PETER WEISS'S MARAT/SADE:
INTENTIONS, INFLUENCES, AND ACHIEVEMENTS

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION ........................................ 1

Chapter

I. A BRIEF LOOK AT PETER WEISS ................. 3

II. PETER WEISS'S MARAT/SADE: INTENTIONS ...... 8
   Historical Background and Summary of the Play
   Weiss's Intentions Regarding the Setting and the Form of the Play
   Weiss's Intentions Regarding the Marat/Sade Debate
   Summary

III. PETER WEISS'S MARAT/SADE: INFLUENCES .... 20
   Brechtian Influence
   Artaudian Influence
   Synthesis of Brecht and Artaud

IV. PETER WEISS'S MARAT/SADE: ACHIEVEMENTS ... 34
   Peter Brook's Experiment
   Brook's Production
   Reactions After the New York Opening

CONCLUSION ......................................... 44

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY. ............................ 46
INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this thesis is to study playwright Peter Weiss's first major work, *The Persecution and Assassination of Jean-Paul Marat as Performed by the Inmates of the Asylum of Charenton, Under the Direction of the Marquis de Sade*, commonly and hereafter referred to as *Marat/Sade*. The attempt will be to examine the play from its inception, beginning with the playwrighting philosophy that Weiss had established for himself, based on his German background, through the important influences upon which he based his work, and finally to the peak of the play's success, Peter Brook's production.

Weiss had definite ideas about what the purpose of a writer should be. These views ultimately stemmed from his feelings of guilt at having lived through and seen his fellow Germans slaughtered in Hitler's concentration camps, his feelings of not belonging to any country, and his determination to make his writing mean something more than a shelter for himself or the satisfaction of his personal desires. He wanted more than to express sympathy for the oppressed and exploited; he wanted to stand up for them in his writing, to be their spokesman.

Weiss felt that capitalism was largely to blame for the state of the world. His first major work, *Marat/Sade*, written from a Marxist point of view, depicts the debate between Marat, representing revolution, and Sade, representing the "doomed" Western way of life. Marat wants change through revolution; Sade states that neither revolution nor anything can ever bring about the changes that Marat
advocates. The play is a debate within Peter Weiss himself. In the end, Weiss has made it clear, both in the text and in statements he has made, that he favors Marat, that Marat should be the victor.

The influence of Bertolt Brecht upon Weiss will be noted. Indeed, so much of what Weiss believes and writes shows the Brechtian influence. Also noted will be the indirect influence of Antonin Artaud upon Weiss, and this same influence emerging strongly in Peter Brook's production. For it was through this production that Marat/Sade truly earned its fame. This was not the fame that Weiss would have preferred, that of having tremendous social significance upon the audience, but a fame built on Brook's fantastic production, a production so theatrical that Weiss's basic intentions and meanings were, to most who saw the play, dimmed or even lost.
CHAPTER I

A BRIEF LOOK AT PETER WEISS

Peter Weiss was born in 1916 in Berlin. His father, a Hungarian Jew, was a prosperous textile manufacturer who had converted to Christianity for his wife, a former actress. Says Weiss, "I never particularly thought of myself as a Jew. I was simply a Berliner and a German."¹ His was a happy home by the standards of the society into which he had been born. As Weiss grew up, he became increasingly interested in painting and writing, and decreasingly interested in what would have been comforting to his parents.

In 1934, during the rise of Hitler, the family emigrated to England. They stayed in England for a couple of years, then went to Czechoslovakia, and finally settled in Sweden. Weiss tried to become a part of the Swedish world, but his efforts were futile. His family's conversion to Christianity began to bother him, not because of any concern for the religious or ideological issues, but because of the sense of helplessness he felt at not being able to assist the Jews, who were being slaughtered by the millions in German concentration camps.

The years of non-commitment to the Jewish cause were to make a lasting impression upon his life, and indeed upon his writing.

In a speech delivered at a conference on "The Artist in the Affluent Society" at Princeton University in 1966, Weiss reflected on these early years.

Since the beginning of my work my attitude toward commitment has steadily changed. In my first attempts to write I had only my own existence in mind. It was the time of emigration and war. I didn’t belong anywhere and I made a virtue out of the non-belonging. My commitment was not to be engaged in a struggle which in my view was insane. Even if the whole world were to divide into a life-and-death struggle I would try to keep out of it. ... My commitment was not to draw any attention to myself. So I could build up my superiority while the world outside was in convulsions. ... ²

Using his art for a shelter, Weiss finally realized it was impossible for him not to become involved. So, bearing the burden of his guilt, he attempted to find the answers to his troubled questions in a new commitment to his art.

Real peace was impossible, even for me, as long as the disaster was going on outside. ... I was fascinated by the power of destruction, I was drawing and writing down my visions, I made art into a shelter as the world fell apart. ... Then suddenly it was all over. ... There was one essential question: who needed my writing? And could my writing contribute to making life more habitable? It was not enough to establish empathy with the suppressed and exploited, I also had to stand up for them in my writing. I could no longer believe in an independent circle of art - even if this meant that I had to start all over again and to face failure. ... ³


³Ibid., p. 655.
In his autobiographical novel, *Exile*, Weiss evokes the years of obscurity and the agonies that went into the makings of a successful writer, while at the same time being a "post-Auschwitz reflection on the meaning of identity."\(^4\) The novel is in two parts: *Leavetaking*, in which he describes the frustrations of his youth, resulting mainly from an uncloseable gap between his parents and himself, and *Vanishing Point*, which reflects his first attempts at painting, writing, and love. Underlying the entire novel is the constant theme of guilt, both personal and universal. His personal guilt at having survived the death of his people paralyzed his talent for years, but at the end of the novel he frees himself from the bonds of race and nationhood. "That evening, in the spring of 1947, on the embankment in the Seine in Paris, at the age of thirty, I saw that it was possible to live and work in the world, and that I could participate in the exchange of ideas that was taking place all around, bound to no country."\(^5\) This is indeed what Weiss does - he lives in Sweden with his Swedish wife, Gunilla Palmstierna, but continues to write in German.

However, the mere exchange of ideas was not enough. Over the years, Weiss has built his ideas into a complete model for a country or a world in which he can at last feel at home. Perhaps the model itself suffices. He can use this model in his writing as a substitute for the country which he has lost. In the model he

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can inject his own ideas of how things should be. This is what Weiss does in his plays. "Every single word I put down and present to the public is political - aimed at achieving a specific effect."6

Weiss sounds like a Communist.

I grew up in a bourgeois society, and I have spent most of my life freeing myself from the repressions, prejudices and egotism which this milieu forced upon me. I thought my artistic work could make me free. But I have come to realize that an artist cannot decently stand aside when prisons are being filled in countries where discrimination on the grounds of race or poverty still exist. My work can make sense only if it is in direct relation to the world's positive forces. These are the Socialist forces, whether they have already achieved power or are fighting for it in wars of national liberation.7

As much as he rejects the West and calls it a doomed world, Weiss does not fully accept any actual Communist alternatives. What entrances him about Communism or Socialism (he uses the terms interchangeably) is the hope he claims to see in it rather than its present reality. He states, "Ideologically, the West has nothing new to offer. Its only contribution comes from its potential of capital and arms. But it is now being challenged by peoples who have been suppressed for hundreds of years so they could produce the means for the West's riches."8

In summary, Weiss believes that it is the obligation of the writer to lend his voice to the exploited and the oppressed. His two major plays, Marat/Sade and The Investigation, are both concerned

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6Clausen, "Weiss/Propagandist and Weiss/Playwright," p. 128.

7Ibid.

8Ibid., p. 130.
with the rights of the individual and the evils of power. Both plays were written as an attack on capitalism, and indeed, the entire Western way of life.

The picture presented seems to clearly indicate that in Peter Weiss we have a playwright using his plays strictly for propaganda purposes. He states this in what seems to be a creed he has set up for himself.

Even if I had the most brilliant theatrical idea, I would not turn it into a play - never, never - if I could not also make it express a message. The greatest danger, as I see it, is that one might come to prize an artistic work for its own sake rather than for the view it propagates. I cannot and do not want to find refuge in some imaginary no man's land.\[9\]

Marat/Sade, then, became for Weiss the first important vehicle with which he could convey his political ideas. However, as will be seen, the Peter Brook production of the play went against Weiss's creed in that it was indeed prized more for its artistic display than for Weiss's political views.

\[^{9}\text{Ibid., pp. 130-31.}\]
CHAPTER II

PETER WEISS'S MARAT/SADE: INTENTIONS

Historical Background and Summary of the Play

Peter Weiss was inspired to do Marat/Sade, and thus begin his career as a playwright, when he saw a "bad movie" about the murder of Marat. "I struggled for a long time to find a dramatic form that would express my concepts. Then I happened to discover that de Sade actually did write and produce plays staged by the inmates of the Charenton insane asylum. Not that he ever did one on the murder of Marat - but he could have."¹

Basically, the structure of the play combines a philosophical discourse and a sequence of semi-historical scenes from the French Revolution illustrating the philosophical argument. The setting is the Charenton insane asylum's therapeutic bath. Charenton was an institution for those people whose behavior had made them socially unacceptable, whether they were insane or not.

Jean Paul Marat (1743-1793) and the Marquis de Sade (1740-1814) visibly are the protagonists of the play. From 1801 until his death in 1814, Sade was a prisoner in the asylum of Charenton, his imprisonment a result of sexual offenses, where he produced plays among the patients. In Paris circles it was considered "in" to attend

¹Clausen, "Weiss/Propagandist and Weiss/Playwright," p. 132.
one of Sade's theatrical performances at Charenton. The plays produced were ones which Sade himself had written; unfortunately, no evidence of these plays exists today. The plays represented his last attempts to communicate with his fellow beings.

Marat was a renowned physician who became editor of a revolutionary paper and contributed to the massacres of the French Revolution and its perversion in Napoleon's rise. He was doomed by a skin disease and by 18th century medicine to remain permanently in a cooling bath.²

No evidence exists to indicate that Marat and Sade met in life. Their encounter in the play is imaginary, based on the single fact that it was Sade who spoke the memorial address at Marat's funeral, simply to save himself from the guillotine.

If the idea of bringing Sade into contact with Marat in his final hour is my own invention, the picture of Marat at this time accords with fact. The psychosomatic skin disease from which he suffered in the last years of his life ... forced him to spend many hours in the bath in order to soothe his itching. And here he was on Saturday, July 13, 1793, when Charlotte Corday came three times to his door before she gained entry and stabbed him.³

Weiss's lengthy title describes precisely the three aspects of the play: 1) The Persecution and Assassination of Jean-Paul Marat, 2) as Performed by the Inmates of the Asylum of Charenton, 3) Under the Direction of the Marquis de Sade.


Thus Weiss' title introduces us to his two main characters, Sade, and a nameless actor playing Marat; Weiss' title describes the main form of his drama, a play within the play; and Weiss' title announces the importance of the setting of his play, the insane asylum at Charenton near Paris.4

The title can also be viewed on another level:

"The Persecution and Assassination of Marat" - this is the semi-historical stratum; "Performed by the Inmates of Charenton" - this is the play in the play; and "Under the Direction of the Marquis de Sade" - this the layer of consciousness.5

The plot is difficult to summarize because the action switches back and forth into one of the following three historical phases: 1793, the French Revolution and the assassination of Marat; 1808, Sade's production in Charenton; and 20th century, the hour of the performance. The play begins with the actors making a ceremonial entrance on stage. The director of Charenton, Monsieur Coulmier, introduces and summarizes, in rhymed verse, the historical subject of the play within the play, and following this, the characters pose in a "heroic tableau." Then the Herald, serving as Master of Ceremonies and Prompter, summarizes the plot of the inner play while mentioning the specific maladies from which each actor suffers, all of this also in rhymed verse. Four singers pay homage to Marat while the asylum patients chant revolutionary cries of freedom until Monsieur Coulmier interrupts them. Indeed, several times throughout the play, Coulmier, representing the bourgeoisie, finds it necessary


to interrupt the outcries of revolution, warning that they will not be tolerated. Charlotte Corday, the assassin, is introduced, played by a somnambulist. (Historically, Charlotte Corday envisioned herself as another Joan of Arc.) She pays her first visit to Marat, then is told by Sade that according to history she must return two more times before she can stab him, which she does.

Sade and the actor playing Marat have several encounters, Marat the idealist, believing that the salvation of society can be found in the revolution, and Sade the perennial nihilist, scoffing at the validity of moral values and the efficacy of purpose. Also important are Jacques Roux, a former priest turned radical socialist; Duperret, Charlotte Corday's lover, who must constantly be restrained from making advances to Charlotte; and Simone Evrard, Marat's mistress, who attends Marat, changing his bandages. The play ends with an epilogue, following the stabbing, in which the patients form a column and begin to march to the cries of "Revolution," resulting in complete chaos. In desperation Coulmier gives the signal to close the curtain.

Weiss's Intentions Regarding the Setting and the Form of the Play

As mentioned, the Marquis de Sade did produce plays at the Charenton asylum near Paris. However, this alone is not the reason for Weiss's decision to set his play in an insane asylum, with madmen for actors. Rather, the intensity of the ideas expressed by Marat and Sade could best emerge through the depiction of insanity.
"Insanity establishes the inflection, the intensity of Marat/Sade, from the opening image of the ghostly inmates who are to act in Sade's play... Insanity is the register of the intensity of the individual performances as well."  

Weiss wishes not merely to present his audience with ideas but to immerse the audience in them. The setting insures that this debate takes place in a constant atmosphere of barely suppressed violence: all ideas are volatile at this temperature... insanity proves to be the most austere (even abstract) and drastic mode of expressing in theatrical terms the reenacting of ideas...”

Through this immersion the audience begins to feel that it, too, is a part of the asylum world, and that "it is the world which is mad and hypocritical, not the lunatics who are the misfits of man's own irrationality." The ending in the Peter Brook production bears this latter point out. When the audience applauds, the actors turn, face the audience, and applaud them. This gesture, used here as a symbol of hostility toward the audience, says, "Who are really the madmen?"

Thus, what Weiss has done is to create the illusion that reason and emotional irrationality are inseparable.

In its own way, Weiss's play is a plea for that mad, necessary illusion that sustains man and makes him

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7Ibid., p. 166.

endure all horror: that somehow life does have meaning, and that there may be a sanity that lies, like Lear's, on the far side of madness.9

Weiss's title informs us that he is using the technique of a play within the play. Weiss, as will be seen, was very much interested in the alienation theory of Bertolt Brecht, that to teach the audience, rather than move them, techniques must be used to alienate the audience from emotional involvement. Thus we are always aware that we are watching a play within a play. The actors frequently forget their lines and need prompting from the Herald. M. Coulmier continuously interrupts, objecting to the revolutionary sentiments.

The device of the play within the play is more complex in Marat/Sade than in other plays because supposedly Sade has written it, and yet he has several speeches in it. Are these speeches written into the script, or is he interrupting his own script? We never really learn. The play that Sade has written is further complicated by the fact that the people who are trying to create an illusion of reality on stage are lunatics.

... since the inner play is performed by madmen, it dazzles by a spectrum of illusion, for each of the madmen-actors projects his aberration and struggles against it. Each of the madmen in the audience on stage is also locked into his own illusion - twitching, moaning, drooling, swaying, changing. Caught in that sustained chaos on stage, one might feel that his own relatively uneventful daily existence is the most monstrous illusion of all. ...10

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10Cohn, "Marat/Sade: An Education in Theatre," p. 481.
In conclusion, Weiss has chosen to present his ideas in the setting of an insane asylum, acted by patients for others in the asylum, ideas that emerge from the debate between Marat and Sade.

Weiss's Intentions Regarding the Marat/Sade Debate

In discussing the Marat/Sade debate, it is important to keep in mind Weiss's commitment to his art, as stated in Chapter 1. Weiss wanted to use his writings for didactic purposes. The Marat and Sade of history became secondary. "Sade, just as much as Marat or any other figure in this play, is simply the medium through which Weiss demonstrates a problem of human existence."^11

Marat is the activist extreme. A former physician and researcher in natural and anthropological science, "he has now concentrated on social engineering and has become a radical forerunner of Marx in the process."^12 He exclaims, "I am the revolution," and as the extreme provoker of public revolution is bent on a program to perfect the world.

Sade has grown weary of action. He exhibits the existentialist personality: introspection and isolation, a leaning toward pure imagination rather than material application. "He distrusts the material, and he has faith neither in human knowledge nor in any romantic notion of human perfectability."^13 He knows neither good

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nor himself; nothing but fear, suffering, and death is certain to him. What he does know is that

paradise on this earth is a dream of utter foolishness that becomes a bloody nightmare the instant we try to realize it by means of revolution. This does not mean that Sade is free of paradisiacal aspirations. However, he knows himself and others well enough not to look for paradise in the practical cosmos of society. Rather, he strives for it absurdly ... within the microcosm of himself.14

He states in the play, "For me the only reality is imagination, the world inside myself. The Revolution no longer interests me."15

Thus the heart of the play is a running debate between Sade, in his chair, and Marat, in his bath, on the meaning of the French Revolution, "on the psychological and political premises of modern history, but seen through a very modern sensibility, one equipped with the hindsight afforded by the Nazi concentration camps."16 Both men struggle with the same problem, how to overcome the despair of being alive, but the struggle goes in opposite directions. Sade is realistic, whereas Marat is idealistic. Sade is an individualist, whereas Marat is a man who denies himself to become the spirit of the revolution. Sade sees things as he thinks they are, whereas Marat sees things as they ought to be.

Where does Peter Weiss stand in this debate? This question has been pondered by many since the play was written. "... the


audience is never sure when Marat and de Sade are speaking for themselves - or for Peter Weiss."17 Weiss himself says:

Marat/Sade ... is perhaps too open to interpretation. In most Western productions, the emphasis has been on its theatrical, aesthetic aspects and on de Sade as individual and libertine. In East Germany, it has been staged as a political play, and the hero has been Marat the revolutionary while de Sade has been portrayed as representing the doomed Western way of life. I think any director is entitled to his own interpretation, but I personally prefer the political one.18

An epilogue which Weiss wrote for the production in Rostock, East Germany, makes it clear that his own sympathy lies with Marat. The epilogue was omitted from other productions because "it would have made the play too long for audiences that did not - like East Germany - have to be indoctrinated at any artistic cost."19 Likewise, before the London production opened, Weiss stated that Marat/Sade is "a Marxist play. Marat should be the victor; if de Sade wins the debate, that is bad."20

In spite of Weiss's statements that he favored Marat and the Marxist point of view in the debate, critics still maintain that Weiss gave Sade an equally strong case.

There is nothing in the text to make us believe that de Sade did not equally represent the author's intention in his stand for the individual and his prophetic vision,


18Clausen, "Weiss/Propagandist and Weiss/Playwright," p. 131.

19Ibid.

not to say cynicism, of the possible results of Revolution ... to discover the purpose of his play through a Marxist-Leninist slant of production is to admit that the director has made up his mind and answered his doubts for him.21

True, Weiss has Sade speak more intelligently. "It is de Sade who speaks the most eloquent, as well as the most interesting words. ..."22 This is because Sade has written the play being produced and is playing himself, whereas Marat is being acted by a nameless patient. However, Weiss clearly evokes a lasting sympathy for Marat, especially when Marat replies to Sade:

If I am extreme I am not extreme in the same way as you. Against Nature's silence I use action. In the vast indifference I invent a meaning. I don't watch unmoved I intervene and say that this and this are wrong and I work to alter them and improve them.23

Peter Brook, who was perhaps as close to the play as anyone, stated in the introduction to the play that it is "firmly on the side of revolutionary change."24

Whether one regards the play as a Marxist play with Marat as the victor or not, one cannot help but pause to reflect, if only for a moment, on the question of where the synthesis of Marat and Sade lies.

21Ibid., p. 249.
23Weiss, Marat/Sade, I.xii,26-27.
24Ibid., p. vii.
... it is perhaps not initially imperative to declare oneself on the validity of Weiss's position in this play but simply to recognize that the play aims to illustrate the anguish of decision, the gravity of the human problem involved: that social change always entails the possibility of sanguinary upheaval - a price too terrible to pay in view of man's disposition to turn the most high-minded enterprises to mediocrity, and in the end to perpetuate injustice.25

The play does not have a moral. Weiss does not attempt to answer questions or solve the debate. The burden is placed on the play's perceiver. "So far as I am concerned the essence of the play is ... the constant pull and tug of the arguments, which are intended to see through the humbug of society and to provoke the audience to think."26 Marat sums up what Weiss was trying to do when he states, "The important thing is to pull yourself up by your own hair to turn yourself inside out and see the whole world with fresh eyes."27 Now we do this is up to us.

Summary

Clearly, Weiss wrote Marat/Sade in accordance with his playwrighting "creed." His intentions in writing the play were to present two political points of view. The setting, an insane asylum, and the form, a play within the play, served to enhance these political ideas, to immerse the audience in them while allowing them to remain


27Weiss, Marat/Sade, I.xii.27.
emotionally uninvolved. Weiss intended for Marat's side of the
debate, the side of revolution, to be the stronger of the two sides,
and thus for Marat to win in the end. Although Weiss favored Marat,
he does not appear to be saying that revolution, or indeed any
political action, can be the only answer to end suffering and
oppression. Indeed, Marat himself admits the shortcomings of the
Revolution, admits that he does not know where the Revolution will
lead. He also admits to not knowing how to even run the Revolution.
All that Marat, and Weiss, are sure of is that people must take a
second look at this world in which we live, at the things we have for
so long accepted and tolerated, to look at the world with new eyes.
And if we are truly honest in that look, then we will realize that
man, because of his nature, must act, must fight, must if necessary
die, to modify those conditions that are causing the suffering and
oppression, rather than just sit back and accept them, as Sade would
do. For only when we stop being concerned with our private loves
and hatreds and start becoming concerned with what Weiss terms the
"real world" can we hope to find where the real answer to the debate
lies.
CHAPTER III

PETER WEISS'S MARAT/SADE: INFLUENCES

Brechtian Influence

In nearly every public statement he has made concerning his playwrighting, Peter Weiss has paid homage to Bertolt Brecht. Hanging in Weiss's studio, where he does all of his writing, is a picture of Brecht. Weiss admires Brecht's Berliner Ensemble more than any other theatre. In an interview for the Tulane Drama Review, Weiss summed up the profound influence which Brecht has had upon him.

Brecht is the one who has helped me most, because he never wrote anything just for the sake of the dramatic event but rather to show how the world is and find out how to change it. He never exhibits figures on stage in an unbearable situation without giving the audience a chance to find out what can be done.¹

One can see from the first part of this statement, "... he never wrote anything just for the sake of the dramatic event. ..." how Weiss formulated his own playwrighting philosophy, "The greatest danger ... is that one might come to prize an artistic work for its own sake. ..."

Weiss appears to have been more interested, and thereby influenced, in Brecht the theoretician and politician than in Brecht the playwright. Politically, Brecht, like Weiss, was a Marxist. He, too, did much of his writing in exile. His writing, with its anti-Nazi

flavor, was interrupted by the rise of Hitler in 1933, and from then until 1949 he spent much time writing in Scandinavia and the United States. Thus, both knew what it was like to be a man without a country. Unlike Weiss, however, Brecht returned to Germany and continued to write and produce plays there until his death in 1956.

The basis of Brecht's theoretical writings was his strong dislike of the "orthodox" theatre, particularly the German classical stage. He felt that this type of theatre draws so much upon the audience's emotions that it prevents the audience from using their heads. The audience is made to identify with the characters; "the means by which this is achieved falsify the picture of reality; and the audience is too contentedly hypnotized to see that it is false."²

Brecht believed that it was useless to stage a play if the production discouraged a critical, objective frame of mind on the part of the viewers. In the 1920's, he became interested in the idea of an "Epic Theatre" which would adopt a different approach. He wrote, "The essential point of the epic theatre is perhaps that it appeals less to the feelings than to the spectator's reason. Instead of sharing an experience the spectator must come to grips with things."³

³Ibid., p. 170.
To achieve the purpose of an epic theatre, Brecht introduced the concept of "verfremdung," meaning alienation, estrangement, or disillusion. The meaning of the word as applied to theatre had one single objective to Brecht: "to show everything in a fresh and unfamiliar light, so that the spectator is brought to look critically even at what he has so far taken for granted."\textsuperscript{4}

Brecht did not wish to alienate the spectator in the sense of making him hostile to the play, but rather to create a method by which the audience could stand apart and view the play with critical detachment. He wanted to instruct rather than to move. Such an atmosphere of detachment was perfect for the didacticism of his plays: the plight of the working class, war, and general concern with moral and social behavior. He managed to shed light on "that interesting and largely neglected area where ethics, politics, and economics meet."\textsuperscript{5}

In practice, many of the alienation techniques in Brecht's plays were a product of his work with the Berliner Ensemble rather than a product of the plays themselves. Some alienation techniques, however, were apparent in the text. He used the Elizabethan technique of multiple scenes flowing together, however unrelated, so as to lead to a cumulative, rather than a conclusive, effect. Many of his plays employed prologues and epilogues. He used music in many of his plays,

\textsuperscript{4}Ibid., p. 179.

\textsuperscript{5}Ibid., p. 79.
sometimes using a chorus of singers, other times not. Irregular
unrhymed verse became increasingly popular as he wrote, for this dry,
choppy style "purified his language and showed him the practical and
aesthetic value of saying just what one really means and no more."6
For settings he preferred platforms with tables or chairs. Anything
approaching a naturalistic setting was abhorred.

In working with his Berliner Ensemble, lighting had to be
bright and clear, for "shadows, if only relative, hamper the dialogue
that issues from them."7 Scene changes were often visible. Screens
were used in the background, upon which were projected images. He
worked with his actors to prevent identification with the characters
they were portraying, for he felt that not only must the actor not
put his audience in a trance, he himself must not be put into a
trance.

His muscles must remain relaxed, for even a turn of the
head with tensed muscles magically carries away with it
the eyes, and even the heads of the spectators - and this
would reduce their ability to reflect or feel emotion
about this gesture. ... Even if playing one possessed,
the actor must not appear possessed himself: how else
could the spectators find out what it is that possesses
the possessed.8

These techniques, and others, were employed by Brecht to support
his alienation theory, a theory which, along with his plays, have made
him one of the most influential theatre men of the twentieth century.

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6Tbid., p. 97.

7Tbid., p. 161.

8Martin Esslin, A Choice of Evils (London: Eyre &
Weiss, like Brecht, in wishing to use his plays for the exploitation of his own ideas, believes that the best way to achieve this goal is through alienation, making the familiar strange, causing the audience to view the familiar in an unfamiliar context, so that they can judge the event. Peter Brook states, "The Marat/Sade could not have existed before Brecht: it is conceived by Peter Weiss on many alienating levels." Many of the techniques Weiss used to alienate the audience were ones which Brecht had used; a few were his own. The most obvious one, mentioned in Chapter II, is the play within the play. The audience is always aware that they are watching a play because they can always see actors on stage watching the play. Actually, Brecht used this technique only once, in The Caucasian Chalk Circle. Another important alienating device is the construction of the scenes. Each scene is constructed as a self-contained unit. There is no flow to the sequence of scenes, and there is no building up of suspense. We know exactly what is going to happen. The title tells us Marat will be assassinated, Monsieur Coulmier states this in the prologue, and then the Herald tells us again. The play runs against any sense of time, and we keep shifting into different periods of history.

Piecing it into 33 scenes, Weiss minimizes the story itself - film-like fragments convey changing moods. Charlotte Corday mimes buying her murder weapon scenes after she displays the knife at her first attempt to approach Marat. Alienation, in the manner of Brecht, also serves to invalidate chronology: when Corday is about to murder Marat, Sade intervenes, telling her that

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according to history and his script, she will have to return two more times to Marat's house before the killing.\textsuperscript{10}

When the murder is finally committed, we are kept from sympathizing with Marat because he is only an actor in a play being presented. After he is stabbed in Act II, Scene 32, he hangs over his tub "as in David's classical picture." Then he rises and steps out of his bath and the epilogue occurs.

Humor also serves as an alienating device. The discrepancies between the lunatics' personalities and their parts in the play create funny situations. For example, Corday, as the assassin, ought to be a well-spring of political action. Instead, due to the patient's hypersomnia, she is prone to fall asleep at crucial moments.

Other alienation devices are apparent in the text. The Herald, and Monsieur Coulmier in the prologue, speak in rhymed verse, while Sade and Marat speak in irregular free verse. The Herald addresses the audience directly, and periodically prompts the actors. Monsieur Coulmier frequently interrupts the play with his warnings. Music is used throughout the entire play as four singers insert songs to tell the story, while a group of musicians accompanies them. Periodically, the entire group poses in a tableau.

In summary, the influence of Bertolt Brecht upon Peter Weiss is profoundly apparent in \textit{Marat/Sade}. More examples can be cited. The point to be remembered, finally, is that Weiss agreed with Brecht that the best way to reach the audience with what he as a

\textsuperscript{10}Moeller, "Weiss' Reasoning in the Madhouse," p. 167.
playwright had to say was to prevent them from becoming emotionally involved in the play. For only by remaining detached could the audience remain intent on the debate between Marat and Sade and, in the end, judge the events as Weiss wished them to.

**Artaudian Influence**

The other name most frequently mentioned regarding *Marat/Sade* is that of Antonin Artaud. Weiss has stated that the Artaudian influence in *Marat/Sade* came through Peter Brook’s production of the play rather than from his own script.

But I didn’t think of Artaud when I wrote *Marat/Sade*, which grew out of its own material and had to be played a certain way in the atmosphere which the material created. However, Peter Brook was thinking of Artaud before he produced *Marat/Sade*, and he used Artaudian techniques. This is a director’s method, and for a writer it’s secondary.11

In spite of his disclaimer, many have contended that Weiss was definitely influenced by Artaud. Whether he was, in fact, consciously aware of Artaud’s theories when he was writing *Marat/Sade* or not is not the important issue. What is important is that Artaud’s concept of a Theatre of Cruelty is evident throughout *Marat/Sade* because of Weiss’s similar conception of a Theatre of Cruelty, a theatre to assault the audience, thereby hopefully awakening in them the urge to "pull themselves up by the hair and see the world through fresh eyes." The influence of Artaud, this writer contends, can be

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present subconsciously in the playwright's mind, for today's modern theatre centers around Artaud's ideas. While revolting against traditional theatre, modern playwrights and producers are turning to Artaud's theories as the answer to reach the audience. Just as Freud subconsciously influenced writers who had read very little, if any, Freud, so Artaud has influenced many writers of today, writers who are everywhere surrounded by his Theatre of Cruelty, whether they have indeed studied his theories or not. So in spite of Weiss's statement, evidence of Artaud and his theories run throughout the text of Marat/Sade. (Interestingly, Artaud had acted the part of Marat in a film entitled Napoléon. Also, in his First Manifesto on The Theatre of Cruelty, he mentions staging "A Tale by the Marquis de Sade, in which the eroticism will be transposed, allegorically mounted and figured, to create a violent exteriorization of cruelty, and a dissimulation of the remainder."

Artaud rejected the psychological and narrative theatre, and called for a return to myth and magic, "for a ruthless exposure of the deepest conflicts of the human mind." He termed his new kind of theatre a "Theatre of Cruelty," for, he said, "Everything that acts is a cruelty. It is upon this idea of extreme action, pushed beyond all limits, that theater must be rebuilt."

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Artaud felt that the approach to theatre which had dominated for so long, the realistic approach, whereby characters had to have motivation for everything they did on stage and the audience responded on a psychological level, was absurd. His main argument was that people think and respond primarily with their senses, not with their mind; consequently, of what value was a theatre which concentrated entirely on the psychological?

Psychology ... is the cause of the theater's abasement and its fearful loss of energy, which seems to me to have reached its lowest point. And I think both the theater and we ourselves have had enough of psychology.15

Artaud likened the effect he wished his Theatre of Cruelty to have on the audience to the effects that our dreams have upon us. He wanted the audience to be confronted with the true image of their inner conflicts and desires, as brought forth in dreams.

The theater will never find itself again ... except by furnishing the spectator with the truthful precipitates of dreams, in which his taste for crime, his erotic obsessions, his savagery, his chimeras, his utopian sense of life and matter, even his cannibalism, pour out, on a level not counterfeit and illusory, but interior ... the theater must pursue by all its means a reassertion not only of all the aspects of the objective and descriptive external world, but of the internal world, that is, of man considered metaphysically.16

Deeply impressed by the Balinese theatre, with its emphasis on physical, non-verbal communication, Artaud wished to de-emphasize the importance of language.

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15Ibid., p. 77.

16Ibid., p. 92.
... the domain of the theater is not psychological but plastic and physical. And it is not a question of whether the physical language of theater is capable of achieving the same psychological resolutions as the language of words, whether it is able to express feelings and passions as well as words, but whether there are not attitudes in the realm of thought and intelligence that words are incapable of grasping and that gestures and everything partaking of a spatial language attain with more precision than they. \footnote{Tbid., p. 71.}

In practice, Artaud never really did demonstrate how his theories could be applied. His only major work, Les Cenci, modelled after Shelly's play, failed. He was committed to an insane asylum for nine years and died two years later. His theories, collected in The Theater and Its Double, have formed much of the basis for such groups as The Living Theatre in the United States, the Theatre Laboratory of Jerzy Grotowski in Poland, and for a group of actors from the Royal Shakespeare Company in London under Peter Brook. This latter was the group who did Marat/Sade in London and later on Broadway, and the influence of Artaud was ever-present in the theatricality of their production, as will be noted in Chapter IV.

Inherent in the script are very definite Artaudian principles. By situating his play in an insane asylum, thereby justifying the use of madmen for actors, Weiss no longer had to worry about accounting for the motivations of his characters. We as an audience can accept what they say and do without looking for motivations because we have been told that the actors are insane; their illnesses have been pointed out to us by the Herald. This is what Artaud means in going beyond the
psychological, in transcending traditional realism. "Freed from the limitations of what Artaud calls 'psychological and dialogue painting of the individual,' the dramatic representation is open to levels of experience which are more heroic, more rich in fantasy, more philosophical."18 In other words, because the actors think irrationally, the audience can accept, and not question, their irrational behavior.

In the scene entitled, "Marat's Liturgy," for example, Marat, as though he were praying, attacks the emperor and the Church, saying that the Church keeps preaching to us that we live in God's light of love, and that if we are asked to suffer, it is the will of God, and we must not complain. Yet, he points out, the priests

at the same time screwing from the poor their last centime
They settled down among their treasures
and ate and drank with princes
and to the starving they said
Suffer19

A mime is then performed by four patients, in which one carries a cross made of brooms, leading another with a rope around his neck, while another swings a bucket for a censer, and another prays on her rosary. Another patient comes forward and stammers the following parody of the Lord's Prayer:

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19Weiss, Marat/Sade, I.xiii.28.
Pray pray
0 pray to him
Our Satan which art in hell
thy kingdom come
thy will be done
on earth as it is in hell
forgive us our good deeds
and deliver us from holiness
Lead us
Lead us into temptation
for ever and ever
Amen

All of this is much more effectively stated and the attack much more stinging because the characters are mad. Coulmier's protests and the Herald's apology serve to underscore the entire attack even further. The audience accepts this scene and does not question the motivation of the characters.

The ritualistic aspects of the play, the chanting and marching of the patients in unison, the ritualistic miming of Charlotte Corday's arrival in Paris, are Artaudian. The entire play is an assault upon the audience's senses as well as minds. We are taken from a debate between men into cries of "Revolution!" from Charlotte Corday's first visit to Marat, to a dance of death and heads and hands being sawed off; from a whipping of Sade by Charlotte Corday to a mime with people who have known Marat and speak for him, including Voltaire. At the end of the play, the patients go completely wild and begin advancing upon the audience. In summary, although Weiss may not have had Artaud directly in mind when writing the play, it does contain very definite elements of the Theatre of

\[20\text{Ibid., I.xiii.30.}\]
Cruelty. Indeed, it may very well represent the first major work depicting Artaud's theories.

Synthesis of Brecht and Artaud

Critics have found that much of the fascination of Weiss's play, whether they liked it or not, has come from the seemingly impossible achievement of combining the theories of the two great theoreticians of twentieth century theatre: Brecht and Artaud. Theoretically, they seem to be poles apart.

How could one reconcile Brecht's conception of a didactic theater, a theater of intelligence, with Artaud's theater of magic, of gesture, of "cruelty," of feeling? The answer seems to be that, if one could effect such a reconciliation of synthesis, Weiss' play has taken a big step toward doing so. 21

Perhaps the answer lies in the fact that although theoretically Brecht's theatre, a theatre of fact, and Artaud's theatre, a theatre of cruelty, are so far apart, in real life the experiences they represent are perhaps not so far apart. Both men were rejecting the traditional theatre which surrounded them, a theatre attempting to become a carbon copy of man's life, as ineffectual and unnecessary. True, they both represent the extremes of reaching man's inner self. But, as Peter Brook states,

Brecht's use of 'distance' has long been considered in opposition to Artaud's conception of theatre as immediate and violent subjective experience. I have

21 Sontag, "Marat/Sade/Artaud," p. 73.
never believed this to be true. I believe that theatre, like life, is made up of the unbroken conflict between impressions and judgments – illusion and disillusion cohabit painfully and are inseparable. This is just what Weiss achieves. Starting with its title, everything about this play is designed to crack the spectator on the jaw, then douse him with ice-cold water, then force him to assess intelligently what has happened to him, then give him a kick in the balls, then bring him back to his senses again.22

In achieving this synthesis, Weiss has given us a vital, exciting play, made all the more vital in the hands of Peter Brook.

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22 Weiss, Marat/Sade, p. vi.
CHAPTER IV

PETER WEISS'S MARAT/SADE: ACHIEVEMENTS

Peter Brook's Experiment

In the fall of 1963, two British directors, Peter Brook and Charles Marowitz, formed an experimental group of actors that was affiliated with the Royal Shakespeare Company. The purpose of the group's work was to explore various aspects of acting and stagecraft under laboratory conditions; no public performances were planned. Twelve actors were selected, but this number later increased. The group, working from 10:00 A.M. to 6:00 P.M. daily, experimented with such concepts as Artaud's theories of sound rather than language to communicate ideas, and indeed, with the entire "theatre of cruelty" concept.

It was never our intention to create an Artaudian theatre - to do what, in fact, Artaud himself never did. But there were too many provocative insights and tantalizing challenges in The Theater and Its Double not to take him up. What was Artaudian in our work was the search for means, other than naturalistic - linguistic means, of communicating experience and insights.1

The group's first performance was a demonstration of their work using a series of short sketches. They then produced Genet's The Screens. Marat/Sade marked the culmination of the group's work.

"When Peter Weiss's play Marat/Sade came along, it was the natural

conclusion of the Group's work; a play which could not have been contemplated before the Group's existence and which now, after the work on Artaud and Genet, could not be ignored."

The play had originally opened at the Schiller Theater in West Berlin in the spring of 1964. There, as mentioned previously, the play had been staged strictly as a political play, as it was when it opened in East Germany in March of 1965. It was pointedly a Marxist play, with Marat the revolutionist clearly being victorious in the end. No question existed in the minds of the spectators as to what the point of the play was. The insane asylum served merely as the background in which Weiss's ideas could further be enhanced.

The London production, under Peter Brook's direction, was almost exclusively a theatrical one and Brook, inspired by Artaud and the work the group had done using Artaud's theories, as well as by the urge to make every production a vital and alive experience for the audience, made this production an assault upon the audience's senses that they were not soon to forget. His colleague Charles Marowitz said that Brook's Marat/Sade "restores something riotous and vital to the theatre, a kind of stylized mania which is closer to the personality of Antonin Artaud than any other single thing.""3

Brook's Production

To depict the bath-house of the asylum, Brook's set, designed by Sally Jacobs, consisted of brick walls of a grayish-beige

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2Ibid., p. 171.

3Ibid.
color, with benches along the walls, as opposed to the German production which, as Weiss had suggested, had rows of baths. In the floor were various tiled pits with slatted wooden screens covering some of the pits. The screens were first seen in a circular arrangement on the raked floor, but throughout the play underwent various highly imaginative transformations to suggest a variety of objects. On stage left was a podium on which sat Monsieur Coulmier with his wife and daughter. In the proscenium boxes were the musicians, patients at the asylum. Marat's tub sat on a center stage dais.

The inmates began entering, constantly twitching, drooling, tottering, jabbering, laughing, and lapsing into private dementia. Their faces were frighteningly realistic as the faces of madmen, and they sustained the appearance of madmen amazingly well throughout the entire play. Indeed, the depiction of the asylum world and its inhabitants was probably the outstanding feature of Brook's production. In the German productions the madhouse atmosphere was less real and more abstract. Brook's Marat/Sade had real and threatening madness in the air.

While all of the aspects of Brook's production cannot be discussed within the limits of this paper, several changes and additions that Brook made will serve to illustrate the total effect he created. The first of these additions to be mentioned is in Act I, Scene 10, the mime of Charlotte Corday's arrival in Paris. The script called for the miming of the executions at the guillotine. To further intensify the horror of these executions, Brook used
the pits in the floor and had his actors in them, bobbing up and
down with only their heads visible, giving the image of decapitated
heads falling into a horrendous pit. When the blood of the people
was shed, red paint, representing the drippings from the guillotine,
was poured from buckets; when an aristocrat was killed, the "blood"
turned to blue. In the end, when Marat dies, white paint was used
to depict his death.

Another significant change occurred in Act I, Scene 20,
when de Sade is whipped. Sade had admitted the hatred he felt for
himself, for the limitations of his mind and body, when he lay a
prisoner in the Bastille. In a masochistic fury, he has Charlotte Corday
beat him on his back as he, on his knees, continues to discuss the
drawbacks of revolution. This affords a striking contrast between
rational and irrational behavior. The script called for Corday to
use a whip to beat him; Brook had his actress use her hair. This was
done, this writer contends, to emphasize the sensual aspect of Sade's
nature; he needs other people for one thing and one thing only:
to satisfy his sexual desires. Other than the sexual needs, Sade
can live alone, within himself. The result was all the more vital
to the audience because he was feeling pleasure and pain combined.

Sound was used, as Artaud had suggested, as an effective
method to assault the audience. Such sounds as the beating of wooden
spoons on the floor and Weillish songs composed especially for the
production by Richard Peaslee continually reminded the audience that
they were surrounded, almost overwhelmed, by the madhouse atmosphere.
A change in the ending of the play was meant to jolt and mystify the audience further. In the original script, the play ends after the inmates' assault on the audience, with Coulmier, in desperation, signalling for the curtain to be closed. In Brook's production the assault occurred; the inmates were beyond control. Then suddenly, a stage manager walked on stage, blew a whistle, and the actors stopped abruptly and began to file out, applauding the audience as they did.

In summation, Brook took the play Marat/Sade and, convinced that it was the perfect play in which to try something new and vital on stage, produced it using Artaud's principles of "theatre of cruelty" and an excellent acting company. He used nearly every technique imaginable to, as Artaud put it, "attack the spectator's sensibility on all sides,"⁴ to create "a revolving spectacle which, instead of making the stage and auditorium two closed worlds, without possible communication, spreads its visual and sonorous outbursts over the entire mass of the spectators."⁵

He used extremes. The play was alternately serious and comic, elevated and crude, violent and reflective, ritualistic and improvised. He achieved, as some have suggested, the effects of a three-ring circus: the audience was never sure where to look next or what might happen. The result was that the audience became so engrossed in

⁴Artaud, The Theater and Its Double, p. 86.

⁵Ibid.
the spectacle going on before them, that the main issue of the play, the political conflict between Marat and Sade, was shoved in the background, occasionally emerging, but only to be interrupted by another shock treatment. As one critic stated, Brook used "every weapon in the theatrical arsenal to mount a sustained barrage on the senses."  

Reactions After the New York Opening

Marat/Sade opened in New York December 27, 1965, an intact importation of the London production. Ian Richardson, Patrick Magee, and Glenda Jackson played Marat, Sade, and Charlotte Corday respectively. It was to have been a limited engagement but was so successful that the run was extended and eventually taken over by an American company, which toured with it. It won the Drama Critics' Circle Award. The success of the production seems to be attributable to its immediate realization of what many critics called "total theatre." The substance of the play was either overlooked or dismissed by most of the press and audience alike. Indeed, many reviewers treated the production as if it were by Brook instead of Weiss. Most critics felt that what Brook had done was definitely to the play's advantage, since Weiss either did not have much to say to begin with, or what he did have to say was not particularly vital. Following are some of the comments:

Peter Weiss's meaning remains obscure. Perhaps it doesn't matter. From the moment the house lights are darkened, director Peter Brook takes charge and the play's intellectual content is lost in the phantasmagoria of horror theatre. ... While Marat/Sade may be run-of-the-mill cerebral drama, Peter Brook's production lifts it to the pinnacle of sensational showmanship.\footnote{Lewis, "Marat/De Sade," p. 182.}

*Time* Magazine stated, "Paradoxically, it is when the play is most sane that it makes the least exciting sense. ... Too equivocal for tragedy, too stale as intellectual inquiry, the play is largely inspired sensationalism, but quintessentially theatrical."\footnote{"Blood Bath," p. 51.}


Peter Brook ... has staged the piece with such self-indulgent extravagance that the trappings practically smother its content. ... I had the nagging notion that Mr. Brook was dwelling on the miseries of the deranged for no other reason than to prolong the shock. I suppose, though, that without the bizarre effects supplied by the purported lunatics on view there really wouldn't be much in the way of dramatic substance to distinguish this enterprise.\footnote{Clurman, "Marat/Sade," p. 83.}

Harold Clurman praised Brook's production, but stated that it very nearly swallowed the script. He says that he left the theatre unmoved, almost indifferent, left with a sense of adult entertainment, "rather than stirred by any vitalizing thought or feeling about the play's subject matter, ostensibly of crucial importance."\footnote{Clurman, "Marat/Sade," p. 83.} He went on to state that perhaps Brook could have eliminated some of the theatrics so that the audience could more readily discern what Weiss was trying to say.
Charles Marowitz summed it up this way:

One tends to appreciate the work in somewhat the same way one admires the resilience of a diving board that allows a world champion to perform a breathtaking triple somersault. Once the swimmer is in the water, that diving board looks mighty bare.\textsuperscript{11}

A few criticized both the play and the production.

\textit{Newsweek} stated:

Beneath all the business, all the violence and startling gestures, is a vacuum. Weiss, for all his pretensions, is a conventional socialist and an extremely limited philosopher. ... The irony of \textit{Marat/Sade} is that so much of it isn't new at all, except in the sense of a new barbarism. ... We are left with images of violence which mount up finally to chaos, to nihilism; we are left really with violence for its own sake, and nothing for the mind to take away. ...\textsuperscript{12}

Perhaps the most vehement statements came from John McClain of the \textit{New York Journal American}, who stated, "I found it merely extremely unpleasant and strangely pretentious. If Mr. Weiss has something important to say, which I doubt, surely there is a more palatable way of saying it."\textsuperscript{13}

Finally, Walter Kerr stated, "A seed that has now entered into me is the seed of rebellion against the substitution of theatrical production for dramatic structure."\textsuperscript{14} He also added that beneath

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\textsuperscript{11}Marowitz, "Notes on the Theatre of Cruelty," p. 171.
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the externals, there really wasn't much there in the way of dramatic structure.

In summary, most of the critics and general audience praised the production, heaping the honors upon Brook, not Weiss. And Brook, in attempting to stage the play so that Weiss's meaning would be clearer to the audience, that they might grasp more fully his message, succeeded instead in creating a production which nearly everyone praised for its own sake rather than for view it propagated. Brook, however, came to Weiss's defense.

I think that what we do on the stage, for better or worse, is exactly what the author himself was seeing on the stage of his mind, seeing in his vision. This is why I am very jealous of any attempt to divide his work from mine. I feel that any criticism of the production is a criticism of his play and that any praise of the production is a praise of his vision.\footnote{Joseph Roddy, "Sanity From the Asylum," \textit{Look}, February 22, 1966, p. 110.}

Most people, however, did separate the production from the text, and most came to the conclusion that the production was brilliant in its theatricality, while the message of the play seemed to be obscure, unclear, and unimportant.

The interest generated in Brook's production caused many college and community theatres to stage the play, most choosing to come as close to what Brook did with it as possible. United Artists bought the film rights and Brock directed the film, shooting it in eighteen days and retaining all the original members of the cast. The
film was not a particular success; however, Brook never intended it to be a box office smash. What he was attempting to do was to preserve on film as closely as possible what he had done on stage. Because of the nature of the play, it was definitely more effective on the stage. Watching it performed live, the audience became totally immersed in what was going on around them. They could focus on any one part of the stage and witness a part of the spectacle, whereas in watching the film, focus had to be concentrated on only one small piece of action. Thus the feeling of total immersion was lost.

Artaud stated that if theatre is to be alive, to be vital, to reach the inner core of the audience, then the director must go beyond the language of words that the author has used. He could foresee nothing worse than a director who was a slave to the script. He stated that since the physical language, movement, lighting, sounds, stage effects, etc., were all available to the director, that "this is the occasion for him to create in complete autonomy."\textsuperscript{16} Brook seems to have made use of the occasion to the fullest.

\textsuperscript{16}Artaud, \textit{The Theater and Its Double}, p. 119.
CONCLUSION

Much happens between the time a playwright formulates ideas and puts words down on paper supporting those ideas, and the time when those words are spoken before an audience. The addition of a group of actors, a director, and finally an audience make various degrees of change upon the original play. In the case of Marat/Sade, the addition of a group of actors such as the Royal Shakespeare Company, a director such as Peter Brook, and an audience looking for something new and exciting in theatre, such as nearly every audience existing today, made the final Brook production and the original script as Weiss conceived it almost as far apart as Marat and Sade's arguments in terms of audience reaction.

The play as written did not, as Weiss wanted, make most people stop to examine their way of life, the hypocrisy surrounding them, did not make people want to pull themselves up by their hair to look at the world with fresh eyes. Rather, the play as produced by Brook made the audience experience for the first time the effects of "total theatre" which Artaud said were so necessary to restore the theatre to its rightful place. The basic reason that the message of the play was lost was not solely due to Brook's production, but rather to the fact that what Weiss had to say was not particularly new or vital to begin with, especially to Western audiences.
It is therefore impossible to be in agreement with one writer who states that Weiss has given us one of the most important plays in the contemporary theatre, considered both in terms of text and the exciting possibilities of mise-en-scene. Considered in terms of text, the play does not seem to be particularly vital. In reading the play several times, this writer failed to see any new approach to the problems which have been, and will continue to plague man. How many more times and in how many different ways can our capitalistic way of life be attacked? How can Weiss earn a position with the top playwrights of the twentieth century, at least in the United States, when he chooses to continue to attack our way of life? He will not, it appears, with his present output of work, be claimed as a leading playwright of the future. Not one American critic who reviewed Marat/Sade, to this writer's knowledge, placed him in this category.

This is not to say that Weiss has not constructed a well-made play. In terms of mise-en-scene, the play does indeed present many exciting possibilities, which Brook utilized to the fullest. It is not to say that what Weiss has to say should not be said. Rather, if the success of a play is a result of the audience response to a play, as surely it is, then Brook must take most of the credit for making Marat/Sade the tremendous success it was, for it was the production, not the message, which the audience took away with them and will remember.
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