system for another. For some others, Beck and Malina were martyrs and attending a performance was akin to a religious experience. The Living Theatre lifted a responsibility from their shoulders by doing on their behalf what they lacked the commitment to do themselves.<sup>9</sup>

In the wake of the Living Theatre's highly publicized arrests and the torture of their fellow company members in Brazil, Rosenthal's essay describes how they retooled their process, yet again. Perhaps it was this retooling, the act of self-censorship in order to survive, which has depressed critics and scholars to the point of avoidance. Rosenthal's article gets closer to understanding the curtailed legacy of the Living Theatre, post-Brazil. However, she substitutes the word Anarchist for the word Activist. Given her close relationship to Judith Malina and her undoubtedly

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid. 73.

<sup>9</sup> Shank, *Beyond the Boundaries*, 37

deep understanding of the Living Theatre's work, I take issue with this oversight.

Gladly, it has provided me a place to fill in my own understanding.

While making work with and for "the man on the street" is what the Theatre achieved in Brazil, it was traumatically cut short. Upon returning to the United States in 1972 their funding model changed. By the 1980s they were playing to paying theatre-going audiences again in order to survive. Eventually, their work can be said to comprise both kinds of performances: sometimes for paying audiences, sometimes not. Sometimes selling tickets, and sometimes not. Their commitment to keep playing as Anarchists surviving under capitalism itself comprises a performance of the very raw compromise of their lives. This has been more difficult to write about. Most Living Theatre scholarship does not engage with performances after the 1970s. If it does, like the 1984 run of four plays in New York (including a remounted production of *Antigone*) it makes general pronouncements such as, "critically unsuccessful".<sup>10</sup>

And while anarchist politics will prove infinitely helpful in decoding the Living Theatre's aims and outcomes as artists, Harding's ideas on avant-garde failure can be directly applied to the Living Theatre's legacy problem, which begins after Brazil. James Harding states, "the very notion of the death of the avant-garde is based largely upon a problematic glorification of success over experimentation". He states that the existence of the true avant-garde artist is in the experimental process, not in whether or not a project is 'successful'. Under this logic, what comprises the Living Theatre's critical success or failure becomes less important than their

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<sup>10</sup> Rosenthal, *Restaging the Sixties*, 30

continued and sometimes documented experimentation throughout the 1970s, 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s. "Most importantly, the avant-gardes are constituted not in the success or the failures -not in the rise or the decline, but in the experimental gestures leading potentially to either outcome."<sup>11</sup>

### **"The People" in "The Street"**

In addition to utilizing the organizing concepts of 'avant-garde' or 'Theatres of the Sixties' - The term "People's Theatre" has also been applied to describe the Living Theatre's style. While Karen Malpede Taylor includes an overall favorable analysis of the LT in her book about *People's Theatre in Amerika*, Mark Weinberg's book, *Challenging the Hierarchy: Collective Theatre in the United States* disparages the Living Theatre. In defining people's theatre he links it to collective creation saying, "The structure that has come to be most representative of the ultimate goals of the people's theatre, and that has produced some of its most exciting work, is *collective creation*...the creation of a production by a group that shares power and responsibility as fully as possible."<sup>12</sup> The Living Theatre obviously participated in, and may have even coined the term "collective creation."<sup>13</sup> However, Weinberg's analysis focuses only on the Living Theatre's failure to achieve its political goals, ,

It is worth noting that in the Living Theatre's inaccessible political analysis, and in its desire to obliterate the distinction between performer and audience, were contained self-contradictions that were really the seeds of its own failure. Ultimately, the Living Theatre seems to have

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<sup>11</sup> James Harding, *The Ghosts of the Avant-Garde(s): Exorcising Experimental Theater and Performance*. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2013), 25.

<sup>12</sup> Mark S. Weinberg, *Challenging the Hierarchy: Collective Theatre in the United States*, (London: Greenwood Press, 1992), 5.

<sup>13</sup> Rosenthal, "The Living Theatre's Arrested Development", 29. "From 1964 to 1968 the Living Theatre toured Europe and evolved a working process titled "collective creation," shifting the creative and authoritative power away from directors Beck and Malina, as the company sought a new level of creative equity and collaboration."

been on the furthest fringe: influential in exploring limits, in training performers who later worked in other theatres, and in shocking audiences, but providing little lasting contribution to politics or performance in the way it intended.<sup>14</sup>

Weinberg states that The Open Theatre, founded by former Living Theatre member Joseph Chaikin, was the most influential collective theatre. The Open theatre is sometimes described as being concerned with actor training methods more than politics. In Weinberg's analysis, and elsewhere, the distinction between collective and 'people's' theatre can get blurry. The Living Theatre is not usually lumped in with theatres of "The People," especially when compared with The San Francisco Mime Troupe or the Bread and Puppet Theatre. Both of these groups gave free performances in parks during the 1960s and performed collective actions such as eating bread with their audiences.<sup>15</sup> The Living Theatre did not start working with American audiences in the same ways until the 1970s, but they created productions collectively as early as the mid-1960s while living in Europe. Most notably, *Paradise Now!* was a work of collective creation. However, People's theatre often implies free performances centered on issues of social justice. The Living Theatre began exploring this more after 1968 when they work to move from the theatre and into "The Street."

From his background in American Studies Martin Bradford describes the Living Theatre as one of many movements which utilized the public space of "The Street" in order to create performances of resistance during the 1960s. His book historicizes the Living Theatre alongside the Freedom Singers of the Civil Rights

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<sup>14</sup> Weinberg, *Challenging the Hierarchy*, 51.

<sup>15</sup> Peter Schumann, "About Bread and Puppet", *Bread and Puppet Theatre*, <http://breadandpuppet.org/about-bread-and-puppet>

Movement, the Diggers, and the Guerrilla Action Group by saying, "These groups reflected a broad set of political influences, which resulted in diverse connections to larger cultural and protest movements."<sup>16</sup>

In Bradford's history the Living Theatre's turn towards street performance at the end of the 1960s is described as the result of a change in their artistic content, choosing to address more "overt" political themes, "The Living Theatre's work has always articulated general themes of pacifism and nonviolence... Prior to addressing politics overtly, however, the Living Theatre spent its early career struggling to revitalize the form of theatrical events"<sup>17</sup> Bradford is most likely drawing on existing theatre scholarship that places the Living Theatre as apolitical artists during their inception, who later become 'overtly' political along with the rest of the New Left during the 1960s.

Bradford describes the Living Theatre's relationship to the New Left,

Infusing theater with serious political thought constitutes the Living Theatre's most significant achievement ... By the late sixties, the Living Theatre's notion of politics had expanded from its original emphasis on anarchism and pacifism to include matters previously regarded as lifestyle choices, such as diet, sexuality, and drug use. The Living Theatre shared this expansive conception of politics with the New Left, the counterculture, and the women's liberation movement.<sup>18</sup>

However, the Anarchist politics of Emile Armand, whose essay on individualist-anarchism profoundly influenced a teenaged Judith Malina, did include precisely these lifestyle choices (with an emphasis on polyamory and free love). I argue that the Living Theatre's politics did not enlarge and expand as liberal politics did

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<sup>16</sup> Martin Bradford, *The Theatre is in the Street: Politics and Performance in Sixties America*, (Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2004), 7.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid. 51

<sup>18</sup> Ibid. 52

throughout the 1960s. Rather (and slightly simplified for the sake of clarity), as deeply-rooted anarchists Judith Malina and Julian Beck ascribed to revolutionary principles throughout their lifetimes, and dominant modes of political expression in American ebbed and flowed. That is not to say that there is no cross-over between the concepts of 'sexual freedom' and 'women's liberation,' but it would be a mistake to conflate the two and assume they call for the same reorganization of the present society.

It is because I am in agreement with Bradford that, "cultural groups' own understandings of their political purposes furnish the most appropriate starting point for a discussion of their political content"<sup>19</sup> that I am surprised he does not mention any of the political content of Anarchism. A place to start could have been the Italian philosophy of *Autonomia*, which the Becks were exposed to in Italy, and Julian references the ideas heavily in his memoir. Autonomism, or the call for autonomous cells as the basic organizing point of society, arguably stems from a different genealogy (even a genealogy of dissidence) than the New Left in America.<sup>20</sup> Finally, John Tytell's biography of the Living Theatre, as well as close-reading the Becks' memoirs, has provided essential and overlooked facts related to the Living Theatre's politics.

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<sup>19</sup> Bradford, *The Theatre is in the Street*, 16.

<sup>20</sup> Patrick Cuninghame, "Autonomism as a Global Social Movement", *Working USA The Journal of Labor and Society*, Vol. 13, December 2010, 454. Cuninghame gives an outline of the history of Autonomism (or *Autonomia*), as developing from neo-Marxism, citing specifically Italian worker's concerns. "The late 1950s witnessed the emergence of a new type of worker: internal migrants from southern Italy, of peasant origin, outside the socialist tradition of the skilled industrial workers of the north, who arrived as anti-communist strikebreakers but quickly became the protagonists of revolt against neofascist and corporative trade unions."

## Visual Rhetoric and Periodization

The last chapter of this thesis draws on original interviews and generous correspondence with Dr. Mark Hall Amitin, manager of the Living Theatre's 1968 American tour, and close friend of the Becks since then. Much of what remains of the Living Theatre's history is ephemera: ticket stubs, program notes, and show posters. As an artist, the posters drew me in immediately. By the end of my research I received gifts of one or two. They hang in my home to remind me, not of a show, but of the experience of connecting with Judith Malina, Mark Amitin, and Tom Walker. The show flyer is a two-dimensional item that will last a long time, and it is charged with the promise and memory of an evening's experience that will never be recreated. Rightly, I have devoted the last chapter to the Living Theatre's posters from their 1971 lecture tour, "Theatre and the Revolution," a fundraising effort following the arrests and deportations from Brazil.

Chapter Three also looks at the ways theatrical flyers may be read by audiences, taking into account their various visual vocabularies. For example, after Brazil, Beck and Malina toured as "directors of the Living Theater", and are pictured in advertising in ways that highlight their individual status as leaders. This contrasts with the rhetoric of Beck and Malina as standing with the people, which had been their goal in Brazil. To the casual observer these images evoke the bold outlines of Che Guevara, or Mao. To the Living Theatre follower, they may represent a break with past publicity, or a reliance on celebrity.

Marvin Carlson has written about applying reader-response theory (Eco, Bennet, Fish, Jauss), to the materials of theatre publicity which he refers to as foundational: "those elements of the event structure aside from text and performance."

He writes,

The neglect so far of such matter (marketing materials) by theatre semioticians interested in reading formations is perhaps even more surprising than their neglect by theatre historians, since message-bearing constructs of this sort constitute for most audiences the most obvious first exposure to the possible world of the performance they are going to see. Moreover, these elements are consciously produced by the institution which also produces the performance as devices for stimulating and channeling the desires and the interpretive strategies of the spectator.<sup>21</sup>

The visual rhetoric of the Living Theatre's publicity is one facet of a much larger project which could involve concentrated attention to stage pictures, the Living Theatre's personal aesthetics, and even an inquiry into Julian Beck's instruction during press photos, "Don't smile, look serious."<sup>22</sup> Here, I read a few images of the Living Theatre for what Kevin DeLuca calls, "image politics." Additionally I draw on the work of Michael Casey, whose book, *Che's Legacy: The Afterlife of an Image*, provides a brilliant approach for historicizing the production, modification, reception, and finally the legacy of a famous revolutionary martyr through an iconic image. Casey's work guided my own inquiry into theatrical advertisements, in part because I found little precedent to work from in theatre scholarship.<sup>23</sup>

Images also help illuminate the differences in the Living Theatre's anarchist goals, and their subsequent relegation to New Left ideology. Thomas Postlewait's observations on how we talk about the theatrical past in styles has been helpful when

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<sup>21</sup> Marvin Carlson, "Theatre Audiences and the Reading of Performance", *Interpreting the Theatrical Past: Essays in the Historiography of Performance*, ed. McConachie, Bruce and Thomas Postlewait. (Iowa City, University of Iowa Press): 90.

<sup>22</sup> Mark Hall Amitin, in conversation with the author, November 19th, 2014.

<sup>23</sup> One exception to this: Hanno H.J. Ehse, "Representing Macbeth: A Case Study in Visual Rhetoric", *Design Issues* 1, no. 1 (1984)



applied to supposed differences between avant-garde and radical, and the period of time that is implied by that distinction, "Underlying all of these concerns about the nature of period styles, I think, an even more basic problem. *Where in fact style is located.* " Postlewait gives theatre historians a variety of places to look for period style,

(1) in the object itself (as form or act), (2) in the artist's intentions, (3) in the perceiver's eye and interpretative strategies, (4) in the audience's attitudes, assumptions, and values, (5) in the era's economic and political practices, (6) in the era's values, attitudes, and general mentality (if this can be defined singularly), (7) in the available expressive codes of the time that shape (limit, determine) how the style is both realized and described, or, (8) in the historian's own points of view, that is, the available discourses and discursive formations of subsequent times that reshape, in Robert Weimann's words, "past meanings into present significance" <sup>24</sup>

For the Living Theatre, the artist's intention (2) has been neglected in scholarship, in spite of available memoirs. Furthermore, describing the Living Theatre as 'a theatre of the Sixties' has an over-simplifying effect on the historical contribution and the legacy of the theatre. Postlewait understands that the way historians create "time periods," or choose to situate people and events into those time periods, impacts our understanding of current reality. He states,

The concept of periodization, in its normative if somewhat misleading usage, delineates one aspect of history, the condition of stability (or identity), in relation to another aspect, the process of change (or difference). These two aspects of human events, though dynamically interrelated and mutually defining, are separated in historical study for descriptive and analytical purposes. The continuous flow of time is organized into heuristic categories, episodes of our creation. As such, periods are interpretative ideas of order that regulate meaning.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Thomas Postlewait, "The Criteria for Periodization in Theatre History" *Theatre Journal*, 40. No. 3 (Oct. 1988) 316.

In reading the Living Theatre's intentions through diaries and interviews, and asserting their continued Anarchist ideals, I hope to pull the theatre somewhat out of the Sixties. Some crossover with New Left Politics occurs (Dvignaud's assertion, "Many aesthetic attitudes can exist together in the same period."<sup>26</sup>), but we lose a present that could be even hopeful when we forget or dismiss the Anarchism that inspired the Living Theatre.

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid. 310

CHAPTER II

THE PEOPLE IN THE STREET:

THE LIVING THEATRE IN BRAZIL

Hope exists only in the imagination.  
 We cannot survive without hope therefore we cannot survive without the  
 imagination.  
 This has to do with the work of unleashing the imagination of the people.

-Julian Beck, Rio de Janeiro. September 13, 1970

### **Introduction**

In 1970 the Living Theatre went to Brazil in search of an economic class of people who, unlike the bourgeoisie, were endowed with the power to sustain a revolution. Following anarchist thinkers such as Mikhail Bakunin and Peter Kropotkin, and undoubtedly influenced by the Black Panther Party's reconceptualization of Marx's "Lumpenproletariat", the Living Theatre's trip to Brazil was less of a cultural exchange, and more of an embedment. Once in a community, they worked as foreign operatives creating their manual for revolution (*The Legacy of Cain Cycle Plays*) by working with and studying "the people" in the street.

In anticipation of the Becks' arrival their friend and presumed sponsor to the country, Brazilian theatre artist Ze Ceslo, described the Brazilian political situation to them through letters. He wanted to warn the Becks about the brutal dictatorship they would encounter. But the Living Theatre's founders remained undaunted. To them,

"The repression (in Brazil), if less lethal, seemed as endemic as in France".<sup>27</sup> As anarchists, their opinions were consistently negative regarding governments of both "First" and "Third" World countries.

In Erika Munk's critical essay on the Living Theatre, "Only Connect",<sup>28</sup> she historicizes the theatre's actions, goals, and manifestos from 1968-1971 through a lens of New Left politics, drawing parallels between the Living Theatre and the Students for a Democratic Society. Her article engages with Judith Malina's early diaries (1947-1957), and complements an existing historiography of the Living Theatre as an avant-garde-turned-hippie, sixties political group, which all but dropped off the world stage after early 1970s.

"Only Connect" begins at the Living Theatre's inception in 1948, and provides a detailed reading of their time leading up to Brazil. The Brazil Period (1970-1971) is discussed in a few paragraphs, and Munk's overall analysis concludes with the assertion that by the 1980s and 1990s, the Living Theatre, "had become primarily a theater of, and for, almost-vanished ideas and people."<sup>29</sup> Like much scholarship on the Living Theatre, her article tells a story of vanishing revolutionaries. And as the Living Theatre becomes irrelevant, so do the politics that inspired them. While I cannot stop the flow of time, in this article I will demonstrate that the New Left is an insufficient historical framework within which to explicate the Living theatre's motivations in Brazil. I will demonstrate that

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<sup>27</sup> Tytell, *The Living Theatre*, 276.

<sup>28</sup> Erika Munk, "Only Connect: The Living Theatre and Their Audiences," in *Restaging the Sixties: Radical Theatres and their Legacies*. ed. Harding and Rosenthal (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008)

<sup>29</sup> Ibid. 53.

engagement with the theatre's (extremely difficult) lifetime commitment to Anarchist philosophy is requisite for writing and understanding their history, especially the Brazil Period.

### **The Students Didn't Have It**

In 1968 the Living Theatre returned from 5 years of voluntary exile in Europe after being evicted from their theatre in New York City on charges of tax evasion. Their 7-month homecoming tour, *Paradise Now!*, was widely publicized, and hotly anticipated by the theatrical community. But the Living Theatre approached the United States with trepidation over censorship and repression, arriving just after the violence of the Democratic National Convention in Chicago<sup>30</sup>. Shortly after landing the late Jenny Hecht spoke grave omens to the company saying, "We are in danger of falling under the power of a great king."<sup>15</sup> Judith Malina's published diary from the tour titled, *The Enormous Despair* chronicles the heavy police presence that followed the company throughout their American tour including an arrest in New Haven, followed by probation. *Paradise Now!* played mostly to college students. Reception was mixed throughout the country, but anxiety and paranoia over the political situation, including police brutality and racial tensions, could be felt everywhere.

In Europe the Becks had performed with students, some of whom even occupied and rioted during *Paradise Now!* when it played at the Festival D'Avignon in France (summer 1968). Referring to that performance in Paris, Erika Munk writes, "they (Becks) clearly accepted the then-fashionable and intellectually respectable

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<sup>30</sup> Judith Malina, *The Enormous Despair* (New York: Random House, 1972), 4

notion of students as the new revolutionary class"<sup>31</sup> This may have been true in Europe, but the Living Theatre's attitudes towards students changed while heading into their American tour. Judith Malina recorded her attitude toward American students that she encountered while sailing from Italy to New York City to begin the tour. She wrote,

There is a "Forum" in the big salon: they are discussing "Anti-Americanism: Is it dead and buried?" The listeners and participants speak in cool college-bred style-noncommittal and neutral. Surely they will decide that anti-Americanism is not dead, but that it is a problem that must be combatted. . . I listen to the bland remarks of the young Americans. The strong voices of the *Enrages* ring in my ears. Their passion and their conviction, their strong feelings and their potency. These American college students are so pale. They are so white.<sup>32</sup>

During the tour Malina wrote more than once of the frustration she felt at the American students' lack of engagement with her professed principles: anarchism and pacifism.<sup>33</sup>

Before we play *Paradise* we ask to talk to the SDS students to find out where it's at. There are thirty of them in this school of thousands. They are unsure of themselves. Their aim is to get rid of the ROTC training on the campus; they make mockery of ROTC marching...One other SDS student is more in touch. He belongs to the War Resisters League and has attended some pacifist conferences, but he gets hardly any support here.<sup>34</sup>

Another entry from Malina regarding the Students for a Democratic Society at Yale ends with her description of their activities, "Protest the draft and the

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid. 45

<sup>32</sup> Malina, *Enormous Despair*, 6. Malina goes on to describe various encounters and conversations with the students on the ship, and eventually she notes that the forums turn towards discussions of anarchy. This initially frustrated her, as passengers tried to plan out a city-supply route into the late hours of the night, "as though a precise economic production plan could be discussed in abstract here in mid-Atlantic, without reference to a time, a place, a city, a truck, and an apple orchard". She states, "they are asking to be convinced" (12), and notes that The Living theatre has, in her opinion, effected these changes in conversation on the ship.

<sup>33</sup> Malina, *Enormous Despair*, 10, 35, 107.

<sup>34</sup> Malina, *Enormous Despair*, 122.

Vietnamese war. Support the action of the Columbia students. They know it isn't enough, but the ivy's so thick you can't get through it."<sup>35</sup>

During their second stop of the tour in New Haven a college-aged Tom Walker carried atop his shoulders none other than Judith Malina. The two paraded out of the theatre and into the street at the end of a performance of *Paradise Now!*, with the rest of the theatre audience. Judith was then arrested with her husband, and the entire experience proved life-changing for Walker. Two years later he joined the company in Brazil, and has been with them ever since. He was kind enough to sit for multiple interviews during my research. When asked about the Living Theatre's motives after 1968 he told me,

After 1968 and the depression that followed, because you know, everything didn't happen as people might have hoped, there was a lot of depression in the movement, and a lot of people left and went into the countryside, or gave up, or went into terrorism of some sort, and Judith and Julian and the Living Theatre, one of our main jobs was to give people hope, to be positive, anarchism and pacifism can happen together, hand in hand. And so a lot of what we were doing was trying to keep hope alive."<sup>36</sup>

Students associated with "The Movement" proved integral to the Living Theatre's thoughts on Americans politics throughout the tour, (and the ticket revenues or college fees that were paid out sustained the company), but the mainstream civil disobedience of the student movement was not of special interest to the Living Theatre. In 1968, Judith Malina and Julian Beck were 42 and 43, respectively. Judith was caring for her newly-born child Isha, throughout the tour. The Beck's elder son Garrick was 18, and a student at Reed College in Portland,

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid. 35

<sup>36</sup> Tom Walker, interviewed by the author, November 17, 2014.



Oregon. The founders of the Living Theatre were a generation removed from the student protests taking place throughout the year.

One of the big disappointments for “The Movement” that year was the election of Richard Nixon to the Presidency on his promise to restore ‘law and order.’ This seemed to signal the end of the democratic reforms which had catalyzed the youth movement. But Judith Malina documented the Living Theatre’s response to Nixon’s election with disinterest. On November 5, 1968 she wrote,

“Not until early in the morning do they decide that Nixon is to be the president. No one cares very much. The general opinion is that one would be as bad as the other. Yet the vote is heavy. No demonstrations disrupt the electoral process, though many individuals made actions of dissent at certain polling places. In *Paradise*, which takes place in the Now, the election is not even mentioned.”<sup>37</sup>

The Living Theatre did not see American students, even those involved in the American Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), as a revolutionary class. Although Erika Munk recognizes that the Living Theatre missed out on nearly all the culturally formative events of the 1960s (Kennedy's assassination, Freedom Summer, mass-mobilization against Vietnam<sup>38</sup>) she continues to draw parallels between the New Left and the Living Theatre, at one point likening SDS’s “Port Huron Statement,” to the political principles of anarchism,

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<sup>37</sup> Malina, *The Enormous Despair*, 116.

<sup>38</sup> She even begins a section of “Only Connect” with, “A paradox. Almost everything that “typifies” the Living as the theater of the American 1960s youth movement developed in European exile.”

The square, straight, sociologically minded leaders of Students for a Democratic Society didn't resemble the Becks in any way, but the SDS's Port Huron statement, the founding text of the New Left, reflects the same universe of critique and dismay from which *The Brig* and *The Connection* came... The concept of participatory democracy that SDS proposed as an alternative to both capitalist democracy and authoritarian socialism had much in common with the self-governing anti-hierarchy proposed by anarchism.<sup>21</sup>

While the "universe of critique and dismay" from which the Living Theatre and the SDS operated may be the same (it is a large universe), the strategies were fundamentally different. It was the strategy, not just the critique, which won organizers for participatory democracy as advocated by SDS, or defectors to anarcho-pacifism as advocated by the Living Theatre.

Van Gosse's *Rethinking The New Left*, describes this important division between New Left and "far left," during the 1960s,

The most famous lines [of the Port Huron Statement] were the assertion that "we seek the establishment of a democracy of individual participation"... For other New Leftists who were further to the left, *The Port Huron Statement* was vague, not especially radical, and lacked clarity about white supremacy and America's informal imperialism. Much of it repeated Socialist Party positions, such as the need to "realign" the Democratic Party by getting rid of the Southern segregationists, and it avoided controversial issues like the Cuban Revolution.<sup>39</sup>

Munk's reference to *The Port Huron Statement* does not include the most famous lines about the establishment of a democracy, and for the Living Theatre an organization seeking "realignment" (of any kind) would have reeked of reformism.

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<sup>39</sup> Van Gosse, *Rethinking the New Left: An Interpretive History* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005), 69. Van Gosse discusses the significance of racial issues to movements more radical than SDS, citing Freedom Summer as a major example of the divide, "The events of 1964 illustrate the problem of viewing the New Left through SDS's history, as many scholars have done."

Additionally, the Cuban revolution was of serious interest to Julian Beck, as well as the Chinese Cultural Revolution.<sup>40</sup> Mao and Guevara are referenced in Beck's work repeatedly, but the Students for a Democratic Society are not mentioned in his work at all. Munk goes on to draw parallels between the quickly-dissolving SDS and the Living Theatre during its American tour from 1968-1969. She discusses how both organizations suffered from a lack of durability, but this is untrue for the Living Theatre which continues to perform to this day.

However, I take no issue with Munk's statement that *Paradise Now!* reflected company members frustration and dismay with American students. She says, "the theatre felt disconnected from the people whom they most deeply wanted to affect."<sup>41</sup> For the Living Theatre, *Paradise* was a turning point: they realized that the middle class, and students particularly, were the wrong class, the wrong "people" to inspire towards revolution. Not only were the audiences in some places "already radicalized"<sup>42</sup>, but according to the anarchist theories the Becks were working with, the middle-class would not be the ones to foment revolution, nor would they attain a consciousness required to maintain an anarcho-pacifist society, should revolution occur.

There is no doubt that the Living Theatre and the New Left are neighbors, and it cannot be denied that there is overlap between the concepts of participatory democracy and Anarchism. Munk states that the issues raised by *The Port Huron Statement* are "unnerving" to read today. The *PHS* critiqued the war effort and the

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<sup>40</sup> Beck, *Life of the Theatre*, 103, 43 (Judith's letter to Carl Einhorn), 49

<sup>41</sup> Munk, "Connect", 49.

<sup>42</sup> Rosenthal, "Arrested Development", 61.

military industrial complex, and asserted that the contempt of the rest of the world for the United States was very real, not just communist propaganda. It has these critiques of the existing society in common with anarchist philosophy. But historicizing the Living Theatre through a lens of student liberalism leaves out so much of the artists own aspirations and preemptively erases a discussion of their efficacy as radical agents of change. The Living Theatre's own ambivalence towards SDS, as well as their age gap, and their professed anarchist politics, all lead me to posit that Bakunin's and Kropotkin's theories provide a better starting point for contextualizing the Living Theatre's work from 1968-1971.

### **The Struggle for Pre-Revolutionary Consciousness**

One of the major misconceptions about The Living Theatre was that it's goal was to ignite a revolution inside the theatre, and then lead it into the street. This assumption explains why the theatre was not allowed to parade the ending scene of *Paradise Now!* into the streets in America, or Europe,<sup>43</sup> for fear of inciting a riot. But a closer look at Julian Beck and Judith Malina's memoirs show that their main goal was actually not to incite a revolution, but to inspire people to *think*, to imagine the kind of world they wanted to live in. In pursuit of this goal, they struggled to bring their audiences to 'pre-revolutionary consciousness.' An audience member's ability to imagine the post-revolutionary world of their dreams was considered to be

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<sup>43</sup> Once in Germany Julian was held on a charge of "defaming the state" after a performance (Tom Walker, author's interview November 17, 2014). But in American they were jailed for public indecency after performing *Paradise Now!* in 1968 in New Haven, CT. "The local newspapers are full of weird stories about nude men chasing nude women out of the theatre." Judith Malina, *The Enormous Despair*, 47.

a precondition for a revolution's occurrence, and its continuation. Heightened consciousness, spurred by activating the imagination, was the goal of *Paradise Now!*

Inspiring the masses is a revolutionary tactic, championed by both Petr Kropotkin and Mikhail Bakunin, two theorists with whom the Living Theatre were intimately familiar. It is their 19<sup>th</sup> century theories of autonomism, collectivism, and pre-revolutionary consciousness that, when applied to the Living Theatre's work, illuminate what may otherwise be dismissed as quirks, or more tragically- poor artistic direction on the part of the theatre.

Widely considered to be the founder of collective anarchism, Russian theorist Mikhail Bakunin wrote of the Russian people in 1873, "What then prevents them from making a successful revolution? It is the absence of a conscious common ideal capable of inspiring a genuine popular revolution".<sup>44</sup> For Bakunin, revolutionary theories were grounded in the lived experience of countless insurrections under the Tsar. Revolutionary action was demonstrated over and over again in what he referred to as, "continuous peasant outbreaks". Like the Living Theatre, Bakunin's work did not aim to incite revolution. He theorized that 'pre-revolutionary conditions' must be met in order for a revolution to be sustained and successful. One of his conditions was the education of the masses, another was the creation of networks of individuals which would make the rural Russian peasantry unified. Bakunin called the isolation of rural Russians "the principal evil"<sup>45</sup> which made revolution impossible. He

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<sup>44</sup> Bakunin, *Bakunin on Anarchy*, 346.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid. 349

stressed an individual's ability to connect. Unifying rural individuals, specifically factory workers and peasants, had to be done on a case-by-case basis. And, the goals of the revolution had to be shared by all people in order for anarchy to be sustained.<sup>46</sup>

Additionally, Bakunin described representative democracy as a scourge which "harmonizes marvelously with the capitalist economic system..." He called for nothing less than a truly popular revolution, whereby nations would disappear and united coalitions of federations based on different types of production ("factory, crafts, and agricultural sections")<sup>47</sup> would emerge.

Inspired by the central tenants of collective anarchism, Julian Beck described *Paradise* as a direct action. He said that if the play succeeded it would inspire collective activities such as grassroots organizing, non-profits, and distributors, "geared for revolutionary services, to hasten the steps for the non-violent revolution". Referencing Julian's aspiration, Erika Munk describes the Beck's goals with *Paradise* as "quite mad."<sup>48</sup> She cites discrepancies in the content of the performance compared with the rhetoric of the company. For example, onstage she saw, "Chaos, fury, mindlessness... The political action is contained in the spectacle... change outside the theatre is beside the point"<sup>49</sup>. She then states that the Beck's would likely disagree

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid. 335. "But poverty and desperation are still not sufficient to generate the Social Revolution. They may be able to call forth intermittent local rebellions, but not great and widespread mass uprisings. To do this it is indispensable that the people be inspired by a universal ideal, historically developed from the instinctual depths of popular sentiments, amplified and clarified by a series of significant events and bitter experiences. It is necessary that the populace have a general idea of their rights and a deep, passionate, quasi-religious belief in the validity of these rights. When this idea and this popular faith are joined to the kind of misery that leads to desperation, then the Social Revolution is near and inevitable, and no force on earth will be able to resist it.

<sup>47</sup> Bakunin, *Bakunin on Anarchy*, 343.

<sup>48</sup> Munk, "Only Connect", 45.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid. 46, 47

with her criticism, given their professed goals for the show, but I am not sure. 'Action contained in the spectacle' may have been precisely what the Living Theatre intended to perform.

For one, when read against a theory of collective anarchism, the goals of the theatre to inspire the masses, leaving in their wake a group of people who would start cooperatives and collectives, are not 'quite mad', but they parallel Bakunin's own ideas, and demonstrate the theatre's philosophical grounding in foundational anarchist theory.

Secondly, this principle of social change, that collective goals and education must exist as a precondition for anarchism, have been and continue to be expounded by the Living Theatre to this day. In the author's 2014 interview with Judith Malina, Malina stressed the Living Theatre's lifelong commitment to inspire others, not to incite a revolution, but to dream of creating a new society,

What we were concerned with, and what we are still concerned with, is not only that people respond to whatever situation confronts them, whatever form of oppression confronts them, but that they confront that oppression with a very clear idea of what they want. And what we are trying to inspire them to want is what we call the Beautiful, Non-Violent, Anarchist Revolution. And all those words are important.

Julian was asked one day, "I understand what you mean by revolution, I understand what you mean by anarchism, but what is this beautiful?" and he said rightly, "If it's not beautiful, I couldn't care less about it". And I think that that's a part of what we're trying to say: is that beauty and political truth are related, *feeling* and our political position are related.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Judith Malina, interviewed by the author, November 17, 2014.

Judith Malina states that the goal of the Living Theatre is to create an anarchist revolution, but that their immediate goal was to provide the inspiration, the opening of consciousness (particularly through beauty) which would make anarchism imaginable. Munk notes that, "in 1968 when even sober analysts envisioned revolution right around the corner"<sup>51</sup>, the Living Theatre rode this revolutionary fervor as part of their performance. But it is worth noting that the Living Theatre may have seen themselves as entrenched in the practically endless history of revolutionary insurrections around the world. The potential for revolution in 1968 merely catalyzed their purpose to awaken the desire, hope, and collective goals of the masses in preparation for sustaining anarchy after a revolutionary moment.

Bakunin's writings and ideas were influential throughout the world, and were expanded and made even more popular by Pitr Kropotkin, commonly referred to as the "anarchist prince". Living Theatre biographer John Tytell has noted Paul Goodman's interest in Kropotkin in the 1950s, when Goodman met the Becks and became one of their closest friends until the later 1960s. For Tytell, Kropotkin's "notions of mutual aid and the voluntary association of self-reliant, self-supporting communities" were influential on Goodman and the Living Theatre<sup>52</sup>.

During the Brazil period, the Living Theatre shared the concerns of Bakunin and Kropotkin, not *how* to create a revolution, but of what happened next. The fear of an instant coup d'état by an autocracy, or a small dictatorship was grounded in historical precedent. Peter Kropotkin stated that specific kinds of books would,

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid, 44, 45.

<sup>52</sup> Tytell, *The Living Theatre*, 55. Tytell calls Goodman, "a spokesman for a non-violent, pacifist anarchism"



"enable the mass of the people to form for themselves a more or less exact idea of what it is they desire to see realized in a new future."<sup>53</sup> In the next section I show that in Brazil the Living Theatre sought to become this manual, a non-prescriptive working form designed to elevate their audiences into the space necessary to imagine a post-revolutionary world.

Bakunin's and Kropotkin's influences on Julian Beck can be found in *The Life of the Theatre*- especially during Beck's time in France directly before his departure to Brazil. Chapter 88 is titled, "The Conditions for the Creative Event", and parallels Bakunin's "Preconditions for Revolution". Beck quotes Bakunin's ideas on spontaneous revolution in his memoir<sup>54</sup>. He refers to Bakunin, Proudhon, and Kropotkin alongside other theorists, sometimes criticizing them and sometimes borrowing directly from their work.

In 1871 Kropotkin wrote, "The time for ideas has passed; it is now time for deeds. What matters above all to-day is the organization of the forces of the proletariat"<sup>55</sup> One hundred years later Julian Beck wrote "Don't talk; do it. From this point on the revolutionary rhetoric only serves to fritter away the frenzy<sup>56</sup>; it becomes an excuse not to act. It is time, perhaps, 1971, for a phase in which we are quieter. Methodical. Clear. Direct. And Active."<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Caroline Cahm, *Kropotkin and the rise of Revolutionary Anarchism: 1872-1886* (Cambridge University Press, 1989) 65.

<sup>54</sup> Beck, *Life of the Theatre*, 28. Quoting Bakunin, "Revolutions come like a thief in the night. They are produced by the force of things. They prepare themselves for a long time in the depths of the instinctive conscience of the popular masses-then they burst, often apparently touched off by futile causes."

<sup>55</sup> Ibid. 72.

<sup>56</sup> "You've frittered away my frenzy" is a quote from Jean Genet's play *The Maids*.

<sup>57</sup> Beck, *Life of the Theatre*, 115.

As a topic for further inquiry, Autonomia, influenced by collective anarchism, was coming into its own in the 1970s in Italy<sup>58</sup>. As a variation on Anarchism, Autonomia calls for autonomous states within capitalism, and may be read as an outgrowth of the ideas of workers federations, organized from the bottom-up, as detailed by Mikhail Bakunin<sup>59</sup>. Beck mentions the idea of "autogestion", or worker's control of the means of production, at various points in his memoir. He then links these concepts directly to theatrical creation.<sup>60</sup> Although I have not found a record, when the Living Theatre worked in Europe between 1963-1968 it is likely that they became familiar with continental socialism and anarchy, including Autonomism. What is undoubtable are their deep Italian connections, which persist to this day.<sup>61</sup>

Further stylistic debts to Bakunin can also be noted in Julian Beck's anxiety related to his position as an intellectual and an anarchist. This is something a lot of people can relate to. Unfortunately, the father of collective anarchism's words would not have comforted him. In the late 1800s Bakunin wrote, "If the intellectual proletariat does not want to surrender they face certain ruin; they must join and help organize the popular revolution."<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Patrick Cuninghame, "Autonomism as a Global Social Movement" in *Working USA: The Journal of Labor and Society*. 454. Cuninghame describes the evolution of Autonomism in Italy based on an Italian workers history of peasant migration and the effects of the Fordist factory. Scholarship on The Living's time in Italy, and any association with Autonomia, is a topic for further research. "But above all, it was the politico-social laboratory that was the Italy of the sixties and seventies that most deeply

<sup>59</sup> Bakunin, *Bakunin on Anarchy*, 83. "The basic unit of all political organization in each country must be the completely autonomous commune". 30 Ibid. 343.

<sup>60</sup> Beck, *Life of the Theatre*, 46. "Collective Creation is an example Anarcho-Communist Autogestive Process which is of more value to the people than a play."

<sup>61</sup> When I was alerted to Ms. Malina's passing, about 5 hours before the New York Times obituary was published, I did a quick google search related to her death and found only one short article had already been published. It was in Italian.

<sup>62</sup> Mikhail Bakunin, *Bakunin on Anarchy* ed. Sam Dolgoff (Alfred A. Knoff, 1971) 350.



But if the Living's Theatre's goal was to break free of the mindset of typical theatre-goers and connect with the "landless peasantry" of Bakunin's writings, they did not reach their goal in Brazil immediately. At first they worked in Sao Paulo and Rio de Janeiro with students. After a few months they traveled to Ouro Preto, a mining town where villagers did not collectively own the means of production. Ouro Preto held a theatre festival every year, and the Living Theatre had been invited to perform. It seemed that here the Living Theatre's interest in the 'revolutionary class' would be satiated. Perhaps the Becks saw the impoverished Brazilians as a modern-day version of Bakunin's lumpenproletariat, made popular again by the Black Panther Party. In *The Life of the Theatre* Beck cites the lumpenproletariat in France, writing just before his departure to Brazil. He asks,

How to build a mass movement? Where does the revolutionary vanguard come from? ... What can the theatre do? Release the creative impetus into the people...Go down in Egypt. To the slaves. What can theatre do? It can entice, zap, pull, inform, cajole and openly inspire the proletariat, the Lumpenproletariat, the poor, the poorest of the poor... The rest then happens, more or less spontaneously.<sup>66</sup>

Beck wrote other entries concerned with similar ideas, asking 'What is the nature of theatre in creating the revolution?' using specifically Bakuninist terminology, ideals such as the Lumpenproletariat and the idea of spontaneous revolution. Bakunin, as well as Kropotkin, wrote of spontaneous revolution and insisted that the masses would rise up themselves, once educated, and sustainably take over the means of production. This theory bypasses the need for Marx's interim

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid, 95.

dictatorship of the proletariat. <sup>67</sup> Bakunin saw the 'poorest of the poor' as the "vanguard of revolutionary action" stating, "For in them, and only in them, and not in the bourgeois strata of workers, are there crystallized the entire intelligence and power of the coming Social Revolution."<sup>68</sup>

A practical application of the theory of Bakunin's Lumpenproletariat inspired the Living Theatre's work in Brazil. Tytell describes Beck's attitudes towards the Lumpen as a class of people who are ripe for revolution, *precisely because of their destitute status*. Tytell notes that the Lumpenproletariat, "had become Julian's intended audience in Brazil".

The decision to work in Brazil did have its own logic....Artuad had gone to Mexico to study the Tupamaro Indians. He had postulated, as well, that the theatre had to merge with the real... which Julian interpreted as theatre in the streets for the sake of the social class that, ordinarily, would never be able to afford the luxury of admission.. Instead of Marx's working class, his (Beck) new audience would be closer to Bakunin's peasantry and *Lumpenproletariat* (Tytell's emphasis), as well as the unemployable and outlawed, those with nothing to lose. <sup>69</sup>

The organization of the Lumpenproletariat is a strategy employed (however problematically) by various militant groups throughout history. It was not a strategy utilized by the Students for a Democratic Society or the Student Non-Violent

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<sup>67</sup> Both Marx and Bakunin reference the Lumpenproletariat as an unskilled class of laborers, but they held dissimilar views in regard to this group. Marx stated that the Lumpen would be unsuitable as revolutionaries, Engels stated, "...this scum of depraved elements from all classes, with headquarters in the big cities, is the worst of all possible allies". (Engels, "Prefatory Note to The Peasant War in Germany" Web Access April 20, 2015.

[www.marxists.org/history/erol/ncm-1/red-papers-2/franklin.htm](http://www.marxists.org/history/erol/ncm-1/red-papers-2/franklin.htm)

<sup>68</sup> Bakunin, *Bakunin on Anarchy*, 334

<sup>69</sup> Ibid, 278.

Coordinating Committee. It was, however, utilized by the Black Panther Party (BPP). But organizing the lumpenproletariat for the BPP meant more than tactical military training. They organized clothing drives, as well as shelters and soup kitchens. This work elevating the community was often overlooked by the news, which focused on their militarism<sup>70</sup>. Errol Hendersen has noted that the organization of the Lumpen was a strategy for the BPP from the beginning, as evidenced by their engagement with urban gangs, similarly, the 'poorest of the poor', and those often looked on by society as motivated by having 'nothing to lose'. This has been debated by other scholars who highlight the middle-class and college-educated backgrounds of important BPP members. In a critique of Pearson's analysis of Huey Newton, Hendersen states, in part, "the impact of glorified Lumpenism is hardly the result of the BPP alone."<sup>72</sup> Since Bakunin (and most likely even before him), the class of "vanguard revolutionaries" has been glorified, whether they are rural Russian peasantry, or urban black youth.

I posit that 'Glorified Lumpenism' is a suitable framework to discuss some of the Living Theatre's motives in Brazil. Glorified Lumpenism assumes that a group of people, specifically because of their economic class, are better suited to serve the needs of a revolution and act as the vanguard. The 'productive classes' (to use a term utilized by both Marx and Beck), would be the ones who needed to remain unified and inspired in order to sustain the revolution. The Living Theatre's goal: inspiration towards a radical new way of thought, would be best conceptualized through the

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<sup>70</sup> Errol A. Hendersen, "The Lumpenproletariat as Vanguard?: The Black Panther Party, Social Transformation, and Pearson's Analysis of Huey Newton", *Journal of Black Studies* 28 no. 2 (1997) 172. [www.jstor.org/stable/2784850](http://www.jstor.org/stable/2784850) <sup>72</sup> Ibid. 180.

Lumpen. The political acts which the Living Theatre engaged in are often overlooked when discussing the Brazil period, specifically connections with the community which were mostly centered on feeding neighbors in Ouro Preto.<sup>71</sup>

The idea that the underclasses could, and would revolt was an idea that existed throughout Brazil and Latin America during the Living Theatre's time in the global south. From 1969- 1970 The National Liberation Army of Brazil, an outfit of what Michael Casey calls, "warriors of the heart, not of the head"<sup>72</sup> were put down by Brazilian officials after a year of action in Sao Paulo. Casey states that these plans were a product of another set of revolutionary theories and strategies, Castro's actions in the "jungles of the Sierra Madre", which translated poorly to urban areas. Casey states the "*foco* model" of warfare belonging to the Cuban Revolution, (the idea that a small group of revolutionary individuals can lead and catalyze change in the populous) has been discredited by many scholars,<sup>73</sup> however this has not deterred widespread identification with these brave individuals called 'guerrillas'. Che Guevara wrote, "The guerrilla is the fighting vanguard of the people...It is supported by the peasant and working masses of the zone and the entire territory involved. Without these conditions guerrilla warfare cannot be permitted."<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Tom Walker, Author's Interview, "Every night we'd make an enormous meal, some of the members of the company, well, most of the members of the company were very good cooks. It was vegetarian of course, simple, but a lot of food. Every night a couple of old people would come to the door with cans and we would fill them up with food. And a family would send one member of the family, they had like five kids, and a different one would come each night. So we were kind of feeding the poor. And, it was a nice month or so, very new for me."

<sup>72</sup> Michael Casey, *Che's Afterlife: The Legacy of an Image*, (New York: Vintage Books, 2009) 139

<sup>73</sup> Ibid. 54.

<sup>74</sup> Che Guevara, "*Che*" Guevara on Revolution, ed. Jay Mallin (New York: Delta Book, 1969) 88.

Guerrilla warfare was taking place in Brazil just prior to the Living Theatre's arrival. The government of Brazil saw the Living as a group of 10-12 people, traveling through the cities, and interviewing people in provinces. Of course their hair was long, but to a dictatorship that had just put down an urban rebellion the year before, this may have looked more like political organizing than a Western vacation. The Living Theatre's performances were encoded, their working methods were fast and light, and as soon as they set down for longer than a few months, they were "busted"<sup>75</sup>. The theatre's 'spatial turn', working in one place for so long (as opposed to their usual nomadic practice), might signal that they were getting somewhere with their project. Moreover, it signaled to the authorities a commitment to an area, an antithesis of tourism. Did this lead the authorities to assume that Living Theatre members were attempting to activate the revolutionary vanguard, "the people" of Ouro Preto?

Without weapons it is difficult to categorize the Living Theatre as a militant operation. After all, they were just a group of beautiful, sometimes-pot-smoking, multi-national but mostly Euro-Americans, known for press which disparaged them as 'utopian'. But in the *Life of the Theatre* Beck's writing displays open and earnest engagement with revolutionary theory, and later attempts to incorporate those theories into the practice of the theatre. His ideas on the Russian and Spanish revolutions were called, "NOTE ON HISTORIC PRECEDENCE",

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<sup>75</sup> Shank, *American Alternative Theatre*, 28. "They had been in Ouro Preto only five months, but the Living Theatre had forgotten a lesson learned in Europe- if they stayed more than two months they would be harassed in one way or another.



What happened in the Ukraine in Russia between 1917-1921, and what happened in Spain in 1936-1937: The farmers, the people who are close to the earth and the natural way of doing things, found it very easy very quickly to get together and form collectives, to get rid of any form of local government, to hold the land collectively, work it collectively, to supply their own needs, and to increase production so that they could take larger amount of food than ever before to the cities. Some of them even went so far so to abolish money in their villages, and reports about them indicate that they experienced the return into their midst of long exiled joy<sup>76</sup>.

Ouro Preto was, and still is a silver-mining town whose means of production are not held by those who operate the mine. And in 1970 any kind of revolutionary rhetoric, encoded or not, would not be tolerated by the Brazilian authorities. But action was the goal of the action cell. Although the Becks did not demonstrate an involvement in Brazilian theatre culture, they did demonstrate a commitment to the anarchist theory of the country. They learned Portuguese and worked to translate Jose Oticia's (1882-1957) essay, "The Principles and Aims of Anarchy", published in his journal, *Acao Direta*<sup>77</sup>. In place of direct political organizing, which was impossible under the dictatorship, the Living Theatre began to develop *The Legacy of Cain* cycle plays in Brazil. Paul Ryder Ryan's article contains a description of the project, calling it a street spectacle, and stressing its function of teaching and inspiring audience members to understand the nature of social organization.

*The Legacy of Cain* is a street spectacle. It was conceived to take place in all the different areas of an entire city over a period of two or three weeks. It is a spectacle of 150 separate plays, dealing with the functions of a city. The plays are for poor people, or banks, for factories, for public squares, for students, even a ballroom. It is a spectacle that deals primarily with the topic of man's

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<sup>76</sup> Julian Beck, *The Life of the Theatre*, 121.

<sup>77</sup> 58 Tytell, *The Living Theatre*, 281. Beck's quote

enslavement of man, and its various manifestations. It is an attempt at an exorcism of this enslavement as we know it.<sup>78</sup>

Why was *The Legacy of Cain* created to be performed over a period of 2-3 weeks? It takes time to perform 150 plays, but perhaps the extended length of time was needed to mirror the time commitment necessary to reorganize a city, before, during, or after a revolutionary event. *Cain* was created to be transferred from city to city, or country to country. It anticipated the Living Theatre's *Strike Support Oratorium* which has been performed globally. *The Legacy of Cain* was, like *Paradise Now!*, a piece of theatre designed to inspire pre- revolutionary consciousness.

The pedagogical imperative of these plays are overlooked and dismissed by Erika Munk in her analysis of *The Legacy of Cain*, which focuses on the exploration of the themes of sadomasochism. The theme of *Cain* is described by members of the Living Theatre as "man's enslavement of man, and its various manifestations." Munk describes *Cain* in this way, "the organizing idea of the entire play is that the oppressed classes have been shaped into masochists who consent to their oppression; the only way they will be able to throw off their sadistic masters is by setting "in the place of the politics of Sadism and Masochism; eroticism, erotic politics.""<sup>79</sup> Her discussion of sadomasochism is chalked up to "a form of rebellion or liberation" which was popular in "intellectual-radical life at the time". She seems disturbed by this way of theorizing the oppression of classes, stating that she does not believe that

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<sup>78</sup> Ryder Ryan, "The Living Theatre in Brazil", 22.

<sup>79</sup> Munk. "Connect", 51.

the masses were getting pleasure from their oppression. The theory of sadomasochism, as the Living worked with it, is contained in the following transcription of a rehearsal with Judith Malina in Ouro Preto, 1970,

I am saying that the slave must be transformed without becoming a master. When people find themselves rebelling, at the moment they feel that they can seize the power they can become either a master, or they can change the word and not become a Master but a Great Lover: in the GREAT sense of the word. And this holy condition: in which one is not a slave nor a master I call erotic. Birgit objects to the word erotic. I would suggest she use the word holy.<sup>80</sup>

The idea that society is organized into groupings of masters and slaves is part of a broader form of behavior described by Malina as "a rejection of real human communication." The fundamental question of *The Legacy of Cain* asks, "Where does violence come from?" Questions related to these kinds of social power arrangements can also be theorized through the writings of Bakunin. Although called the "father" of collective anarchism, Bakunin's distaste for the paternalism of the Russian state is encapsulated in his ideas about men who are both masters and slaves, due to the oppressive nature of Russian society. He writes,

The family patriarch is simultaneously a slave and a despot: a despot exerting his tyranny over all those under his roof and dependent on his will. The only masters he recognizes are the *Mir* (peasant community) and the Tsar. If he is the head of a family, he will behave like an absolute despot, but he will be the servant of the *Mir* and slave of the Tsar. The rural community is his universe; there is only his family and on a higher level the clan. This explains why the patriarchal principle dominates the *Mir*, an odious tyranny, a cowardly submission, and the absolute negation of all individual and family rights.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Beck, *Life of the Theatre*, 120.

<sup>81</sup> Bakunin, *Bakunin on Anarchy*, 346.

This is not to say that the popularized version of sadomasochism as erotic (BDSM) was not explored by the Living Theatre, but that disrupting "man's enslavement of man" is a closer description of the goal of the *Legacy of Cain Cycle Plays*. It is also worth noting that as a deeply political artist, Judith Malina's turn towards the personal experiences of those living in poverty was a direct attempt to catalyze revolutionary change within them. This differed from her past political activities such as protesting government-led atomic tests and air-raids. Her attempt to inspire an "erotic politics" is an imaginative attempt at holiness, reaching beyond in order to feel the pleasure of opening the mind's consciousness and inspiring hope and passion into "the people."

Knowing all this, it is only fair to say that a certain amount of romanticism may have clouded the Living Theatre's initial ideologies surrounding "the people." And while they may have prepared for Brazil as agents of political action, they were largely unaware of Brazil's culture related to "people's theatre." This isn't excusable, but they weren't alone. Richard Schechner also visited Brazil in 1970. He was not deported, but Augusto Boal's enraged letter to him illuminates transnational tensions, and attitudes of artistic superiority coming from the West to South America.

You think that everything in art is yours. If we use a stage, a garage, a truck, you think we are imitating you;... I remember very well a lecture he delivered at the Alianca Francesa in Sao Paulo. He told us about his experiences with "guerrilla theatre" that he had done in Grand Central Station and other places in New York. He was very happy and excited because we showed a great deal of interest in his experiences. He thought he was revolutionizing the Brazilian theatre just by giving us the idea of doing theatre in the streets. He was so excited that he didn't even notice that many actors and directors who were there listening to him has been engaged since 1956 in all kinds of theatre in the streets: theatre during political meetings, theatre as political meetings, theatre for peasants in the open air, theatre in factories, etc. Even though we

told him our experiences, he preferred to ignore them so that he could feel better as an innovator.<sup>82</sup>

For Boal, Schechner's ignorance betrays a superiority complex. Later in the article Boal makes a sarcastic statement regarding Schechner's attitude that Brazilians, "have to be folkloric in order to be authentic".<sup>83</sup> While in Brazil, questions of cultural authenticity did not figure prominently into the Living Theatre's work. They were largely ignorant of the existing culture (although a Brazilian named Ilion Troya was in their company), but Julian Beck assumed that they were bringing something new to the country by working in the streets. While it is true that a strong strain of union-organizing theatres existed in Brazil up until the implementation of the dictatorship<sup>84</sup>, the Living's record demonstrates no engagement with this history. Furthermore Beck's statements in the 1983 film, *Signals Through the Flames*, demonstrate a lack of understanding about those community, union-theatres, which would've been available to those outside the middle class. He states, "While we were in Brazil we worked on trying to develop means for using the art of the theatre to inform people about what was going on in the world. Especially people who couldn't pay the price of admission, who couldn't go to the theatre, who weren't educated to go to the theatre, people for whom the theatre had no meaning in their cultural conscience."<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Augusto Boal and Richard Schechner, "Letter from Augusto Boal" *The Drama Review: TDR* 15 No. 1 (1970) 152.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Michael Tuassig, Richard Schechner and Augusto Boal, "Boal in Brazil, France, the USA: An Interview with Augusto Boal" *TDR* (1988- ) 34 No. 3 (1990) 52.

<sup>85</sup> Julian Beck, *Signals Through the Flames*, 35mm, directed by Sheldon Rochlin (1983; Chicago: Mystic Fire Video, 1984.), Videocassette.

While the Living Theatre's ignorance of existing theatre culture is not excusable, for the way it assumes originality, uncovering information from locals about the then-closed theatres was likely difficult, and the Becks reported being asked repeatedly by villagers if the Living Theatre were members of the CIA. Their experience as anthropologists was rockier: access to information from middle-class theatre makers or students whom they interacted with in the cities was colored by the "culture of silence", which members of the company referenced in their letters home from prison <sup>86</sup>.

In her commentary on the Living Theatre in Brazil, Erika Munk follows existing avant-garde historiographies by implicating the Living Theatre in the cultural appropriation of an undocumented other, a critique levied by other art historians at modernist painters and artists. In this brief segment of her article Munk supports a discourse whereby Brazilians are conceptualized as the "romantic other" from the perspective of the Living Theatre.

Munk's commentary does not mention Ce Zeslo, but states, "They decided to go to Brazil."<sup>87</sup> It is picky, but her erasure of the invitation sets up the Living Theatre as active Euro-centric agents against a backdrop of passive Brazil. She describes the Living Theatre's choice to work in Brazil as a reflection of the concerns of the New Left during the early 1970s saying,

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<sup>86</sup> Paul Ryder Ryan, Julian Beck and Judith Malina. "The Living Theatre in Brazil" *The Drama Review: TDR* 15 no. 3 (1971): 28. [www.jstor.org/stable/1144678](http://www.jstor.org/stable/1144678). Hans Shano, and Austrian member of the group wrote a letter home saying, in part, "By the way Brazil is really halfway back. People don't want to stand up for anything publicly. They want to do everything in secret. Live in secret, talk in secret, fuck in secret, whisper about making love in secret at the most. I think this is really, really deceiving. Surely they accept to live in lies, in public lies."

<sup>87</sup> Munk, "Connect", 50

Their move from Europe to Latin America was part of a strong current of "Third World-ism," rooted in angry identification with Vietnamese peasants, the hope that newly independent African and Asian countries would establish liberating societies, and a romantic need to create heroes out of victims. To shed one's own skin seemed the only way out of complicity with power. That taking art to a poor community suffering under a brutal military regime support by one's own country rather than agitating at home against that support might smack of cultural imperialism and exotic adventure was something the Becks perceived later.<sup>88</sup>

Erika Munk's framing of the Living Theatre as fundamentally Americans, using terms like, "one's own country", assumes that the Living Theatre identified not only as Americans, but with the atrocities committed by the U.S. government in Vietnam and Latin America. This assumed identification then theorizes that a liberal apologist stance of "Third Worldism" was implicit in the Living Theatre's travels to Brazil. In Munk's narrative, the Theatre travels to Brazil in order to "create heroes" out of the victims of the U.S.-backed dictatorship.

I argue that national identity had less to do this choice. The Living Theatre was invited to Brazil by a friend, after retreating to Europe (after spending eight months out of the previous five years in Europe). While the Living Theatre saw Brazilian miners in Ouro Preto as "Other," it was more likely due to the theatre conflicting identities, artists vs. "the people." This is Julian's anxiety, demonstrated again and again in his memoir, while talks of borders and nations are absent.

Anarchists don't think quite as much about those things.

Regarding cultural imperialism, The Living theatre committed errors in their understanding of Brazilian culture. Like Schechner they appear to have been ignorant

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid, 51.

of the history of union-theatres that were already performing organizing work in the streets, before the dictatorship. And it is also true that their project was not framed in a narrative of the "cross-cultural", it had little intersection with the artistic practices of most Brazilians. Cultural imperialism would entail at least some engagement, presumably in order to (mis)interpret, and then appropriate. But the Living Theatre's only sustained artistic collaboration in Brazil was with Los Lobos, a theatre group from Argentina. Even this did not last as, "Los Lobos were not at all political."<sup>89</sup>

One way to measure the culturally imperialist impact of Brazil could be to look for appropriation, or co-option of Brazilian art forms upon their return to the U.S. But *Seven Meditations on Political Sado-Masochism* did not contain "traditional" Brazilian art forms such as African samba, or elements of Carnival. There were trance sequences, but there is no record of these being acquired in Brazil. Judith Malina's pal Allen Ginsberg is a more likely inspiration for the incorporation of chanting and meditation.<sup>90</sup> Instead, *Seven Meditations* referenced Brazil in an overtly political way. The torture scene was used to comment on the situation of the prisoners in Brazil suffering under a military dictatorship, not their unique culture.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Rosenthal, "Arrested Development", 64. She quotes Ilian Troya, "a Brazilian university student who joined the Living Theatre after one of their first street performances in Rio Claro, outside of Sao Paulo."

<sup>90</sup> Judith Malina, *The Enormous Despair*, 57. Malina recounts how Allen taught them to chant "Om". "He describes the sound, how it rises from belly to head. He pronounces it with the long "AUM" sound of its alternate spelling... Does he believe magic can save us? Certainly reason seems to have failed, but what is called reason is not reason, and what has failed is not reason. But "magic" seems like another form of the enormous despair. The times are desperate. Try everything. Magic. Allen says he will teach the company breathing and mantras."

<sup>91</sup> Judith Malina, interviewed by the author, November 17, 2014. Judith described the motivation for the torture scene, "Well, when we left Brazil, we talked to our fellow prisoners, who were all political prisoners, and we said, 'Look, we can't send you money, which is what you'd like most, but what can we do for you?'. And they said, 'Tell people what's happening to us here.' And that was the beginning of *Seven Meditations*. It was really a response to our fellow prisoners' requests in Brazil."



Although both ideas are problematic, Glorified Lumpenism is different than cultural imperialism, which looks on a low other with a fascination that has less to do with a revolutionary impulse and more to do with assuaging guilt (as in Munk's article), or the desire to be original and authentic (as in Boal's). In a complicated and by no means blameless move, the Living Theatre looked to empower impoverished Brazilians because, in their eyes, they had "nothing to lose". This attitude is similar to strategies utilized by the BPP, who saw those in the 'underclasses' as powerful allies in the revolution.

These differences begin to matter when analyzing performance historiography of the Brazil Period. In Munk's article, the focus on the body and the absence of words for the Living Theatre's group texts emerged in Europe, when, "Moving from country to country and language to language makes the spoken word ineffective as the primary means of communication".<sup>92</sup> But her reading contrasts with the more political reasons for the Living's focus on the body during those years: the ability to avoid censorship<sup>93</sup>. Julian Beck's own professed ideologies towards language offer yet another interpretation. The following was written in October 20, 1970 in Rio de Janeiro.

Breakdown of language equals breakdown of values, of modes of insight, of the sick rationale. Breakdown of language means invention of fresh forms of communication... Shake things up, change, give ourselves over to what we do not comprehend, what we think we comprehend we don't anyway, our logic is false, is rigid, and systematic, open it up. Breathe. To free language (thought)

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<sup>92</sup> Munk, "Connect" 43

<sup>93</sup> These are the reasons cited by Theodore Shank, *American Alternative Theatre*, 26. Rosenthal, "Arrested Development", 65. and Ryan, "The Living Theatre in Brazil", 23.

from the confines of the Socratic rationale, which is now the strong weapon of enthroned imperialist democracy.<sup>94</sup>

Here, a discussion of the politics of language explicitly demonstrates the Living Theatre's attempt to break away from imperialist democracy. But Glorified Lumpenism was far from a solution. Contrary to Richard Schechner's visit to Brazil, Living Theatre company members were held for two months after a raid and an arrest for subversion and marijuana possession. One company member was tortured. Officials confiscated Living Theatre notebooks, presumably believed to contain subversive material. And whether or not the LT engaged with Guevara-ist strategies, their commitment to anarchism is well-documented and foregrounds the history of the engagement The Living *did* have with Brazilian politics, if not with Brazilian theatre culture. Their attitude in Brazil, however imaginative, can be stated by the native anarchist whose work they translated there. "The maximum happiness of one depends on the maximum happiness of all."<sup>95</sup>

## Conclusion

In 1970, the Living Theatre traveled to Brazil to work with "the poorest of the poor"<sup>96</sup>, but their overtly political gesture loses its heart in Munk's analysis. By aligning the Living Theatre's history with the history of American liberal politics her reading; (1) contains the Living Theatre's political contributions to a faded sixties

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<sup>94</sup> Beck, *Life of the Theatre*, 13.

<sup>95</sup> Beck, *Life of the Theatre*, 122.

<sup>96</sup> Julian Beck, *The Life of the Theatre: The Relation of the Artist to the Struggle of The People* (San Francisco: City Lights, 1972), 95.

moment, (2) insufficiently historicizes the political content of Anarchism and (3) nearly antagonizes the theatre for their unwillingness to give up radical hope which led them to experiment in Brazil, this time under more dangerous conditions than ever before. She identifies the flaw in the established narrative of the company's history (a collective which toured America for 7-months between 1968 and 1969 should not rightly be called a theater of the American 1960s youth movement) but she does not critique it. In short, aligning the history of the Living Theatre with the formation and subsequent dissolution of SDS seems incorrect at best, and at worst, situates the history of radical, global, anarchist-activism into a specific strain of American liberal politics.<sup>97 98</sup> A more positive and materially-grounded approach makes the Living Theatre atypical of the 1960s American youth movement, and they do *not* vanish along with the ideologies of the liberal left in America, post-1968.

Hendersen notes the fundamental failures of 'Glorified Lumpenism', saying, "The legacy of the BPP instructs us that we must abandon the notion of a vanguard party", in favor of what Hendersen calls the "the nurturing and positive values and interests that is the 'stuff' of successful liberation struggles".<sup>99</sup> Can these values be

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<sup>97</sup> Especially problematic are Munk's descriptions of anarchy and utopia as, "inchoate notions of freedom", when she discusses the implications of *Paradise Now!*. Here she employs a tactic which denies anarchy's historical prevalence and emotional immediacy for millions of people worldwide, further disempowering The Living's artistic and political goals.

<sup>98</sup> Alisa Solomon, "Four Scenes of Theatrical Anarcho-Pacifism: A Living Legacy" in *Restaging the Sixties: Radical Theatres and their Legacies*. ed. Harding and Rosenthal (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008), 60. "Calling The Living Theatre's -or any radical's- ideals 'utopian' has long been a means of dismissing their aims as naive and pie-in-the-sky and therefore, presumably, not worth raising even for debate. This condescending slur has always bounced off the Living Theatre, which has typically embraced the intended insult as a badge of honor. In retort to the accusation, frequently Malina or Reznikov will quote Paul Goodman: 'When they say 'utopian' they mean they don't want you to do it.'"

<sup>99</sup> Hendersen, "Lumpenproletariat as Vanguard", 195.

found in the "erotic politics" that Malina believed would disrupt the cycle of sadomasochism, substituting in place the desire to live in a holy fashion, which transcends the desire for power?

In claiming that, "no class or group has an innate quality that ordains them as the vanguard", Hendersen's critique is sharper than the accusations of "Third-Worldism" Erika Munk makes about the Living Theatre's in Brazil. The story of the Lumpenproletariat is of desperation felt so intensely that a "slave" becomes, as Bakunin state, "capable of performing heroic and apparently impossible exploits"<sup>100</sup>. This problematic theory posits that the "lowest of the low" are able to direct inconcievable rage at power. This imagined ability is fetishized by the middle classes- but Bakunin suggests they join in and help the popular revolution, lest they be made the object of that popular rage. This way of formulating "the other", that is based on foundational Anarchist theory, is outmoded, classist, and in an odd marriage with the Living Theatre's stated goal of inspiring the masses towards a collective, sustainable ideal.

Glorfied Lumpenism nearly reads as a highly-constructed form of class-apology, if it's were not so potentially violent for the people it fetishizes. When Munk describes the Living Theatre as experiencing, "the need to create heroes out of victims", she is right. But it is not the victims of the Vietnam War, or of an American interventionist strategy in Latin America. For the Living Theatre, the victim/hero or master/slave dynamic existed since Cain murdered Abel. Their anarchism situates them in an on-going political history which exists before, during, and after the New

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<sup>100</sup> Bakunin, *Bakunin on Anarchy*, 334.

Left. The desire for "participatory democracy" put forth by SDS cannot be equated to the political philosophies of anarcho-pacifism or Autonomia. Ultimately, the free-association of collectives which own the means of their production is a fundamentally different form of organization than participatory democracy as advocated by SDS. Malina's entries on SDS show an interest in their activities, however, this is not enough to assume solidarity with specific political principles and methods. The question which remains is Julian Beck's, "What is the relationship of the artist to the struggle of the people?" While Mikhail Bakunin's advice on the revolutionary vanguard is (rightly) less palatable for our time, his call to join the popular revolution feels more relevant than ever.

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## CHAPTER 2

### THE LIVING THEATRE'S PERFORMANCE PUBLICITY: VISUAL STRATEGY IN "THEATRE AND THE REVOLUTION"



"The spectacle is not a collection of images,  
but a social relation among people, mediated by images."

-Guy Debord, *Society of the Spectacle* 1970

### **Introduction Visual Rhetoric of Performance Publicity**

The Living Theatre's performance publicity shifted with the arrest of the "action cell" in Brazil. After 7 months in Ouro Preto, the Living Theatre's home was raided on charges of sedition and marijuana possession. The press were everywhere, and photos of the company proliferate throughout artistic circles due to a "media frenzy", as Judith Malina and Julian Beck become "overnight celebrities" in Brazil.<sup>101 102</sup> In addition to being interviewed by television stations in Brazil, Judith Malina was allowed to publish her 'prison diaries' in a local newspaper. In an interview with the author Tom Walker described the effect of the diaries on the Brazilian public, "Diaries were out in the press every day, and it gave regular Brazilians an eye into the prison experience, which they couldn't have under the military dictatorship, but they got it through Judith. She was

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<sup>101</sup> Tytell, *The Living Theatre*, 302.

<sup>102</sup> Mark Hall Amitin, in conversation with the author, November 17, 2014.

"Another major factor in their release was yes, the Brazilian government and Brazilian military wasn't quite aware of the notoriety of the Living Theatre, but once demonstrations began in front of embassies, in front of airline offices in Paris, New York, in San Francisco, in L.A., and there were senators and congressmen that wrote letters, Jean-Paul Satre wrote a letter. And once those started coming in, the military government was saying, 'Ah,' and it was publicized in the New York Times, in Newsweek magazine, they were saying, 'Ah, we have a problem on our hands. How do we solve this?'"

careful about what she wrote, of course." Judith then added, "Oh yes, I couldn't write everything that was true, they would never have published it."<sup>103</sup>

The Living Theatre was engaged in a storytelling practice throughout their imprisonment, creating rhetoric which supported their cause. Likewise, their publicity for the 1971-1972 lecture tour utilized a visual rhetoric in order to condition audience reception and expectation. One poster for the tour portrayed the Living Theatre as imprisoned radicals, another seems to exalt them as figureheads of an avant-garde theatre movement. Both flyers were used to publicize *Theatre and Revolution*, a campus lecture/discussion tour designed to raise funds for the Becks to get back to work after their company was dismantled following the deportations from Brazil.<sup>104</sup> These promotional flyers constitute what Carlson would call a "message-bearing construct", noting the importance of this form of advertising to theatre companies. He states,

Message-bearing constructs of this sort constitute for most audiences the most obvious first exposure to the possible world of the performance they are going to see. Moreover, these elements are consciously produced by the institution which also produces the performance as devices for stimulating and channeling the desires and the interpretive strategies of the spectator.<sup>105</sup>

The wave of media and demonstrations among U.S. artists did much to "hype" the Living Theatre's return to the United States, and although the tour was not a

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<sup>103</sup> Judith Malina and Tom Walker, interviewed by the author November 17, 2014. , also see Rosenthal, "The Living Theatre's Arrested Development in Brazil" for a more detailed discussion of the diaries.

<sup>104</sup> Mark Hall Amitin, in conversation with the author, November 19th, 2014.

<sup>105</sup> Marvin Carlson, "Theatre Audiences and the Reading of Performance", *Interpreting the Theatrical Past: Essays in the Historiography of Performance*, ed. McConachie, Bruce and Thomas Postlewait. (Iowa City, University of Iowa Press) 1989: 90

performance itself<sup>106</sup> Beck and Malina were well-known performance artists by this point. The images used to publicize the tour were critical, not only in order to perform basic marketing, but to "stimulate and channel" the interpretive strategies of those in attendance. This chapter explores audience reception of the visual rhetorics created by these two images.

A second kind of rhetorical reading I will explore in this chapter is "ideographic performance", which characterized not only the LT's *Legacy of Cain Cycle Plays*, but subsequent productions such as *Seven Meditations on Political Sado-Masochism*, and *Six Public Acts to Transmute Violence into Concord*. Ideographic performance turns away from an emphasis on text, plot, and character for reasons which go beyond avoiding censorship, or communicating with a multi-lingual audience.<sup>107</sup> The Living Theatre began working with ideographs as early as the mid-1960s. In the author's 2014 interview with Judith Malina, the co-founder of the theatre stated, "I've got a new play...my new play is called *Venus and Mars*, and its about Love and War, two venerable subjects."<sup>108</sup> "Love and War" along with "Master and Slave" were ideographs: higher-order abstractions that come in pairs as defined by McGee. These rhetorical devices were utilized in the *Legacy of Cain*, the Living Theatres major performance project in Brazil. Additionally, Kevin DeLuca's discussion of the rhetoric of social movements has been employed in my analysis because it describes the Living Theatre's actions circa 1968-1972 in a way that is almost uncanny. This analysis necessarily

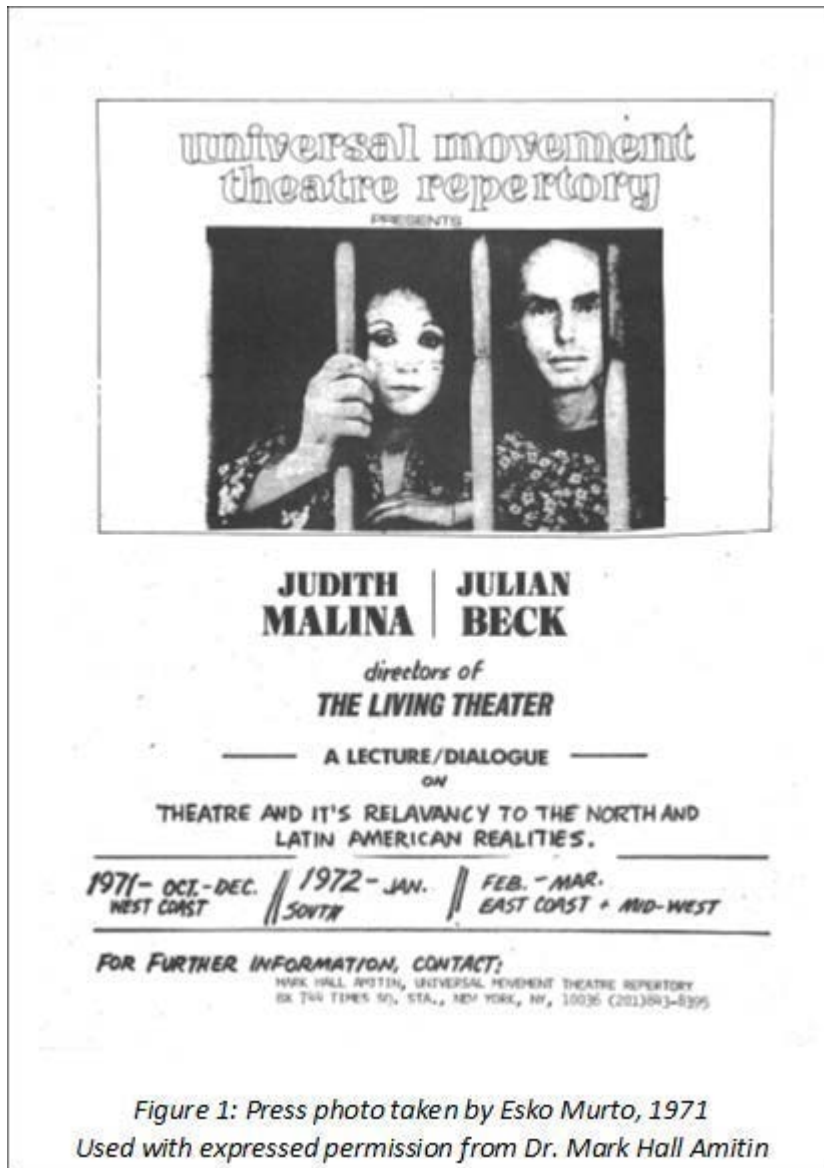
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<sup>106</sup> The shows created in Brazil would not have been able to be performed right away, because the temporary company assembled in Brazil had been broken up by the arrests and deportations.

<sup>107</sup> These are the reasons cited by Erika Munk, "Only Connect", 43. and Theodore Shank, *American Alternative Theatre*, 26.

<sup>108</sup> Judith Malina, interviewed by the author November 17th, 2014.

privileges the Living as political activists first and performers second, which mirrors Malina's own personal history and comprises the main struggle of Julian Beck's memoir<sup>109</sup>.



<sup>109</sup> John Tytell, *The Living Theatre: Art, Exile, and Outrage*, (New York: Grove Press, 1995), Julian Beck, *The Life of the Theatre: The Relation of the Artist to the Struggle of The People* (San Francisco: City Lights, 1972)

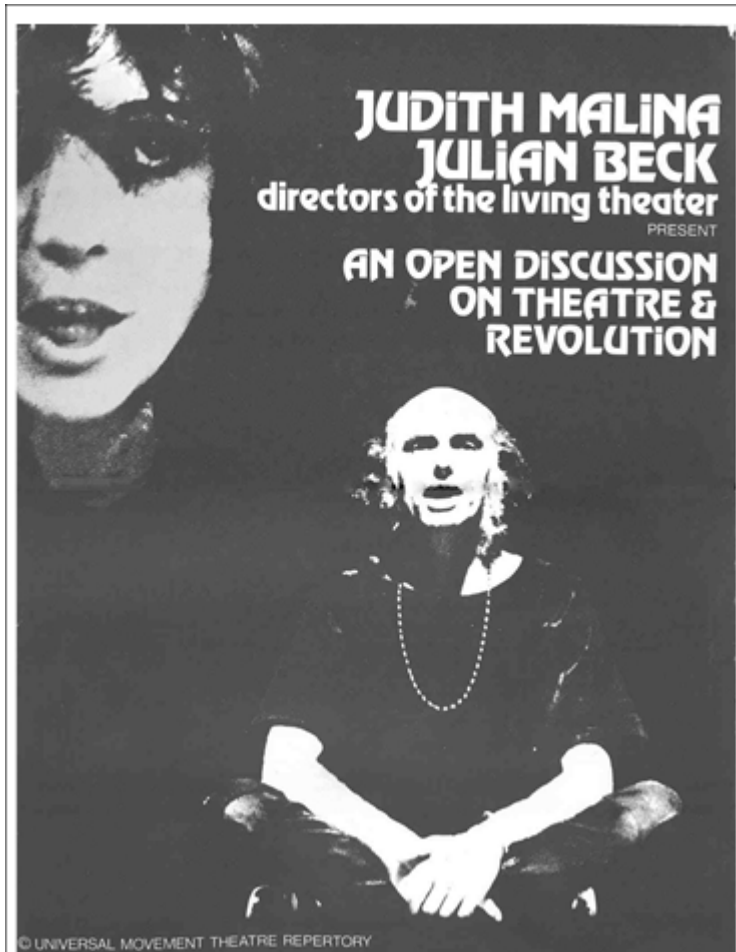


Figure 2: Official flyer for “Theatre and the Revolution”

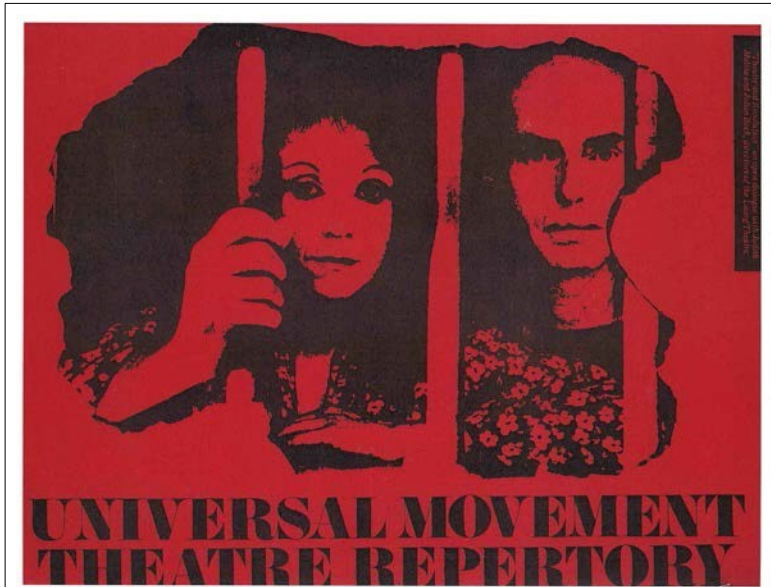


Figure 3: UMTR catalog, 1972

### A Dialogue

During and after the Beck's two-month imprisonment in Brazil one image came to dominant their representation in the press: A photograph of the couple in a Brazilian jail cell. It was taken by local photojournalist Esko Murto and published in the Brazilian magazine "Manchete" in July 1971<sup>110</sup>. Copies of the photo were made in Brazil by the Living Theatre's family and friends, and soon after the image was used to publicize "Theatre and the Revolution", which began in the Fall of 1971. The photo was also used as the cover of Mark Hall Amitins Universal Movement Repertory Theatre's 1972 catalog. Although eventually stylized, the image began as a photograph, which Barthes states comprises a message that is very different from a work of art. For Barthes the

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<sup>110</sup> Mark Hall Amitin, in email correspondence with the author, October 25, 2014.

press photo is, "never an "artistic" photograph"<sup>111</sup> and its paradox is that it supplies both connotative and denotative reading possibilities. The connotative reading takes into account the code, "(the "art", or the treatment, or the "writing", or the rhetoric, of the photograph)".<sup>112</sup> The denotative reading lies in the fact that the image itself is not reality, but it is "its perfect *analogon*"(Barthes emphasis).

What is conveyed by the prison image is, indeed, a paradox. As a press photo the image is striking, but does it makes sense? A connotative reading creates some inconsistencies: First, the two founding members of the company, husband and wife Julian Beck and Judith Malina are imprisoned in the same jail cell. They face the camera straight on, almost leaning into its gaze. Neither person is wearing a jail uniform, in fact, Judith's flowered shirt and her cosmetics are visible upon closer examination of the image. The black background provides no sense of place beyond the cell. However, anyone who has an experience with jail will tell you that prisoners are separated by sex. Without even knowing the identities of those photographed we may ascertain that one appears female, and the other appears male. According to Beck and Malina's biographer John Tytell, Julian Beck and Judith Malina were kept in separate cells, however they were allowed to work together in the afternoons. They were kept in the same prison, unlike other members of the company who were sent to other buildings, or other prisons entirely. While jailed, the Living Theatre were forced to wear blue uniforms, at least when they traveled to their trial.<sup>113</sup> A photo exists of the male members of the company

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<sup>111</sup> Roland Barthes, *A Barthes Reader* (New York, Hill and Wang: 1982) 197.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid. 198.

<sup>113</sup> Tytell, *The Living Theatre*, 203.

(without Julian), uniformed and posing for a camera in a Brazilian penal colony. Thus the rupture and isolation of the prison experience is not conveyed in this photo.

Additionally, this photo of Beck and Malina jailed together draws from a genealogy of performance. By 1970 Beck and Malina had already been jailed numerous times for political protest. Although while imprisoned the Becks would've been kept separate from one another, the performance of their arrests, often staged together, has previously been part of the show.<sup>114 115</sup> The photo is clearly posed, but given an opportunity for press photos this one is not exactly 'over-the-top'. Given the romantic nature of the diary publications<sup>116</sup> and the intensity of the worldwide protests against their arrests, a potentially more heart-wrenching depiction (for example the couple looking at each other from separate jail cells, or holding hands through the bars, etc.) would not be entirely unexpected. Here the Becks appear united, with their trademark sober gaze.

What has been excluded from the photo is also worth noting. Given the collective arrest of at least ten people, no other company members were included in the

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid. 189. During the highly publicized arrest of Beck and Malina during the run of *The Brig* in 1963, tensions mounted as actors played the show even as IRS officials and police waited to arrest them. After the show, "When Julian, Judith, fourteen members of the all-male cast, and nine female friends stoically locked themselves into the stage brig, they were arrested..." A press image of this arrest can be found in the 1983 movie about the Living Theatre, *Signals Though the Flames*. The image creates a genealogy of performance with the prison image from Brazil.

<sup>115</sup> In Malina's *The Enormous Despair* she describes an arrest at Yale during the performance of *Paradise Now!*. Upon finding Julian arrested in a "paddy wagon" after a show, Judith asks a policeman, "That's my husband; can I go with him?" (44). The officer allows Malina to enter the wagon. Later when Malina is seen in court and found guilty of "interfering with an officer", she writes a commentary on the value of this arrest for the Yale students in the courtroom, present for both her arrest and her conviction, "It is useful for them as they see the lie win over the truth, to reevaluate their meaning of law and order...It is good that this can be demonstrated in a small, safe, and unimportant case, where there is no real suffering, but where the suffering of thousands in the jails, in the death houses, in front of the firing squads is emblematically carried on in all its shrieking horror under the banner of "In God We Trust." (62).

<sup>116</sup> Judith wrote of a fictionalized love-story between inmates in order to arouse Brazilian sympathies. See Rosenthal, "The Living Theatre's Arrested Development in Brazil", 72.



promotional materials. This image then constructs specific realities of the prison experience, potentially at the expense of others. And, it is truly tragic that for all its notoriety, Judith does not remember it being taken. She stated that during the arrests there were press everywhere, and that she doesn't remember the exact moment.<sup>117</sup> Visual methodologist Gillian Rose has noted that, for some, and image's method of production has the most bearing on its subsequent meaning.<sup>118</sup> It would be wonderful to know whether this photo was taken one of the many times they were transported by the prison system, or during an interview, or in a press conference with the media. All these different moments contribute to a different history of the image's production.

A typical theatre flyer makes a statement about a production company's interpretation of a play. This type of visual communication is accomplished through a designer's often-intuitive process of concept formation, as well as input from the production team. Much of the 'meaning' of marketing is derived from the connection between text (a title or caption) and the image itself. Ehes states,

A theater poster is the result of the interplay of two sign systems- title of play and graphic image - that elucidate and complement each other. This is possible in theater posters because the signification of the image is assumed to be intentional; the signified of the message correspond to certain attributes or associations of the play that are graphically transmitted in the clearest way. Therefore the graphic image is seen as a series of signs replacing a statement about the play or about a specific theatrical interpretation of the play."<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> Judith Malina, in an interview with the author, November 17, 2014.

<sup>118</sup> Rose, *Visual Methodologies*, 17.

<sup>119</sup> Hanno H.J. Eheses, "Representing Macbeth: A Case Study in Visual Rhetoric", *Design Issues* 1, no. 1 (1984): 59.

These posters of did not herald a theatrical event in the strictest sense of the word, but the two sign systems are present. In a personal interview, Mark Hall Amitin noted that there was no confusion over whether or not this was to be a performance, it was a dialogue with Beck and Malina <sup>120</sup>. But like a theatrical flyer, each poster utilized a specific combination of title and graphic image in order to encode (and advertise) the event. In Figure One the name of the program is, "Theatre and its Relevancy to the North and Latin American Realities". This title expresses solidarity. Theatre is what is able to bring together both North and Latin American realities, and the accompanying graphic symbol is of two (North) American theatre artists jailed in South America. Other text on the flyer notes the producing organization (UMTR), the roles of each person on the flyer ("directors of the Living Theatre"), and sets up the event as "A lecture/dialogue". The use of the word "dialogue" combined with the prison image of Beck and Malina create a unified concept for the event. The idea of dialogue is not only communicated in the title, but at the level of the image itself. The position of the two performers behind bars may make the viewer feel as though they are being addressed, partially due to Malina's hand reaching out to us, and it's inexplicably larger scale. Beck and Malina's look of calm-but-direct confrontation communicates a new Living Theatre, one that is not rioting in theatre buildings, but calmly and bravely 'facing the music'. In looking at this image a viewer may enter into a dialogue with themselves, especially if they can identify with the racial, class, and cultural makings of the Becks.

Another way to describe the familiar spatial orientation in this image is by the use of "planes" as used in geometry. One plane creates one vanishing point, directing the

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<sup>120</sup> Mark Hall Amitin, in conversation with the author, November 19, 2014.

viewer to one line throughout the image. In the prison photo, one plane creates one place for a viewer to look first. The performers eyes are positioned about two-thirds of the way down the poster, and the layout of the poster itself challenges us to look not only at their imprisoned bodies, but directly into their faces. Gillian Rose describes the way that another kind of image, the self-portrait, is said to create the experience of dialogue due to the logic of figuration which organizes a painting.<sup>121</sup> Combining spatial organization as well as elements of light, angle, and mass, the image of Rembrandt in his self-portraits offers a similar logic of figuration as a viewer might see upon looking in a bathroom mirror. From the shoulders up, gazing slightly from one side as if to check one's reflection, these paintings allow the viewer to identify the image as something they might see outside the world of the painting, and this makes their connection to the work stronger<sup>122</sup>.

The logic of figuration of the prison image positions the viewer outside the jail cell looking in. The scale does not appear to have been manipulated (save for Malina's hand) and the camera angle is at medium level, one of a passerby. This creates space for the viewer to imagine themselves to be there in person. In addition, the straight-on position of Beck and Malina's faces play into our sense of, "honesty" and "being direct." This is a kind of portrait, in addition to being a press photo. The fascinating topic of portraiture cannot be dealt with here, but it is worth mentioning that Beck and Malina are posed in a kind of portrait, something that can be described, like Rembrandt's self-portraits as, "moving and disquieting"<sup>123</sup>. Again, the scale and logic of figuration of

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<sup>121</sup> Gillian Rose, *Visual Methodologies*, 41.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid. 45.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid. 35.

these images is much like looking in a mirror, or at a friend during an earnest conversation. Photographs heighten our feelings of "connection" and "being there" due to their formation in public consciousness as "a technology that simply records the way things really look."<sup>124</sup>

### **Antigone and the Guru**

This constructed concept of "dialogue" is not present in the official poster, which relies on other design methods to create visual interest and construct and guide reading strategies for the viewer. Corbett states, "Style does provide a vehicle for thought, and style can be ornamental; but style is something more than that. It is another of the available means of persuasion, another of the means of arousing the appropriate emotional response in the audience, and another of the means of establishing the proper ethical image."<sup>125</sup> As the theatre's manager, persuasion of the audience was something that Mark Hall Amitin had to have in mind when he created designs which represented the company. The image of the couple behind bars was not his first choice for publicity. In retrospect, he states that it conveyed the wrong idea about the purpose of the tour for The Living Theatre. In a personal interview he described the process of conceptualizing the official flyer.

“That was a conscious choice, to not picture them behind bars but in fact, in action, doing their theatre work. Not to over-emphasize, 'these are jailbirds' these are cons. Because in our discussion about what the program would be, it wasn't just to talk about the jail experience, it was to talk about the months of theatre work they were doing there, and the

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<sup>124</sup> Ibid. 19

<sup>125</sup> Hanno Ehses, "Representing Macbeth", 55.

work of the past, and the work to be done in the future. To *not* overemphasize the bust.<sup>126</sup>

Amitin's goal was to paint the Becks as theatre practitioners. Although the lecture series capitalized on the press and media frenzy surrounding the deportation, this official tour flyer drew from an entirely separate image vocabulary. To begin with, the text and its accompanying image conveyed a concept different from "dialogue". Figure 2's title is similar enough, "An Open Discussion on Theatre and the Revolution", but the image 'mentions' nothing about the Brazil experience. When compared with the popular prison image, this flyer negates the arrests entirely. Amitin utilized images from the Living Theatre's shows *Antigone* and *Mysteries and Smaller Pieces*, which were made popular during the run of *Paradise Now!*, (and were perceived to be less "confrontational" shows. Thus, the featured images for the official poster draw on a different genealogy of performance, which is still grounded in the Living Theatre's history. While the official poster and the prison image share some content I believe that the concept created by the official poster is that of the "gurus", or mystical leaders. The image of Julian Beck on the official flyer was taken from *Mysteries*, during an iconic moment of the production. This moment was criticized by audiences as having a profound impact on the psyche of those in attendance. Beck described the German audience reaction from the 1965 production of *Mysteries* in Berlin,

"You are using the same techniques that the Nazis used! the same mass hypnosis! the same appeal to emotional response and that's dangerous! You have to be rational! When Julian Beck sits in the middle of a stage, lit by a spotlight directly over his head and hypnotizes us with magnetic voice and you enchain us by repeating slogans until we echo them and seduce us to come onto the stage and open our throats in a surge of

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<sup>126</sup> Mark Hall Amitin, interviewed by the author, November 19, 2014.

ecstasy...you rob us of our rational ability to see the world, to assess it and act accordingly. You make us into brainless animals. We don't want to feel, we want to think." <sup>127</sup>

Part of the post- *Paradise Now* reconfiguration of The Living Theatre was a reaction to difficulties of leading a 40-person theatre collective. Amitin's poster draws on a visual vocabulary of Beck and Malina as powerful leaders; Beck as the guru, and Malina as the title character Antigone. Amitin stated that he pictured them "in action, doing their theatre work." If an viewer is familiar with these productions, this will ring true. But without context the only action pictured in the mouths of the couple, open and engaged in speaking. Rhetoric part of the action of the Living Theatre, and the concept of "an open discussion" is portrayed. However, this differs from the concept of "dialogue". The "two-way street" signified by a single visual plane (the mirror-like reflection of the prison image) is not present in the official flyer. Instead, the viewer is located in the midst of two planes, and two voices speak out from the poster simultaneously. The mystical qualities of the Beck's leadership created a paradox for both the company and their audiences. The tenuous and ironic status of the Becks as "leaders of a collective" is described by Erika Munk, sharing her feelings on the company in 1969,

The uneasy coexistence of gurulike leadership with anarchist egalitarian principles was never resolved. The conviction that their collective shaped dissent by demonstrating a future utopia in microcosm seemed delusional, while their dour rhetorical overkill made me suspicious of any revolution they had in mind. Yet... still... nevertheless... *Frankenstein* and *Mysteries* were better theater-better structured, breathtakingly designed, more complex... No matter how alienating any particular production, how wrongheaded their politics, how maddening their mysticism, the constant

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<sup>127</sup> Julian Beck, *The Life of the Theatre*, 58.

surprises of the stage work and their underlying commitment to freedom remained worth respect."<sup>128</sup>

*Antigone*, *Mysteries*, and *Frankenstein* were some of the theatre's most popular productions. In making visual references to these works in the official poster, Amitin's design may call out to a previous audience, one familiar with these iconic productions. The poster may build on an already existing visual vocabulary in order to condition interpretive strategies for the viewers, (this would've been especially true for those familiar with the *Living Book of the Living Theatre*, from which the images were taken directly). It also utilizes, partially and perhaps unintentionally, an image vocabulary which would've been common at the time: the iconic image of Che Guevara that is referred to as "Korda's Che". The image of Guevara looking off and to the left of our heads, into the distance, is echoed by Malina's looking up and to the right. Discussing Che iconography Michael Casey states, "this kind of distant gaze is a feature of many popular portraits of leader figures". Dr. Perlmutter of University of Kansas notes that for portraits of popular leaders, "their images tend to be looking past us; they are looking at something beyond us that only they, because of their mystical sense, can see."<sup>129</sup> Additionally, the image employs the same high-contrast, two-tone quality of popular reproductions of the Korda's Che.

While many meanings and significations can be read into these images, it is also important to emphasize the way modes of production were instrumental in creating the images. Ehses notes that designers seem to use the methods of visual concept formation intuitively<sup>130</sup>, and while Amitin described his intuitive, conceptual choices, he also notes

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<sup>128</sup> Erika Munk, "Only Connect", 50.

<sup>129</sup> Michael Casey, *Che's Legacy: The Afterlife of an Image*, (New York, Random House, 2009): 37.

<sup>130</sup> Hanno Ehses, "Representing Macbeth" 53.

that a deciding factor in the visual style of the image was influenced by its production, or rather the constant limits on production resources, both temporal and financial.

There wasn't time nor money to get a photographer and to pose them and all that. I said, "I think it might be better, in fact, to use extant [materials]", so I took pictures out of the *Living Book of the Living Theatre*... The graphic designer that I hired who chose the lettering and did the pastiche to put it together, we were in a hurry. They [Beck and Malina] came back, it was already the second week of September of '71 and if something was going to happen [the lecture tour], the academic year was already in sway, I had to get stuff out right away and I needed to get posters ready right away.

...there was the white at the bottom, which we did on many posters so that a sponsor could buy the posters from us pretty much at cost, but maybe a little extra change to pay for all the printing and the mailing, and then they would print in their date and time and ticket price on the bottom. It made more sense. It kept a consistency in general to the look and the feel for any company or any group to do that. You have more control over image. And while I was never 100% happy with that poster, it is now become a great classic and it was the first poster I actually produced. I never put my name on it, I always put Universal Movement Theatre."<sup>131</sup>

Amitin's own disinterest in crediting himself as the creator of the poster speaks to a certain mode of production which fits with the other aesthetic creations of the Living Theatre. As anarchist, anti-hierarchical theatre practitioners, James Harding notes that for the Living Theatre a creation which claims a death of an author sometimes functions to erase an actual author, such as in their production of *Frankenstein*.<sup>132</sup> For my purposes, this kind of critique does not posit that there is a right or wrong way to credit a theatre flyer (and people rarely do), but only to credit Amitin for the record while

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<sup>131</sup> Mark Hall Amitin, interviewed by the author, November 19, 2014.

<sup>132</sup> James Harding, *The Ghosts of the Avant-Garde(s): Exorcising Experimental Theater and Performance*. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2013), 90-110. Harding's article "Critique of the Artist as (Re)producer" provides a detailed, insightful account of the Living's production of *Frankenstein*, alongside a reading of Warhol's production of the same name. Far from the standard 'death of the author' narrative, Harding details the ways in which, "the *Frankenstein* narrative offers a unique opportunity to examine not only the debt that the avant-gardes owe to romanticism, but also the gendered economies that this debt sustains" (92).



pointing out that in the history of the Living Theatre, enforcing legal copyright to images was not a major concern largely because of their professed anarchist politics.

This poster was constructed using photos, but unlike the press photos of the prison image, the images on the official flyer were production stills, or images taken during rehearsal. Amitin himself did not take the photos, nor were they from a personal collection, instead the photos came directly from the *Living Book of the Living Theatre*, a collectively published photo-book which focused not only on the performances of the company, but also on their lifestyle. It came out in 1971, the same year the LT was deported from Brazil. The book is filled with pieces of Judith's diaries in small type as well as un-captioned photos. It begins and ends with manifestos. The book follows a loose narrative through Malina's diaries, but these are secondary to the many photos which picture all manner of rehearsals, the company at dinner, and different candid shots. Fifty-two people are credited towards the beginning of the book<sup>133</sup> which functions as a printed representation of the company's collective philosophy.

The original image of Judith as Antigone is printed over a centerfold, her face is partially cut off in the middle, and the top of her head is not visible. On each page her white arms extend out from the center in an arc, shining in stark contrast to the black background. Below her, a man's face is partially visible. He is lying on the ground facing up, it's hard to tell if his eyes are closed. Presumably, it is Antigone's brother. What remains in the official flyer from this two-page image is Judith's face and neck, edited to create more exposure, perhaps to lessen the shadow on her face. Her face also appears to be slightly elongated when compared to the original image from the book. Aside from

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<sup>133</sup> Carlo Silvestro, *The Living book of the Living Theatre*, (Dumont, 1971).

those modifications, it is interesting to note that Judith's face is placed on the flyer exactly where her face is placed in the original photo, upper left-hand corner, face partially obscured, keeping continuity with the production still.

The image of Julian meditating was printed in the *Living Book of the Living Theatre* in the center of a right-hand page in a two-page spread. The only modification which I could tell had been performed to this image is an increase in exposure, which makes the light shining on his head more obvious. This increased exposure also washes out the watch Beck is wearing, which is more visible in the original image. Like the image of Malina, it also lessens the shadows on his face. This image was then placed just off-right of the flyer, and the space between their faces was used for the accompanying text.

The Living Theatre's incarnation as a collective can be described as the pages of the *Living Book of the Living Theatre*, "Poetic and political statements alternate, rich images follow one another, sometimes lyric, sometimes tragic, but universal in their denunciation of the alienating structure of capitalism"<sup>134</sup>. Throughout many different medias, the death of the author is part of the company's critique. What is presented to advertise the coming lecture tour is as much a work of the collective as any performance piece, even though this collaboration took place over time and space, and not in a rehearsal hall. Although Amitin worked on the poster to design it, and hired a graphic designer to help him, neither of them are credited as an author of the image, and neither of them attempted to be.<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> Ibid. 2.

<sup>135</sup> Although the fact that they were not credited is not surprising. During my research I found that very few theatrical posters (or protest posters) had authors or artist credit. Lack of authorship is perhaps a topic for further investigation.

In analyzing what Gillian Rose calls the *compositional modality* of the Figure One poster, I have treated the image more as a work of art than an advertisement. Compositional modality rests on what Rose calls "the good eye". This kind of visual-rhetorical analysis depends on a familiarity with high-art, and functions as a kind of "visual connoisseurship" where connoisseurship, "involves the acquisition of extensive first-hand experience of works of art with the aim, first, of attributing works to artists and schools, identifying styles and establishing sources and influences and second, of judging their quality and hence their place in a canon."<sup>136</sup> Tom Walker described Beck and Malina as, "experts in Modernism" saying to Judith, "you knew all the canon" to which Judith replied, "I knew all the people, too."<sup>137</sup> Compositional modality takes into account a shared set of Western high-art practices- The Living Theatre's successful classical productions, as well as Beck's familiarity with "the good eye" was described by Amitin in an interview,

A clear idea that Judith and Julian both have had throughout all of the years of the Living Theatre was that the sets, the costume, the lighting, the physical movement, the stage pictures, and the actors themselves all were beautiful. Even when it was 'brute', it was beautiful. And Julian would ask me whenever I would have a new person to send to the company, as we're looking for printed materials and putting it together, before we had met someone, he'd say, 'Are they...are they beautiful?' and I would answer, 'Would I call you otherwise?'. That was true even about laying out materials, Julian always had an eye. All of us who have been connected to the Living Theatre have gained that eye in some way.

Some of Mark Hall Amitin's contribution to the beautiful, non-violent, anarchist revolution were created in two-tone printing and press-on letters. His style was born

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<sup>136</sup> Gillian Rose, *Visual Methodologies*, 34.

<sup>137</sup> Judith Malina, interviewed by the author, November 17, 2014.

often from lack of financial resources, and family favors which were paid-back later. To manage an anti-capitalist enterprise is not an easy task and the personal style that Amitin brought to the publicity for the theatre branded them, perhaps too successfully. The high-contrast, two-toned images of the theatre came to be representative of the company under Amitin's management. Perhaps this accounts for why the theatre was criticized for creating a fetish of the revolution by their long-time friend Paul Goodman.<sup>138</sup> In buying and selling the experience of the Living Theatre, as universities had been doing for decades, they were participating in a system of capitalist exchange. However, this criticism of "festishing" the revolution is not present in the record until the early 1970s. Michael Casey states in his discussion of the infamous Korda's "Che", talking about a performance as a kind of 'branding' or 'exchange of commodity' doesn't have to mean a complicity with capitalism. He states, "Political branding strategies need not be interpreted as a sell-out of principles. In fact...sustained success will only come to a political brand when there is a logical consistency between the underlying product and the advertising slogans, logos, and concepts attached to it."<sup>139</sup>

In 1972 the cover of the Universal Movement Theatre Repertory (UMTR) catalog featured the prison photo of Beck and Malina, but this time it was modified both visually, and conceptually. Contrary to a theatre flyer, the cover of the catalog uses the couple to brand the company, and they become the image which advertises other artists who are represented by UMTR. Dr. Amitin further modified this image by burning the edges of it by hand, giving it what he refers to as a "rough-hewn edge". Amitin references the production of these materials as similar to a wood-cut, he likes to be able

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<sup>138</sup> John Tytell, *The Living Theatre*, 311.

<sup>139</sup> Michael Casey, *Che's Legacy*, 13.

to see that hand-made style, what he refers to as "Brechtian"<sup>140</sup>. Although the production method of the two posters is very different, what Rose calls the "expressive content"<sup>141</sup> is similar. Focusing on the faces of the two performers and their expressions compels the viewer to look into the eyes of Julian Beck and Judith Malina. At the same time bold, high-contrast, and two-tone color pallets alert the viewer that they are looking at something that is seemingly dangerous, yet beautiful.

The political intensity of the theatre has always been measured with an application of "the beautiful." The company's repeated use of the term "the beautiful" implies shared aesthetics, from performance to publicity. These aesthetics both condition and are conditioned by the material and ideological forces that create them. The theatre's power to enact social change is stressed by their political rhetoric, which is accompanied by visual practices which both support and complicate that rhetoric. Ultimately, the goal of the Living Theatre cannot be overlooked in their historiography: to bring people to a point where they can imagine a better world.

"What," says the Red and Black militant, when we say we want to try to create theatre for the workers, "you think you can get their attention? We can't get them to read a leaflet!"

"Comrade, the theatre *begins* by being attractive..."<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> Mark Hall Amitin, in conversation with the author, November 19th, 2014.

<sup>141</sup> Gillian Rose, *Visual Methodologies*, 34. "The combined effect of subject matter and visual form"

<sup>142</sup> Julian Beck, *The Life of the Theatre*, 49. My emphasis.

## Ideographic Performance

The Living Theatre adopted new performance and promotional methods in order to order "get out of the trap"<sup>143</sup> of their celebrity. Erika Munk and Theodore Shank<sup>144</sup> have described the Brazil Period as a time when the Living Theatre turned towards the body and away from text, as well towards collaboration and away from confrontation<sup>145</sup>. But in spite of Munk and Shank's contributions, this period in the Living Theatre's history remains insufficiently historicized and their major performance project from this time, *The Legacy of Cain Cycle Plays*, is still poorly understood.

I describe the Living Theatre's turn away from interpretations of play texts and towards larger-scale theoretical concepts as not only grounded in formations of the body and plagued by the presence of censorship, but as part of a larger project which can be described as the 'disarticulation of ideographs'. Kevin DeLuca, a rhetorician of social movements, utilizes McGee's definition of an ideograph, calling it, "...an ordinary language term found in political discourse. It is a high-order abstraction representing collective commitment to a particular but equivocal and ill-defined normative goal." Ideographs function to create meaning in the world, they are more than just words. An ideograph is a concept that, "warrants the use of power, excuses behavior and belief which might otherwise be perceived as eccentric or antisocial, and guides behavior and

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<sup>143</sup> Cindy Rosenthal, "The Living Theatre's Arrested Development in Brazil: An Intersection of Activist Performances" in *Avant-Garde Performance and Material Exchange: Vectors of the Radical* ed. Mike Sell (Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 60.

<sup>144</sup> Theodore Shank, *American Alternative Theatre* (New York: Grove Press, 1982).

<sup>145</sup> Erika Munk, "Only Connect: The Living Theatre and Their Audiences," in *Restaging the Sixties: Radical Theatres and their Legacies*. ed. Harding and Rosenthal (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008)

belief into channels easily recognizable by a community as acceptable and laudable.<sup>146</sup>

Ideographs are words loaded with connotations. According to DeLuca, ideographs function together in pairs which construct a rhetorical discourse. These pairs work together to create normative narratives. DeLuca's major example of this is the pair of ideographs "Nature" and "Progress". In his study on radical environmental groups he demonstrates how these two terms constructed together in normative discourse have been used to justify the process of environmental degradation under capitalism.<sup>147</sup>

In discussing the Living Theatre as engaged in a form of ideographic performance, my analysis assumes that the Living Theatre had a set of rhetorical practices to begin with, and that these practices shifted over time. Traditionally rhetoric is seen as "'reasoned discourse," with "reasoned" connoting "civil" or "rational" and "and discourse" connoting "words."<sup>148</sup> Popular reception of the Living Theatre's most famous work, *Paradise Now!*, focused on exactly the *opposite* of reasoned discourse, citing outbursts, nudity, and on-stage drug use as indicative of the 'incomprehensible' nature of their performances.<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>146</sup> Kevin DeLuca, *Image Politics: The New Rhetoric of Environmental Activism* (Routledge: 2005) 36.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid. 38-44. DeLuca supplements articulation theory, and McGee's "discussion of the diachronic structure of ideographs"

<sup>148</sup> DeLuca, *Image Politics*, 14.

<sup>149</sup> In Munk's article, "Only Connect", she describes Eric Bentley's critique of "The Rite of Guerilla Theater" as performed by the Living during *Paradise Now!* The critique focuses on the unavailability of "dialectics-a sense of the interplay of opposites" and Bentley's insistence on "what intelligence demands". Munk emphasizes the Living's rejection of discourse by selectively quoting from Malina's diaries. In the "Rite", a performer frustrates an audience member by refusing to engage in dialogue with them, instead repeating phrases again and again. Malina's diary entries provide a different commentary on Bentley's later reaction, when they met in person. "Eric Bentley received us warmly for one who had rejected our work so harshly publicly...We talked about *Paradise Now*. When Julian outlined the structure, Eric said he liked what he was hearing more than what he saw...And he was glad we were so reasonable." (231)

Describing the performances as 'unreasonable' is not new<sup>150</sup>, but DeLuca's concept of the "image event" can be used to find and explore discourse in performances and events which seems too 'unreasonable' to constitute rhetoric. DeLuca's *image events* are performative actions which are designed to challenge and change public consciousness, and they are created specifically for dissemination via mass-media. DeLuca describes image events as a form of rhetoric created for activism in the postmodern age, however I believe that there is important overlap with theatre and performance activism during the infancy of the information age. DeLuca differentiates between Debord's concept of the spectacle, or Dayan and Katz's "media event" in favor of a description from Robert Hunter, a founder of Greenpeace. According to DeLuca and Hunter, an image event is a "mind bomb" which "explodes "in the public's consciousness to transform the way people view their world.""<sup>151</sup>

Although the Living Theatre did not rise to popularity in the time of viral videos, to analyze their performances as image events provides a theoretical window into their performances as a form of rhetoric. DeLuca states, "To dismiss image events as rude and crude is to cling to "pre-suppositions of civility and rationality underlying the old rhetoric, a rhetoric that supports those in positions of authority and thus allows civility and decorum to serve as masks for the protection of privilege and the silencing of protest." Much of the criticism of *Paradise Now!* emphasized both the 'rudeness' and the 'crudeness' of the production. A *San Francisco Chronicle* article from August 1968 titled their piece, "The Living Theatre Shocks Swiss Audiences". One sub-heading of

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<sup>150</sup> Alisa Solomon, "Four Scenes of Theatrical Anarcho-Pacifism: A Living Legacy" in *Restaging the Sixties: Radical Theatres and their Legacies*. ed. Harding and Rosenthal (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008) 56.

<sup>151</sup> DeLuca, *Image Politics*, 1.



this article is just the word, "ORGY".<sup>152</sup> A month later the Los Angeles Free Press called their review for the same show, "REHEARSAL FOR REVOLUTION", and gave a much-longer, in-depth coverage of the performance complete with drawings and a quote from Marat, "I am the rage of the people".<sup>153</sup> These articles stress the different-ness, the avant-garde, the non-normative methods of the Living Theatre. If we adopt DeLuca's framework (who, terrifically, wrote that even Aristotle maybe read as "a primer on how to maintain hegemony"<sup>154</sup>) these types of reviews disempower the Living Theatre as a group of people who are engaged in constructive political rhetoric, in favor of drawing attention to the "unreasonable" nature of their work thus emphasizing that it is not to be taken seriously.

The Living Theatre saw much-improved press upon their return from Brazil and praise for their piece, *Seven Meditations on Political Sado-Masochism* (1973).

Interestingly, *Seven Meditations* was lauded for none other than its reasonable discourse.

Gone is the screaming, spitting and bitter confrontational manner which so characterized the Living Theater troupe before its exodus abroad five years ago, and in its stead is a panorama of sound, slow-motion ballet and polemic that is sober and convincing... Ironically, the doctrine (example: "property is murder") is ultimately less persuasive than certain of the dramatic tableaux. The harshest moments for example, occur during the meditation on violence, when a single actor is stripped, crumpled over a parrot perch torture rack, symbolically wired with electric shocks and tortured... it is the only instance of nudity and the only hint of sensationalism in an otherwise restrained production."<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> Ferris Hartman, "The Living Theater Shocks Swiss Audiences," *San Francisco Chronicle*, Aug. 30, 1968.

<sup>153</sup> Roy L. Walford, "Rehearsal for Revolution," *Los Angeles Free Press*, Sept. 20, 1968.

<sup>154</sup> DeLuca, *Image Politics*, 14.

<sup>155</sup> Patrick McGilligan, "Living Theater back in Boston," *Boston Evening Globe*, March 29, 1974.

As DeLuca noted in his analysis of the ideographs "Nature" and "Progress", ideographs are articulated together in a way that makes certain notions about the world commonplace, or "common sense". He writes, "Belief in progress is contemporary common sense"<sup>156</sup>.

DeLuca analyzes how radical environmental groups work to rupture the underlying connections between the ideographs Nature and Progress thus changing the "common sense" conception of progress, which, by extension, makes environmental degradation a "sensible" option'. In *Seven Meditations*, The Living Theatre disrupted commonplace notions of society by stating, "Property is murder." Most people would not think that the act of buying or owning something is analogous to the taking of a life, but by repeating the statement, "Property is Murder" the audience is forced to react to the hyperbolic statement. Maybe at first saying the audience contests the dramatic phrase, thinking, "No, it's not," but perhaps they eventually ask the question, "What *does* it mean to own property?" or "How could violence be located there?" This may spur on new thoughts and insights.

*Seven Meditations on Political Sado-Masochism* was inspired by the bodies of the workers in the mining town of Ouro Preto. The LT considered these workers to be slaves to capital. The experience of capital's dominance over humanity was a basic problem that the Living Theatre worked on in Brazil. Thus, "Property is Murder" was not simply an exercise in oratory. To perform the words "Property is Murder", accompanied by dramatic tableaux, the LT attempted to shake up the connection between those two words. What does it mean to own property? How could that be

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<sup>156</sup> DeLuca, *Image Politics*, 46.

equivalent to the violence that is "Murder"? The literal legacy of Cain is invoked as the company asks the audience to contemplate the way humans commit acts of violence towards one another. Representing the torture and violence of their Brazil experience was the Living Theatre's aim with *Seven Meditations* however their methods diverged from documentary theatre or an interpretation of a text-based play. In a recent interview, Malina described the theatre's imprisonment in Brazil as the creative impulse for *Seven Meditations*. The end of the show was the "seventh meditation", a discussion with the audience whereby people could process what they had just seen in an overtly rhetorical and reasonable format. In describing this meditation Malina stated, "We always like to end our plays with a discussion so that people are activated to take action"<sup>157</sup> While this may be true for the theatre now, it was still a new move for the theatre in 1973.

DeLuca states that "we can and should study the rhetorical tactics of groups attempting not merely to move the meanings of key ideographs but to disarticulate and rearticulate the links between existing ones."<sup>158</sup> Although it is arguable that a turn towards these higher-order abstractions was apparent in *Paradise Now!*, ideographic performance became an obvious mode of inquiry for the Living Theatre during the creation of the *Legacy of Cain Cycle Plays* as they were work shopped in Brazil. Other pairs of ideographs that were explored Money and the State. Some of the most controversial aspects of the play, and later plays based on this work, were the rituals between "Masters" and "Slaves". Erika Munk interprets the Living Theatre's engagement with these concepts as predominantly related to BDSM and erotica,<sup>159</sup> but these concepts

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<sup>157</sup> Judith Malina, interviewed by the author November 17th, 2014.

<sup>158</sup> Kevin DeLuca, *Image Politics*, 45.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid 51.

also represent engagement with non-sexual constructions of power in line with overarching discourse practiced by the theatre. The theatre did not only engage with concepts like the master and slave relationship, but they represented other large-scale ideas like love, war, property and the state. These interrogations have lasted to this day, which is why The Brazil Period is so critical for theatre and performance studies scholarship.

The focus on disarticulating and re-articulating these "ordinary language terms" is evidenced in rehearsal notes from Brazil. When Malina discusses the cyclical nature of violence between a Master and a Slave she attempts to substitute a form of empathy at the exact moment that the transformation from Slave to Master would take place.

I am saying that the slave must be transformed without becoming a master. When people find themselves rebelling, at the moment they feel that they can seize the power, they can become either a master, or they can change the world, and not become a Master but a Great Lover: in the GREAT sense of the world."<sup>160</sup>

The lengthy rehearsal conversation, which reads more like a philosophy circle, was recorded by Julian Beck. Judith Malina describes how a "Great Lover" substitutes "erotic politics" for a politics of violence. The focus on sado-masochism is present, but couched in a larger question about the violence which permeates personal and institutional relationships. This kind of process is evidence of an attempt to break apart the internal, rhetorical, and ideological strictures of those who dominate others, and those who submit to their own domination. It's worth noting how relevant this conversation is to the present moment: the words used to describe the political goals of the Living Theatre in 1972 are eerily similar to those used during "Occupy Wall Street".

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<sup>160</sup> Julian Beck, *The Life of the Theatre: The Relation of the Artist to the Struggle of The People* (San Francisco: City Lights, 1972), 120.

The social structure has it so, it supports the drive from Masochist to Sadist. All the slaves want to be masters. None of the masters want to be slaves. But socially speaking, not sexually. Politically, if we take for instance, the sadists in Brazil to be the 1% ruling class, if the sadistic class is the ruling class, then it's only 1% of the population. This 1% must change. But nothing is going to make them change because they have all the guns, power, computers. The only thing that will make them change is if the 99% make them change... this 1% will not give up their power because the whole structure supports this hierarchical system. But the people can refuse to be slaves. And because there are so many more of them they can change the whole thing.<sup>161</sup>

Disrupting the Master/Slave dynamic, here called Sadism and Masochism, is part of a larger goal of liberation which, for the theatre, stretched to all reaches of human existence: the personal, sexual, political, and public. In discussing the overtly political goals of the company, McGee's theory of social movements applies to the Living Theatre as a group which was and is engaged in active social organizing through performances. He states,

Social movements are not phenomena but sets of meanings... Changes in the social consciousness are empirically present in the public discourse or rhetoric used to describe "reality." In short, social movements are changes in the meanings of the world, redefinitions of reality, with such realities always being structured through the filter of rhetoric.<sup>162</sup>

The Living Theatre attempted to perform these changes in the meanings of the world, and perhaps it was due to their attempts that the untimely arrests occurred in Brazil. The few performances which happened in Brazil provide an example of the Living Theatre's goals, which have been called, "an attempt at an exorcism"<sup>163</sup>. Shortly

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<sup>161</sup> Ibid. 120.

<sup>162</sup> DeLuca, *Image Politics*, 36.

<sup>163</sup> Paul Ryder Ryan, Julian Beck and Judith Malina. "The Living Theatre in Brazil" *The Drama Review: TDR* 15 no. 3 (1971): 22. [www.jstor.org/stable/1144678](http://www.jstor.org/stable/1144678).

after fleeing Brazil some members of the company who were not imprisoned gave an interview wherein they described one performance given in the street,

When we got to the square, there were perhaps 2,000 people waiting and we took up positions at six different points, enacting plays with different subjects, such as the State, Property, War, Love, Money and Death. These were plays without words, done in an Artaudian style, ritualistically and repetitiously. In the end, there was a transformation with all the actors tied up in ropes or chains. We tied ourselves up in as sexual a manner as our imaginations could invent. Eventually, the people watching the play unchained us and us all joined in a musical Chord of Liberation.<sup>164</sup>

The member of the company being interviewed calls the liberation scene a "transformation"<sup>165</sup>. Looking at the Living Theatre's next piece, *Six Public Acts to Transmute Violence in Concord*, this exact bit is performed again: the actors tie each other up and wait for the audience to free them. *Six Public Acts* culminated in "The House of Love", which called for two kinds of transformations: A transformation in the audiences' understanding of marriage as ultimately a form of domination, and a transformation in the audience's conception of their own agency as liberators. When the Living Theatre entrusted their audience to liberate them, they trusted them to break the fourth wall and to dissolve the boundaries of theatre, thereby contributing to a change in the established conventions.<sup>166</sup>

### **Cake and Money**

Another performance of ecstatic and rhetorical transformation occurred in Brazil at the end of one show when performers and audience members joined in eating a

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<sup>164</sup> Ibid. 24.

<sup>165</sup> Joe Chaikin worked with the Living Theatre in Brazil.

<sup>166</sup> Claudio Vincenti, "The Living Theater's Six Public Acts" *The Drama Review: TDR* 19 no. 3 (1975): 92. [www.jstor.org/stable/1144999](http://www.jstor.org/stable/1144999) The outcome of this goal was not always realized by actual audience members, and plants were sometimes used to spur on the liberation.

massive 4' x 6' cake the Living Theatre had baked, which was frosted to look like a giant *cruzero*, the Brazilian monetary note. In areas like Ouro Preto the Living Theatre generated ideas when they, "studied these people, much as one would study a character"<sup>167</sup> But what did it mean to eat a Money-Cake? One way to read the Money Cake is as an anti-capitalist satirizing of the Christian Church, due to the processional staging which harkens back to medieval pageant plays. But instead of employing a cross or another religious symbol on the cake, the monetary note adorns the cake as a symbol of that which is celebrated. In addition to its medieval form, the *Legacy of Cain* draws on other Christian rituals as well. In eating a cake together at the end of a performance, audiences and performers partake in a kind of communion and enter into a bond with others. As an expression of nourishment the money note is symbolic for the way it can never nourish the parts of us that are human: practically speaking, we cannot eat money. It is this irony that is explored during the Money-Cake. This event is reminiscent of the Theatre's other pseudo-famous activity performed during *Paradise Now!*; the burning of one-dollar bills. These symbolic actions meant to awaken consciousness and were not intended to promote wasteful destruction<sup>168</sup>. As a symbolic act meant to disrupt our ideas around the worth of money, eating the Money-Cake disrupts the balance between the ideographs Money and Food.

A second, more depressing way to read the Money Cake is as an act of consumption, which, while it may provide a political commentary for some audience members, may also become a celebration of capital for others. This kind of reading is

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<sup>167</sup> Ryan, "The Living Theatre in Brazil", 23.

<sup>168</sup> Judith Malina, *The Enormous Despair*, 113. The theatre convinced an audience member during a show to not burn a large sum of money, but instead to donate it to an anarchist company called "The Motherfuckers" where it would, "support the weakening of the fabric better than anywhere else."

not my preferred one, but I have included it because it takes into account variation in audience reception. In this alternate reading, eating a cake still constitutes a celebration, but what is celebrated is frosted atop the cake without irony. Thus, the cake itself symbolizes the ultimate expression of capitalist celebration and indulgence. By eating the cake, performers and audience join in the celebration, gathered with others who share their sentiments. In this reading, the ideographs Food and Money are not disrupted, their linkages are just presented in a new way. Food and Money are united, bound together by the cake, which symbolizes the celebration of capital.<sup>169</sup>

In my previous chapter I stressed that the Living Theatre's motives have been to bring their audiences to pre-revolutionary consciousness. The re- articulation of ideographs may be seen as a method which creates an openness, allowing audiences to imagine the world in a new way. Schechner calls this concept, "performance consciousness", stating, "The beauty of 'performance consciousness' is that it invites alternatives: both 'this' and 'that' are both operative simultaneously... Performance consciousness is subjunctive, full of alternatives and potentiality... (It is) a celebration of contingency."<sup>170</sup> Schechner wrote this in 1982, a decade after the Living Theatre worked to promote pre-revolutionary consciousness in Brazil.

The emphasis on potentiality and spontaneity of performance consciousness and pre-revolutionary consciousness mirrors the anarchist rhetoric which the Living Theatre subscribes to. But the Money-Cake celebrates a form of contingency. It allows for the

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<sup>169</sup> A partial description of this performance can also be found in Rosenthal's "The Living Theatre's Arrested Development in Brazil", 66.

<sup>170</sup> Michael Vanden Heuvel, *Performing Drama, Dramatizing Performance: Alternative Theater and the Dramatic Text*, (Ann Arbor, The University of Michigan Press, 1991): 6.



assertion that we are all dependent on one another, and (for the time being) on capital, and on food, but we celebrate that there may be a better way to act in the world. When we 'eat money' we are simultaneously complicit in ideology of capital, but we're given space to choose. Do we eat to survive, or is it an act of conspicuous consumption? By disarticulating the ideographs Cake and Money, the Living Theatre's ideographic performance in Brazil opened multiple avenues to construct reality.

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## CONCLUSION

The popular image made available in the press (and subsequently utilized to publicize not only the lecture tour, but the cover of the 1972 catalog of Amitin's Universal Movement Repertory Theatre) displays Beck and Malina behind bars, in effect, in solidarity with those in prison although it was not the official tour poster which was created by Mark Hall Amitin. I argue that the two major images of Beck and Malina during this time, either as "jailbirds" in Brazil or on the official poster for the tour (which featured Julian Beck meditating on stage), created a conflicting visual-rhetorical account of the impact of the Brazil Period on the Living Theatre's aesthetic and political goals.

Even before the Brazil Period, the Living Theatre was considering a fundamental turn in their tactical maneuvering, their rhetorical devices, and their performative methods. In short, it was time for a new strategy. The group planned to disband following the 1968-1969 U.S. tour of *Paradise Now!*, in order to form different 'cells' which might accomplish different aims. The Living Theatre saw itself as needing to break free of the institution they believed they had become, a large company of over 40 people traveling together with enough notoriety to be invited onto television networks like CBS, for interviews they didn't feel comfortable giving.<sup>171</sup>

For the Living Theatre, an anti-capitalist collective, their advertising will necessarily exist in conflict with their professed principles. And although they did not

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<sup>171</sup> Judith Malina, *The Enormous Despair* (New York: Random House, 1972), 105. "Should one-how (and if ever) - talk about the Revolution on TV? Or refuse ever to look out of CBS's eye and speak out of their loudspeakers? And if so, when/ And if so, how, how much, under what conditions?"

"sell their bodies"<sup>172</sup> under such dire circumstances as they encountered in Brazil, the act of doing theatre for a living means that as performers their bodies are the products which are created, advertised, and ultimately consumed. However, creating and sustaining a paying audience-base was always a secondary concern to their anarchist practice, and perhaps this is why the theatre remains polarizing to this day.

Gillian Rose calls the most common visual-rhetorical reading strategy the "compositional modality", and she borrows Irit Rogoff's term, "the good eye" to describe common reader strategy for artwork.<sup>173</sup> The theatre's manager and long-time friend Mark Hall Amitin has described Julian Beck as always having had, "an eye for beauty"<sup>174</sup>, which he imbued into Living Theatre productions, and passed on to his friends and fellow theatre-practitioners. This eye, this attention to design and rhetoric, from posters to performance, has been utilized to contribute to the history and analysis of the Living Theatre's Brazil Period. Additionally, DeLuca's notions of disarticulating ideographs provides a theoretical framework to critique and understand Living Theatre performances previously disregarded by critics as 'unreasonable.'

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<sup>172</sup> Julian Beck, *The Life of the Theatre*, 101. A letter by Judith Malina, "I am with the people who sell their labor, their bodies, their lives, to escape starvation in their struggle for life. I am thinking of the women who have to carry water on their heads up the high hills of Rio so that someone can turn on the tap in California, I am thinking of the children who are starving in India so the professors can in Kansas can talk about liberty, I am thinking of the unbalanced world, the polluted planet, the imminent apocalyptic disaster when, madness, the world falls down, and the light goes out, and we drown down, too soon."

<sup>173</sup> Gillian Rose, *Visual Methodologies: An Introduction to the Interpretation of Visual Materials*. (Sage: 2001) 33.

<sup>174</sup> Mark Hall Amitin, Interviewed by the author, November 17, 2014.

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