

A.M./A.M. La Mamma. Feb. 82.

Tendency toward increased formalisation: sharp edged, brightly & sharply lit stages/stage sets (but these are generally a hospital room; then a motel room, so the cold/clear air is appropriate) & toward dance movement, slow/abrupt/significant, in fact all the movement in this piece seems dance. Starts & ends with a movie projected on a screen that in between is lowered for performance, live performance. 1 1/2 hours. Starts with reading from N.T. by a female, perhaps an Oriental female's voice: Jesus wishing this cup to pass, Peter-Simon keeps being asleep, not 'watching' when he returns, - the spirit is ready indeed, but the flesh is weak: part of same text read again later in connection with the escape of a catatonic/autistic or so mental patient from treatment (he is dubbed something like "A.M. 34" & a "device" for various purposes that is being ^{- reduction to a robot -} worked on, i.e. this is a comment on modern psychiatry, socially integrative conceptions of mental health, an adverse comment, core of this piece of Chong's): my companion thought the piece as a whole expressed Chong's continuing sympathy for "outsiders", Jesus included, & madmen included. The "flat" text, to my non-Christian ears, from the N.T. is somewhat startling: no performance value? not theatrical: deadened by 2000 years of rites only, of course, highly theatrical in itself: no one would risk doing it on stage, though. This formalisation just a little diminishes the "transcendentality", air-of-mystery of Chong's work (it shares it with the earlier work of Wilford Leach): not so much that there is another world "beneath" this one - another world of man -, but that people generally are - some-

what sinisterly - pretending, dissembling, playing parts, are possessed of devious purposes they are acting out, - hints of conspiracies, - hidden combat: that role-playing is adapted to another play or action than the ostensible one/ones, & that people know of this, i.e. not only of their own personal pretense, hopes, traumas, viciousnesses, conflicts, but one another's, everyone's. Strong hint of evil, e.g. again in A.M./A.M. But to me Humboldt's Current was the strongest piece in this direction. The ~~Chesler~~ Getamane reading each time breaks off into a brief direct comment, the first time: "But when was this?!" & at least the first time is accompanied - or accompanies - a woodsy glade, misty, natural-paradise-paradisical projected on the curtain, a powerful picture, sharing some of the flatness of the preachery text read, but not obviously relating to it semantically: perhaps the sweet 'natural' personality of the self-sacrificer? The second reading veers into the (British-accented, male) reader's reflections on Jesus' not walking away from the situation, that he, the reader would have left, - not stayed for his crucifixion: the story of the mental patient that escapes, killing three technicians, holes up in a hotel room, where he tries to cure himself, - tries to "learn", e.g. how to smoke a cigarette, tries to learn about the world from the t.v. set in his room, paying his bills by credit card, - the "action" being that he is being traced, & is finally, we do not see this (we have seen yellow lines, horizontal on films, during the performance, at this final point we see two of them in an "x", he is crossed out: but the piece ends with the mention, over the speakers, that perhaps he evaded his pursuers, made it into the

"metropolis") is "terminated", - this story may be that of a man that does not stick around to be crucified, i.e. rendered socially conform, to be de-ego-ified, but takes off, killing others as needed, instead of letting them kill him.

The N.T. reading is followed by (incidentally: I fail to see in the piece any analogue to Peter's being unable to keep his eyes open) a film which is a trick film, accompanied by modernistic, not quite eery piano music (& female voices) - Meredith Monk's music? - in that it is shot in negative:black for white, white for black, very beautiful: mostly of Central Park, people there, leaves,...& in slow motion (in fast motion, scene of a summer-peopled grass part at the park's north end at the end of the movie), a beautiful movie: a mood-piece, I guess, unrelated, as far as I can see, to hospitals & such-like, except for its effect of alienation, things being seen otherwise than usually although they are the usual things, as individuals might be thought of as being individuals in terms of the divergencies of what they perceive:normal appearances of things the product of the conditioning of the viewers.

Then follow ⁴3 hospital scenes with nureses etc.: a black-boy patient's birthday party in the hospital, he keeps resisting, maniacally, getting three or two rather than just one birth cake (it's hollow & empty anyhow), the nurses that bring the cakes are teasing him; finally the subsequent male patient-figure, the "hero" of the piece, acts out a therapizing intern-doctor (pipe & all) trying to get the kid out of his despondent isolation within

himself, by doing movements the kid is to repeat: the kid trusts him, tries, succeeds, but then the movements get too difficult, the kid has a break down, rolls on the floor; the second hospital scene - or the third? - is of a pregnant women (young girl actress, tied to a pole with a heave base & blinking top, she drags it upright) who performs an abortion on herself, - outlined plunges knife repeatedly into her outstanding little belly, the scene otherwise consisting of milita y-type exercises by the black actor & three girls, white, back & forth at the front of the stage & of the "hero" (later") i.e. of the man that does him in white acting out the part of the people that in airports in front of rolling planes direct their movement with their hands; another scene, 2nd or 3rd: the black fellow, now an intern, & one of the nurse-females are half undressed, lighting up their opposite skins with small flash lights, then unrelating for a while, getting dressed, then have a moment of passion (a kiss) which is followed, beautifully, by the real tenderness, they both break down laughing, looking at one another: during this the later hero is rising horridly, a trunk & head out of the floor behind the bed that presumably was their trysting place of sin, staring - catatonically or so - straight ahead at us, not looking at them: after the black lover intern leaves, the girl & this maniac are both on the bed & although at first he seems about to rape her, she being unattracted to him, he finally with a rapid motion pulls up his seater, baring his right nipple & she proceeds intensively - vampirishly, sexily - to suck on it; another scene, not a hospital scene, shows an old woman)young actress, shaking head, she tells us she is 74 years old & since her husband's

death "does her work" at home, the work something to do with black bottles or containers on a table, the old woman has a lit, periodically flashing device on her chest): a devilish young woman dancer enters & proceeds - apparently invisible to the old woman - to frighten her (until she has a heart attack or so & dies), by changing things around - the bottles etc., lifting the table, - pulls the device off her chest finally, the final shock: while this demon (a very fine, scary dancer) does this, four other performers, white stockings over their faces, all in white, stand by the left-hand wall, facing it, then go down, aprallel with one another, by it, then inch backward, belly on floor in a line across the floor, then have a brief dance back & forth: they look powerful, muscual, a tough back-up to the devilish woman: the last of the hospital scenes shows what then becomes the hero, a youngish white performer, rather good, male, being "treated":but it is a movie, not live:he sits catatonically, or almost, perhaps inwardly slyly more active than he lets on, facing us behind a table, two medicals, their heads not on the screen, with note pads etc. place different things (an apple, a pine cone, a cactus plant in a pot, finally a robot, mechanical robot doll) in front of him on the table, trying to induce reactions, of his, or testing them, his reactions are consistently "wrong", e.g. he dumps dirt from the pot into cereal. After this the filmed - note:filmed, not live - sequence of him (having escaped: a voice over the p.a. system tells us) in a motel room, educating himself. Actually, much of the piece, thus, is film.