

The Discovery of a Director:  
first impressions of the plays

*Getting with it, but hardly getting it. Sophia = (Wisdom), Part III, The Cliffs*

(1971/72)<sup>1</sup>

Cinematheque, New York, December 8, 1972 - January 28, 1973

*Performance of December 29, 1972*

The performance lasts about 3 hours, the seating is extremely uncomfortable, the audience is youngish but not young — Jewish hippie. Wooster Street is dark, dirty and deserted (exhilarating). The "play" is an enormously numerous sequence of constellations of a few figures frozen or moving frozenly, relative to one another, largely in attitudes of observation or indifferent interest. A character named Rhoda (Kate Manheim) is the object of their and our attention. She may be a heroine, incorporating self-awareness, in stances of fear.

But her body is the object of the play, for she is stark naked most of the time, slipping in and out of a brief shirt-dress or cloth wrapping: a narrow-legged, tawny-skinned body, with big, bulbous, pendant breasts that contrast with her upturned nose, pretty-girl face, a magnificent enough body. I like it and felt deficient for not being excited by it. When I had met her, clothed, as Richard Foreman's girlfriend, I had found her very attractive. At one point, Foreman has her manacled to a post in an erotic-pious picture-pose, Ben (Andrew Noren) slipping his hand up her legs from behind. Subsequently they fuck, i.e. roll over each other in a stylized, gymnastic manner, explicitly going through a simile, but the indication being that she is being forced and

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<sup>1</sup> Written in 1971, after *Evidence* and *Dream Tantras*.

liking it. She lies and squats as if neatly tucking her cunt away in a convenient place, safe and proper — but where it could be got at without fuss if needed.

The plot I made out was that Sophia (Linda Patton, slim in black) is trying to make Rhoda and does not succeed. One of the lines seems to indicate Rhoda's character to be that she likes to have the woman-vacuum inside her filled often, and manages to. There is an evocation of a general male versus female competition for this goddess — of love? She seems punished for too much sex. Perhaps Foreman is jealous and/or a voyeur.

I am doing the manner of this theatre a vast injustice by this talk of sex and plot. But that nude body, especially because it is the only one, is an object and an overpowering one; all else is minor stage-property. Fortunately another girl, Margot Breier (as Hannah), is not made to stun us with her no doubt equally stunning body. You only see the tip of her hemispherical arse briefly, with the rest of her nude self hidden behind a screen. I admired her stately face and superb eyes, and she has beautiful legs. Breier, who with fur collar and little pocket self-regarding mirror in a near final large tableau forms a disdainful-mysterious centerpiece to the naked, cowering Rhoda at the other end of a long bench, has no part to speak of up to this point, but here does, and acts it with a cool contrasting with Kate Manheim's persistent dancer's intensity.

Noren (playing Ben) looks to be a faggot in real life. Perhaps Foreman likes to use him as he-man for this reason. He comes through as performer only once, as couldn't-care-less boxer, cigar in his mouth.

Ben and the three girls are carrying on a personal life. They are in private. The stage is a room. It is said to be a room several times. It is treated as a room which people enter and leave, through doors, windows. I felt it was one and the same room, a particular room, as in some late 19th century psychological drama: a salon or drawing room. This is oddly old-fashioned.

Sometimes this room turns out also to be a beach or a cove overhung by cliffs on which there are tiny houses, little wooden pentagon frames high up over a backdrop, from time to time framing the faces of people living in houses. It is possible that we are to think of them as "the workers" spoken of on the tape and in the written words projected on the little screen, hung as in *Hotel China* in the upstage, stage-left corner like a spying

mirrors in a supermarket. These people are generally identified as "they." That is, when the room, place of potential intimacy, is equated with this open place, there is the sense that intimate relations are presented as subject to (super)vision and (disapproving) judgment. You are in the public eye (no question of God here), as though you were making love on a beach possibly surveyed by a dirty old man with a telescope or by prurient little boys. Yet the supervision seemed to make no difference. It did not cause the principals to behave themselves. I took it as only their excuse for not opening up to one another, when in fact they were saddled with a primal inability to do so.

There is an edge of humor to the spectacle. Spectators who had seen *Dr. Selavy* seemed excessively responsive to it. The humor lies in interceptions and frustrations, whether in entrances, in approaches to others, in stances, chiefly Rhoda's — of bewilderment, withdrawal, fear or paralysis — or in some (often in the surrealist tradition beautiful) encombrement or disarray of objects. The empty grandfather clock hangs in space. The metronomic beat of the play is Foreman's signature as director. Tickings, buzzings, bells, flashing lights, his own occasionally recurrent viva voce count of four *give* this rhythm away. But it is the performers' stipulated entrances and exits, taking and breaking off of poses, that *make* it (rather than only obeying it): a tight clacking of a made-up substitute for time, tense (something is going to happen!), but devoid of the push of urgency (there is nothing to accomplish). It sets the impression of humor: in the contrast of the presumable inner lives of the by and large deadpan stage personages to the brisk busyness they are subjected to. This humor expresses uneasiness.

What we have got so far is the glory of the flesh, the outside of the womb, a hot babe chilled, and a bunch of lonely jerks doing a funny dance in the public eye.

We soon realize we might as well forget about being entertained. Then we see there is no way of understanding what goes on. Then we have a sinking feeling there won't even be anything interesting to look at. Finally we realize nothing is going to happen. All this time, we are instructed to watch, to try to recall, to think, to think harder — exhorted by a voice on tape over the amplifiers, by words on the little screens (a pretty supplementary screen, like a stand-up mirror, is occasionally brought on), by graffiti appearing suddenly, chalk-scrawks on a stile brought in once or twice. Our learning capacity is being tested, but we are getting a little less than enough to use it. The play

doesn't let on, tells us it's for our good. If there is no hidden meaning in the object, perhaps our *relation* to it is what's supposed to be instructive. Maybe the play is to help us reflect on our watching it.

We are watching them. The performers are watching us, and Foreman by those instructions lets us know he is watching us too. We are watching them watching us watching them... And there is no payoff, only the unease of a bane of divination. With the naked broad in the middle, it's like a distressing orgy, participation in which one has felt unable to refuse. A paradigm of life?

In this play, at least, Foreman has largely reduced theatre to watching and thinking: for himself, for the characters in the play relative to one another, for the performers and the audience relative to one another. And he has made this reduction explicit. He has complicated the situation in two ways: by a central strong erotic stimulus so arranged as to feed not into erotic stimulation but into observation and thought; by subjecting the audience to an intimidating and embarrassing awareness of being itself observed and thought about — voyeurs making a spectacle of themselves.

The characters in the play are observing one another and are thinking. Ben watches himself, Sophia watches Rhoda, Max (Bob Fleischner) watches everything, as do the inhabitants of the little houses on the cliffs. Only in their sexual projects do the characters seem to go beyond observation and thought. There is the ultimate object of visual interest, a nude woman. She is both the voyeur's dream and the image of one who is fulfilled in exposing herself to view. There are the ubiquitous stagehands, defined as not part of the spectacle, not to be watched, and demonstratively not watching the actors.

The performers don't speak. Their utterances are assembled on tape. The device is borrowed from the comic strip balloons. It enhances the interiority of the figures, but only as cauldrons, cold to the eye, of the unexpressed: black chambers of reflection. It empties them out: their implied awareness of one another is detached from them, with the words, a fact about them, leaving their visual image pure for the spectators, without absolving these latter from an awareness (disharmonious rather than complementary) of their awareness. The performers' inexpressive countenances and commanded body movements and pre-arranged relationships confirm this excerebration. The watching of the silent is purer than watching that which gives off speech or other sound: the eye is not perturbed

in its search, the object does not fight back, we are not diverted into a concern with meanings. Here, meanings are conveyed separately, by the disembodied words, so that instead of suppressing our attention to the words by relating the meanings directly to the speaker's mind, we take an observer's attitude toward the words, *observe* them with our hearing. The figures themselves being left without meanings, we look at them harder, and are more inclined to think about them, not being able to take them at their word. The movements of the figures are not mime: they do not indicate feelings or intentions, but are simple physical actions. The divorce of meaningful speech from them leaves us simply looking at *bodies moving in space* and interacting with other bodies physically. The detached words do not merge with their meanings but have the *prima facie* aspect of sound. We feel we are supplying the meanings, as when listening to a foreign language we are only beginning to understand. Both to the eye and the ear, thus, Foreman supplies a *physical theatre*.

*Performance of December 30, 1972*

Max (Leo?) (played by Bob Fleischner) comes out, sits, facing us, thinking, doing nothing.

Screen with 2 girls (Sophia, Hannah), one (Sophia) dressed, the other (Hannah) nude behind it, shoulder blades and arses protruding. The tape talks of what either could do for the other. Alien dixieland jazz, sad and feeling, oddly not a camp: color and emotion setting off the play's lack of same. Stand-up screen, lovely furniture shadows on it, projected writing (brownish), something about assertion being the only worthwhile thing — "Remember: Assertion." No judgments in this play. The play itself an assertion?

(On screen): "I hope this is interesting enough to suit your purposes." Ordinarily, in the theatre, and elsewhere, we are interested only in means to our purposes. Such interest is impossible here.

"The trouble with nothing but images is that images don't make anything new happen." Girls, their backs to us, laying hands on the Abominable Snowman's (really Karl, played by Jim Hoberman) silvery image on the screen, on his genital region. Images

don't respond: don't expect satisfaction from them. The theatre is not for real.

Confrontation of Rhoda in one corner of the stage, naked, with basket, with Sophia in the opposite corner, dressed, no basket. Sophia in a very pretty pose of aggressive interrogation. She wants to get into Rhoda's basket. Rhoda wants to know if she is not afraid there is something in it that will hurt her.

The girls seem to be competing for Ben. Ben is trying to make Sophia, but she turns him over to Rhoda.

The Abominable Snowman (Jim Hoberman), in goggles, camouflage jumpsuit, creeps along the black backdrop, his spider-hands (gloved) feeling it. Rhoda comes in, poses, left leg back, finger pensively on lip, slightly opens her mouth just before her line (from the tape): "I had the most unusual dream last night."

### *Performance of December 31, 1972*

The more I see it, the more the play seems a switch on a play, and thus more a play — perhaps partly because Manheim's body recedes.

I notice<sup>2</sup> that two of the three men, Max or Leo and Ben, seem to be after the three girls, Hannah, Sophia and Rhoda; Hannah and Rhoda are competing with each other for men, though are perhaps really both in love with Karl (the Abominable Snowman); and Sophia is rather cold to men, but trying to make it with Rhoda, though also giving her to Ben — Rhoda making it not only with Ben but also with one of the workers. Max or Leo — though in what seems a scene of chaste coupling near the end of the play, he ends up with Rhoda — seems left out of la ronde. Ben first tries for Sophia, who slips him to Rhoda — Sophia enjoying her vicariously. After he makes it with Rhoda, the big affair of the play, Ben switches to the elegant Hannah. Karl or the Abominable Snowman is paired with Sophia in a chaste marriage. He never seems to cash in on Rhoda's yen for him, apparently because he is so timid, perhaps also because he has too much pity. He seems to see himself as a healer. Also, he is "very cold."

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<sup>2</sup> This synopsis is erroneous. It is hard to make out what the characters are after, and what goes on.

Rhoda is always "thinking," is also very giving, always wants to screw. She has visions and strange dreams. Sophia seems an intense, spiteful lesbian, mostly interested in power, thinks of herself as a goddess, likes to be called an angel. Hannah is a narcissistic doll, beautiful but dumb, tranquilly self-concerned. Ben is a sniffing-dog Casanova or swinging single, profoundly preoccupied, even through his sentimental infatuations, with his appearance of uninterest. He thinks of himself as having "good ideas." Karl is a timid adolescent, a gentle guy with sadist fantasies and idealist pretenses to being a "healer." Max or Leo is a truly lonely guy, perhaps really not interested in sex, though apparently a voyeur. He feels he is a thinker, but seems mostly an observer.

It is as though Foreman had put together a humdrum psychological tragi-comedy of personal relations, mostly sexual, and then decided to give an abstract and alienated presentation of it as (1) mechanical ballet of lonely ones (caught up in their "thinking" — dreams, visions, self-glorifying fantasies), and (2) fiction, broken up into shreds, for studious spectators to reassemble if they wish and are not afraid to make fools of themselves doing so.

Who makes it with whom seems radically irrelevant to anybody not involved, i.e. the spectator. The how and why of it might be of interest, but if an individuation of the characters gives that interest the form of an interest in the individuals, it disappears, becomes ridiculous — besides which, the psychology of these not very selective affinities in this play seems as shallow as its theme seems trite. Foreman seems to be making a fool of us three times over: for not seeing the shallowly treated trite theme right away; for partaking of it with the fascination of wonderment if not with interest; for falling for the do-it-yourself mechanical gimmickry of staging and minimalist performance that dress up and obscure it. In the process he seems to reveal himself as not very profound: brilliant inventor of a complex, new, coherent and effective way of doing theatre, the only utility of which seems to be to obscure temporarily the baseness of his interests (it's all about fucking), the impotence of his imagination, and the superficiality of his psychology.

Perhaps his point is precisely that the individual as such — Rhoda, Max, etc. — has ceased to be adequate subject matter for theatre, but that the general theme of the personal life of ordinary people is valid subject matter; and that his new performance mode, reducing the particular, named individuals to exemplars, provides theatre on this

general topic: in the form of a satire on the theatre of particular individuals. This satire would be a merely humorous side benefit of and psychological device for a dramatization of some thesis such as that people can not relate. The theme is as trite as personal lives normally are, he might say, little but perpetual sexual quest, thinly covered over by fantastic spiritual pretensions serving at most to interfere with that quest. And he might claim this pan-sexual psychology of frustration and make-believe sufficiently profound to warrant a metaphysical theatre and to require a theatre of alienation.

*Performance of January 5, 1973*

His theatre is his showcase: Foreman framed by sound and written messages. Most of the taped speech is apparently the characters'. It is an awkward simplification of low-class speech, arhythmic, declarative, but without the assertive or expressive qualities of speech, more like a rendition of thought. It is elevated dumb speech. The remarks are followed by pauses, hang in the air. Their simple, often physical references seem intended as metaphors for feelings and psychologically complex tendencies and states of awareness, introspective and social. Though taken at face value the speech is trivial, and taken as metaphorical is indirect and closed, in terms of its unrevealed real significances it seems straight to the point of essential concerns, more so than actual speech mostly is. It has an air of summing up in a thought the individual's reality of the moment. In its surface aspects it goes well with the simple physical actions of the inexpressive, uncostumed figures. Crude and simple as they, it can be taken as their speech. As abstract as they, it can be taken as their thought, which we believe them simple and crude enough to express. But insofar as we take it as metaphor, we incline to view it as the surely unexpressed thought (only) of more complex, sophisticated and emotional characters, of which the figures on stage are schematic or poetically concentrated renditions. Thus a feeling that the play represents another, richer play. Perhaps Foreman is calling for us to construct this other play?

But the immediate effect of the separation of speech from live performance is to make talk seem mere verbiage, not significant expression or genuine act of relating but, on the contrary, even camouflage: the pretense that one does not feel, want, or is not

doing what in fact one is feeling, desiring or doing — *a cerebration contrary to life*, or, if not contrary, oblique. The effect of this stage device is to convey the view that man's *body* is his reality, and that the body may have its own thoughts, feelings, intentions: that the body, qua body, is mind. We begin to feel that the true relations between people may be those between their bodies — their spiritual bodies. But given the non-acting movements of Foreman's performing bodies, this spirituality of the body would be of a peculiarly sluggish, inward, contained sort, unsuitable for relating to others. The body has a mind of its own, Foreman seems to be telling us, yet it is a mind incapable of externalization and communication by verbal or any other means. And the *other* mind, the one that works through speech, is false.

The tape also has a chorus on it, partly apparently that of the outsiders/cliff dwellers, censorious observers, partly that, apparently — more rarely — of the intimate group of principals on stage, commenting on a member, usually the heroine, these comments more solicitous.

Third, the tape contains a deep, slow voice saying, notably, "Not yet." This may in fact be Foreman's voice, but it is clearly someone in charge speaking, a superior being who knows what's going on before it happens and controls it: addressing, ambiguously, the performers and the characters they enact.

The audience is addressed on the screens. The little suspended corner-screen gives ironic accounts of the progress of the play and of what the problems of this progress are: the dissecting surgeon's asides to the interns. From it, the director speaks around the play, establishing a second relation to us. The roller-coaster stand-up screen is a stage presence. Images of the performers are projected onto it, and the performers on stage relate to these. But mostly, the director uses it to speak to us, sometimes echoing his comments or advices from the little constant narrator screen, as though to give them emphasis by bringing them back inside the theatre-situation.

Most of the performers, as performers, have a stage persona different from the character of their parts.<sup>3</sup> This enhances the impression of watching a director's *staging* of

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<sup>3</sup> Asked about this, Foreman shows amused indifference.

a play rather than the play. Noren performs with an attitude of studied indifference toward his part, edged by tiny demonstrations of disobedience toward the director. He ignores the audience completely. He puts himself on show as though he were astoundingly handsome, whereas his part in the play is that of a naive slob and studious stud. Manheim, as Rhoda, performs on high intensity at all times, doing a job (acting as the production's master of ceremonies), though her part (as she acts it) is that of a sacrificial victim. She projects sweet warmth rather than the sensuality of her character, whose intensity is also of a different sort: inward, reflective. Breier, who in her part (Hannah) is vain, cold and haughty, shows her timidity as performer by a conscientious way of doing the part, solicitous of the audience. Iris Newmann and Allegra Scott (crew) behave truculently toward us, in the way they fix us with their regard and place props. Bob Fleischner (Max, Leo) and Linda Patton (Sophia) are the only ones entirely within their parts, indicating no attitude toward it or us. In Fleischner's case this may seem so because the character he is playing is pretty much like himself: phlegmatic, quietly reflective, unconcerned but interested in what he is doing, and undemonstratively cooperative. Patton may be the best actress. Her stances are delicate; her studied vacuous facial expression might be viewed as richly universal.

If in spite of this variety we get an overall feeling of real or feigned truculence toward us, some antagonism, this is probably not due to the performers' attitudes but arises from our impression that they are obedient to the rapid succession of tableaux and to the director, there in person, cueing them, and from the play's aspect of being a challenge to us: a challenge conveyed by the projected exhortations, by the obscurity of the action, by the willful simple abstraction of the characters, and by the way the performers keep looking at us, without expression and critically, as though daring us to treat an indicative statement as question or as open to question, a challenge belonging neither to their parts nor their own attitudes as performers, but to Foreman's staging.

What the performers have to do seems in no way difficult or artful. They haven't had to learn any lines, their facial expressions are generally set, there are no acrobatics, there is scarcely anything subtle to convey by expression, and the cues are plentiful. They have to learn these, they have to be on time. They don't have to create characters, at most give faint indications of a character's attitude of the moment. The artistry required seems

to be abstention from art, though the performers, the girls especially, seem to be trying to slip some characterizations past Foreman. On the whole, we see them *as* performers, and see their parts only as what they are doing, and see what they are doing as coming from the director.

And yet the characters represented seem neither totally lifeless nor totally Foreman's. Rhoda strikes one as having the aspect of a heroine, and perhaps not merely because Kate Manheim is asserting herself against Foreman by putting herself into the character. The very part seems to call for our interest in her as person, not only as example, and as extraordinary person, an admirable one, and one with an individual — tragic — fate.

There is the suggestion of something else mustily traditional: we seem to be expected to take the 3 boys and 3 girls as exemplars of personality types and their antagonistic-loving relations as examples of the way we humans relate: "this is you."

Perhaps being covered over and undressing, keeping distance and getting close, is Foreman's sign language for these relations. It seems his ambition to have very simple body-actions, complicated only by symbolic uses of symbolic objects representing attitudes, feelings and characters. If so, they either represent them only in a very rudimentary way, leaving it to our imagination to provide supplements, or else represent only very rudimentary attitudes, etc., in which case he is giving us the alternatives of accepting these characters as toys of an abstract or inhibited imagination, markers in a unique game, in which to join him, or of thinking about them as logical symbols of a determinist philosophy of life. Or is he telling us this is what mankind is really like?

The play is clearly about personal relationships. At the same time, there seems no communion, no interaction, of minds. The very possibility seems to have been excluded. Thence an undertone of despair, tempered by the humor of irony. The thesis that human relationships are only physical relationships between bodies, these not acting as the mediating means of minds or souls, may account for much of the *form* distinguishing Foreman's theatre from other theatre.

It is possible that Foreman is also saying that some self-centeredness or inhibition, or some fixation of attitude and purpose, a rigidity of orientation, frustrates the attempts of individuals to give their relationships an inner meaning — one and the same meaning

for both parties. In any event, the figures in the play are totally lonely. Max is just watching; Sophia and Rhoda do not get to be lovers; Rhoda and Ben do, but in the act of loving, one is thinking of a dream she had, the other of a good idea he had. Or consider:

Sophia: Do you think I'm more beautiful than you are?

Rhoda: Oh yes... probably.

Sophia: Guess what. I'm not looking through you, Rhoda... I'm not even looking inside your head. I'm looking at the surface of the side of your head.

Rhoda (turns): Now you're looking into my eyes.

Sophia: But I'm looking at the surface of your eyes, aren't I.

Rhoda: Then I guess I'm looking at the surface of *your* eyes.

Foreman's directing seems designed to reduce expression to conduct. The cued rhythm of the action also seems designed to exclude any denotation of inwardness: the impression produced is that of bodies going through their motions. To the extent that Foreman allows an actor to indicate an inward state, this seems to be a state that Foreman conceives of not as state of mind but, resolving the mind/body dichotomy, as the state of a mindful body, of a corporeal individual, whose thought and feelings are one with his body. Separating the performers from their speech converts the speech from apparent manifestation of the characters' minds to material attribute of their bodies — product of the body's mental faculty.

Foreman has siphoned off the voices and bottled them for his own usage — a graphic representation of the role of the actor: his voice is not his own. The performers are thus left in obedient dumb-show, and this makes it hard for us to think of the characters as having any will, therefore to think of them as individuals or as undertaking to relate to one another. Perhaps it is Foreman's ambition to abstract and isolate relations as such and to make them, as universals, the object of our attention. An index of this is

the pauses during which, often, following a taped remark or exchange, the figures are held in poses relative to each other (e.g. Sophia holding Rhoda, who has attacked her). The pauses seem designed to give these remarks a chance to reverberate, not really to dress the poses in an aura of psyche but to let us sense, in the clash of reverberating phrases against the impenetrable density of acting-out bodies in space, the dialogue (e.g. the *compound* of Rhoda's hostility and attraction with Sophia's aggressiveness and timidity) as an *interpersonal* reality, the two minds creating by their interaction that spiritual reality of the moment, the personal relation itself, of which the phrases and body-devolutions seem almost accidental effluents. The technique inverts the usual feel of an interpersonal aura or climate, a "situation," to wit: that it is the product of a severality of self-directed personalities.

The question dealt with by Foreman, then — the topic of his theatre — would not be: what are people (or these or such people) up to, but: what interpersonal molecular field of forces are these person-atoms caught up in on approach? Persons would figure as parts helplessly creating momentary wholes more real than themselves. Their intentions, their very actions of creating these minute societies of personal life, are whisked away from them, graphically — into the air above their heads, where their words reverberate. The persons are turned into figurant facets of these wholes which succeed one another, tableau to tableau. The social wholes reverberating in the upper air are the substance, like the landscapes which create the spirit of a natural nation residing in them — the Burgundian, Tuscan, Swabian ethos. Down below are the person-parts, moved by the climate.

Foreman separates language from people not only by having it put on tape but also by its artificiality and the impersonality of the voices. He has recorded inexpressive *readings* of the lines, and the transmission through the P.A. system wipes out the personal timbre to which we react as an individual's signature.

The performers move their lips when they *hear* the sound of their voices. The separately reappearing speech carries with it the stolen impress of being-a-person, of will, of the power of spontaneous action. That power, conveyed as independent of the moving bodies, exerted over them from above, now seems to reside, together with the exhortations addressed with directorial authority to the performing bodies and to us, in a

distinct stage dimension consisting not only of an organized temporal flow of electronic sound of many sorts — including beeps, explosions, ticking, buzzing, ringing — but also of projected legends and images, and of a mechanical system of pulley'd strings and moving objects. The language vanishes into this environing noisy machine. The power to relate now belongs to this machine. The machine belongs to the director.

*January 16, 1973. Notes after seeing the final performance and looking at the script.*

The script seems rather different from the play in performance. It has a poetic beauty to which the awkward prose, artificially simple and precise, contributes. Its irony toward men's muddledness and stultifying inhibition is compassionate rather than, as in the performance, nastily condescending. The God-like deep voice of the commenting director in the script is called "the soft voice." The addresses to the audience, in performance reducing the characters to objects, read like invitations to participate reflectively in the comic tragedy of their lives, and their lives come across as colorfully flowering self-assertions. The development, though no more understandable, in the script is forceful and convincing. In its unfolding, it has a nicely clear yet not finicky structural air. A certain looseness of the imagination — a withal modest, unpretentious imagination — vivifies the carpentry with its mad translations into irreducible metaphors, i.e. by a light madness. In the performance, these qualities turn into a pseudo-mathematical rigidity on the one hand, a grimy air of sloppy neglect on the other.

Reading the script, I find I have been deceived in some particulars and have missed others. Rhoda does make it with Karl (whom Hannah at that point refers to as a worker). Hannah desires Sophia. Max and Leo are distinct persons. The camouflaged Abominable Snowman is not necessarily always Karl: he is identified as different persons by different people. The separation of the speech from the performers, in spite of the device of having them mouth the beginning of the lines, makes it hard to attribute the lines during the performance. But the basic reason for my bad perception seems to be that Foreman really does not care who seems to be desiring whom. As a director he treats the delineated personalities and relationships cavalierly, as though their functions were only to straighten out the performers and to tantalize the audience as an indubitably there but

unknowable Ding an sich.

In performance, the characters' thoughts and enterprises, and the story — pretty much the actual, particular play — disappeared. The actions were reified into an ornamentation of colorful, whimsical inventions, surrealist relics reduced to delivering dadaist stings, the verbal meanings sublimated into an outer atmosphere of metaphors seemingly in a foreign language. The story became something we merely suspect is there: a possible account of what is happening to the characters. When we read the play, the verbalized meanings, though equally obscure, coalesce with the characters into a *play of the spirit*, articulating into grotesque actions and events, frozen revelations of obscure meaning. The performance falls apart into a *play about some lives* and into a series of images, which at times seems a *play of things* and at times an extraneous *play of symbols*. The images are perceived separately. One is apt to see the play as just their succession:

A man (Ben) half-enters the half-open door of a room. The door opens again, but a voice says "not yet" and nobody appears and the door closes again. A man (Max) tries to exit through a wall, pressing against it. (Later on, the Mountaineer tries to enter a room the same way, and still later another man (Ben) tries to leave through a mountainside.) Cloth descends, covering people and furniture in a room. People enter the room, but not really: they crawl across under the cloth. A "thin black-board . . . goes horizontally across the stage-space, about four feet off the floor" (stage-direction). A string is set to cast a linear shadow on a band of light projected on a screen. A mountaineer, whose image is at times projected on a screen, repeatedly attempts to scale cliffs. Furniture is strapped to a man's (Ben's) back, a girl (Sophia) watching. Another girl (Rhoda) is chained to a post and felt up by a man (Ben). Wings are held, later strapped, to a girl's (Sophia's) back. (Still later, cord is tied from the tips of the wings to the shoulders of Hannah and Rhoda). A naked girl (Rhoda) and a dressed girl (Sophia) whip a mountainside, then snap towels at it. A girl (Rhoda) traces the coils of a mountaineer's rope on the floor with a stick. A naked man (Ben) holds an apple out to a girl (Rhoda), who is about to take a bite when another girl (Sophia) enters and places the tip of a sword on it. All exit maintaining their poses. A big white block is repeatedly held up and exhibited by the crew. Flowers are taken out of a magic hat. Card tricks. A man (Ben) and a girl (Rhoda) try to picnic off a

seesaw table. Two girls (Rhoda, Sophia) are given parasols which are then immediately taken away from them, but a man (Max) enters and squats under his parasol. Two girls (Sophia, Rhoda) and two men (Max, Ben) hold onto ropes tied to easy chairs; the ropes are extended by the crew, so the four can move offstage holding the ends. The same group bang on pots and pans for 5 minutes. A girl (Hannah) swings into a room on a rope. Workers enter a room to cover a man and a girl (Karl, Rhoda) with a sheet. A grandfather clock outside the room asks the workers to bring it inside; they do and place it on the sheet, then uncover the couple again. Big hands on sleeves float in, guide a man (Karl) out the window by his temples, are attached to the clock and lift it, are detached from the clock, to which a table has been attached. A girl (Hannah) opens a lunchbox so the contents fall on the floor. A big beam is given a girl (Rhoda) to hold by one end; she holds it at her stomach, the other end is let go. The beam is elaborated into a semblance of a stringed instrument by having a string-arc put over it, whereupon the girl holding it (Rhoda) collapses to a buzz saw noise — plastic being set under the arc. An angel (Sophia with wings) plucks the strings. A man (Karl) lowers his pants to his feet, which are covered by a piece of cloth tied around his ankles; a girl (Rhoda) crawls under this cloth; a ribbon is tied around the man's penis and run through a flower-shaped hole in a screen placed in front of his lower body; a string is extended from his mouth to the floor and moved in an arc, leaving a chalk-mark arc on the floor, inside which a girl (Hannah) drops the contents of her suitcase; strips of cloth are laid over his extended arms, boxing gloves are attached to them. Two other men (Ben, Leo) box, each with one of the two gloves, while the girl (Hannah), seated on her suitcase, after a pillow has been placed under her naked arse, watches them; the naked girl (Rhoda) re-emerges from under the cloth around his (Karl's) ankles. Suitcases are attracted (moved by the crew) to a naked girl's body (Rhoda's), seated on a bench. A sheet is suspended, held up by the pressed-together chins of the three girls kneeling on a bench and of three men (Ben, Leo, Karl) standing facing them. The six persons squeeze grapefruit halves into basins which are then suspended aloft. Paper ruffles are put around the ankles of the girls kneeling on the bench. The six shift the sheet to between their teeth and move with it held out between them. Flowers drop into the sheet. A girl (Rhoda) clad in cotton-wad snow, dances. A girl (Sophia) puts radios, tuned to different stations, on her naked feet, winds a rope around

her neck so the end loops over her head and hangs down in front of her face. A large, long arm swings down over the stage, providing the illumination. A man (Ben) on a swing; a man (Leo) nibbling on a giant foot; a man (Karl) with a red wig, bells in his hair, shaking his head to make the bells tinkle. A telephone with sail, sails by through the air; someone lifts off the receiver which drifts after it at increasing distance. A playing card plunks into a plate with a leaden sound.

In the play as read, these actions and events appear simply as what the characters get themselves into, on the same plane of sub-reality as they. But in performance, they are a material imagery, manipulated by crew and performers, and engulf the action, almost creating a separate play: partly a play of objects, indifferent to human concerns, partly a play of symbols, which, though seen as manifest fabric of the characters' psychic lives, seems to symbolize some chain of ideas of Foreman's parallel to the chain of ideas embodied in the acted play, complementing it, commenting on it, perhaps some inversion of it — possibly the objective meaning of the actions and states of the characters, as distinct from the meaning their actions and states have for them.

### **What for?**

#### ***Notes of January and March 1973***

January 25, 1973

One cannot say that his plays have any charm, but they are intriguing. One wonders whether they are in code or are to be taken as they appear, and in the first case, what they are about, in the second, what they show: the mechanical precision of the staging in conjunction with the simplicity and ordinariness of the actions — all out front and obvious — compel a feeling that if there is no meaning by some translation, the plays are (at least) hewn toward the revelation of some essence.

They have no charm. One could go on to enumerate nearly as many absent enticements as there are reasons for going to the theatre, without fear of offending Richard. For his seems above all an art of subtraction (so extreme that when he releases the odor of grapefruit, it reaches one as air of the most colorful opulence). He works at expunging from his performers grace, artistry, acting, the show of emotion; and as long as they accept his discipline of poverty (for which not everyone is suited), he does not object, even, to a certain sloppiness in their execution of his design, partly because it helps place them, as performers, outside the work of art, but also presumably because his scripts and staging ensure the emergence of the design's essentials, which are abstract.

He tells the audience that the play makes sense (e.g. at the end of Act I of *Cliffs*), and he works during rehearsal toward making it make sense, changing details and arrangements not, or not merely, for aesthetic reasons but to bring out or enrich meanings. These are not happenings.

He has a code-language. The physical actions encumbered by objects translate into relations in a sex-appeal ballet between spiritually mired or transcending individuals. Foreman seems to gamble not on rational translation, however, but on essences showing through purely to intuition. These essences pertain less to character or external fate than to a spirituality, of which the individuals themselves may not be fully aware — further aggravating the symbolism's obscurity.

The symbolist intention seems crossed by Foreman's allowing his stage imagination somewhat free play with the symbols, the stage images, as they occur to him. So they stand forth in their own right, independent of symbolic function. He is thus led on to a doctrine of theatre as pure art experience that absorbs our failures of intuition. We are to enter a state of intense watchfulness in which we are conscious of watching theatre and are conscious of our watchfulness and are conscious of it as arbitrary act. To achieve this, Foreman eliminates beauty and sensuous pleasure — and charm — and strives to give the theatrical images autonomy from meaning. And he so organizes the stage space as to systematically disrupt the experience, never providing it with a dominant center, over and over again tearing it out of a prior focus. We are left with the generic rudiments of an art experience, specified only by the genre, theatre. Forced continuously to question it, we are forced to assume responsibility for it.

March 16, 1973

(After attending rehearsals of *Particle Theory*)

What the devil am I doing watching this small-timer working out his picayune schemes? How have I come to this pass? A kindly man, a small malevolence, a small despair — and an exemplary perseverance in total self-enclosure in shaping his most intimate concerns. No doubt he will be some kind of success, a little bobbing ball of next to nothing borne aloft on the sympathy of a small elite (of which myself) and the sure-as-taxes acclaim of the watchful censors of public entertainments called critics — or at least of the academics among them. I have a horror of sly, timid obscenities promoted by those having the daring to go just a little further than hitherto tolerated. If you can't be dirty, act like a gentleman.

[Goes to notes on reading early scripts: "The Playwright's Prodigious Plaint" see following page]

## The Playwright's Prodigious Plaint

Reading the scripts (1967–71)

*Notes of June–July 1973*

What is her secret. Can you imagine what is the phenomenon which must be explained about the goddess. Can you imagine a body that is extensive. Can you imagine a body full of the void which is filled again whenever something happens.

— *Sophia = Wisdom III, The Cliffs*

### ***Sophia III [1971/72]: A closer reading of the script***

*The Cliffs (Sophia, Part III)*, written toward the end of 1971, performed December 1972–January 1973, in 2 acts with no scene-division, is very much an audience-directed play: not so much to teach us something, but to put us into a stance of

strained observation, kept pure by the incomprehensibility of the action, so that thought can only take the interrogative form and thus not overcome the images or dispose of them.

The obscurity of the action is not merely the murk of unreason but seems designed to express the lassitude of the man who has too often told the anecdote about how he came to be so unhappy: "There is nothing more to know about the lives of unhappy people" (Act I). What has happened to the author is in the past. He has gotten so that he can talk about the other party — the Woman (Rhoda), forget about himself (Max), drop the whole sordid story (at the end of Act I) and engage in passably free fantasizing about it (Act II) rather than in miserable rationalizations only. The subject matter is no longer the events, but fictions and fancies about them. Yet even this view of himself is a little tedious to him: he treats his own imaginations as mere material for a stage presentation. He confronts us as director, as someone who has prepared a script for himself, has gotten together some performers, and is producing himself for an audience.

There is a heroine (Rhoda), but no hero.

Her man, Ben, is a stud of no importance. Max, whom I take to personify the author in his personal capacity — jealous, impotent, voyeurist, thoughtful observer, censorious and attached to a nest of personal belongings — fades out at the end of Act I, though he reappears as an even more unimportant Leo. (His brief reappearances at the beginning of Act II is a typical device of Foreman's. Cf. Sophia's persistent, diminishing reappearances at the end of *Total Recall*. Real endings are never final, have real afterimages.)

Max/Foreman's disappearance from the play takes the form of a mental breakdown. Max tries too hard to "think harder" — while observing Rhoda and Ben fucking. The "big white block" repeatedly presented at the end of Act I we may interpret as Max/Foreman's contention with a writer's block on the topic of his personal life. He decides "not to get back into character," he stops observing, and the story (of Act I) dissolves into a general dance of all with all, everybody vaguely coupled, as meaningless as the burlesque-line stick-thumping routine at the beginning of Part II of *Particle*

*Theory*.<sup>4</sup> In his afterimage appearance he is just one of the "workers" — Foreman might view himself as director as being a worker.

Both his writer's block (blocking out view) and his "stopping to observe" are presented by reckless translations into stage imagery: (1) a big cube repeatedly brought onstage by the crew, interfering with the action and held up for our inspection, and (2) Max's ceasing to regard the action through a miniature replica of the stage (in the script growing out of his forehead, in the performance mounted on stilts<sup>5</sup> and held up by him in front of his face): he lets his head slump.

Karl is a would-be healer, crucified, after a fashion, in Act II — a further development of the Karl in *Sophia I*; not just a guardian angel, but a healing savior. He's a fiction, not a person.

To the extent that it is about its characters at all, the play is really about the women in it, foremost the sexy Rhoda, apparently purified in Act II, then Sophia, the Goddess and Guardian of Wisdom, of the glowing brain, bringer of fruit. The third female, Hannah, repeatedly oddly fades out, to be replaced by Rhoda — a weaker, more timid Rhoda, perhaps, like Agatha in *Angelface*.

The action of the play *might* be described as an undefined sort of contest between Sophia and Rhoda. At the end, Sophia, radios on her feet, a rope about her neck, is said to have had all her wishes fulfilled. Rhoda is wandering naked and perhaps sightless in the snow, clad in snow herself, as frigid now as she found Max in her dream of him as Abominable Snowman in Act I. This development echoes in a distant way that of *Total Recall*, the difference being that in *The Cliffs* they are not contending for a male, and Rhoda seems the chastised loser. There is a fantasy of revenge here.

In Act I, the figures seem tolerably relating like ordinary people, notably sexually, most everyone having a yen for most everyone else. Rhoda, in her dreams preoccupied by

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<sup>4</sup> Cf. the section on *Particle Theory*. I inserted these references into these notes of June-July 1973 subsequently.

<sup>5</sup> "The front of the box is open . . . the back wall of the box has been removed, and Max's eyes can be seen looking into the small room." (Kirby, 1973)

Max's sexual indifference to her and by Karl's coming on to her as healer, is having an affair with Ben, engineered by Sophia. Max is out of it, relates to the others only as observer. There is no indication that he is Rhoda's husband or is sexually interested in her or Sophia. Act I is in the realm of the personal and natural. The incursions of "something else," as in Rhoda's dreams, or like the mysterious mountaineer or Sophia's divinity or hinted-at incorporeality, appear as extensions of the natural. Act I seems to tell a story about ordinary people with ordinary extraordinary fantasies about themselves.

The important development seems to be on another level: a transport of the individuals beyond themselves.

How and where are they transported? There seems no question of "enlightenment." Rhoda's advice to Ben, not to wait for enlightenment but to let himself be seized by his imagination, perhaps paralleling the play's initial exhortation to "assertion," might be the play's epigraph.

Though there is an image of expulsion from the Garden of Eden (Ben and Rhoda's by Sophia) in Act I, a climactic communal state of chaste beatitude in Act II is referred to as "paradise." Coupled with a Christian-seeming allusion to an approaching apocalypse in Act I (the "christ/beast") and with the possible evocation of a crucifixion (Karl's) in Act II, this suggests salvation, and perhaps specifically from sexual concupiscence.

This would be sexy Rhoda's salvation in particular and would relate back to her vision (of Christ on her road to Damascus?) in Act I, and to the Mountaineer's "healing" her there. We note that she suffers a pseudo-death in Act II (the goddess playing the harp over her saw-martyred body) and is something like reborn through the Christ-like healer's crucifixion. Toward the end, Hannah notices that Rhoda is now not like Rhoda at all: Rhoda's feet are being washed by the crew.

The play's Christian eschatology is doubled by a Marxist one. The workers' take-over of the houses, their reappropriation of their belongings and sharing them (a "fair exchange"), and the principal characters' turning into (or turning out?) workers, ostensibly define the action of Act II. Marxists and Christians equally distinguish the final from the original paradise. In his earlier plays, Foreman seems to view man's bodily nature as alienated. Property ownership, such as Max in Act I of this play glories in, may be viewed as the harshest form of this alienation.

Whereas Act I tells something like a story about the lives of some people, Act II, while seeming to continue the story, presents eschatological fantasies in symbolic images of a kind that makes it clear that the author is not interested in the specific eschatologies per se (is neither communist nor Christian), nor is he using them as metaphors for some further development in the lives of these people. Rather, in Act II the author seems to have abandoned his concern for these people and their lives. They have become material of his fantasies. But his fantasies are of no concern to him either. The working of his theatrical imagination has become the topic. Whereas in Act I he is concerned with what Rhoda is like and what happens to her, in Act II he is concerned neither with his fantasies as to what should happen to her nor with what "really" happened to her but with the fact of having fantasies that can be staged. The point that it is his practical theatrical imagination, working for some audience, and not just his imagination working on something, that has become his subject matter, is carried by the fantastic theatricality of his imagery. The eschatologies emerge as mere aids in the production of stage images.

This development, loss of personal concern with a personal topic, is paralleled by the disappearance from stage of the author's image (Max). The play reports Foreman's decision to cease subordinating his creative life to his personal life and his staging to his writing. In conformity with this decision, the report is given impersonal, theatrical form: the form of an expansion of consciousness involving abandonment of the personal-involved viewpoint. In this perspective, we might call *Sophia III* a play of the spirit.

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The action extends over three locales: the room, a meadow and adjoining cliffs, houses on top of these cliffs.<sup>6</sup>

Each of these locales functions not only an external setting but as a mode of an individual's reality, a mode of awareness of oneself and others: the characters', the author-director's and, potentially, the spectators'. These modes both exclude each other and are

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<sup>6</sup> In performance, room and meadow alternately coincided with the stage. The houses were small wooden effigies high up on the back wall of the stage. They were generally covered by a curtain or not lit up when the room was on.

identical: a room is the interior of a house with an outside-of-it, a house is one among others in the outside. Whether the stage is supposed to be the interior of a room (or of a garden), or a room in a house (or a single house), or is divided into different modes of awareness, on the part of the characters, of the action, or represents a public place standing for a confluence of places in one place, or represents the world, or successively plays these different roles, gives a significant clue to an author's view of man and to the conception of human nature he pushes. Form is content. The distinguishing feature of Foreman's play is that it utilizes this apparatus: makes the distinctions explicit and sets them into dialectical process.

The development of the play is defined by an interaction between the room/meadow complex: a (possibly middle-class) world of private lives, and the houses, the (possibly working-class) larger social and natural world. The closed-off personal world opens up to, is elevated into or taken over by, or proves to be part of (ambiguities in the play) the larger social world.

This story of the spirit is ironically clad in the aforementioned eschatological tatters and is superimposed on one or more stories of personal development or realization centering on the replacement of an abortive sexual sociality by a spiritual sociability.

*Sophia III* rejects the solipsist transcendentalism of *Sophia II*. Most important, there are indications that the play is the theatrical representation of a development in the (author-director's) mind,<sup>7</sup> a progressive shifting, presumably enlargement, of his viewpoint; the successive "assertions" of a graphic though abstract (not "decorative") imagination.

This imagination, working through the medium of directorial theatrics, exercises a magical command, like Max's in *Angelface*, over the only apparently real yet really appearing realities<sup>8</sup> of only apparently real yet really appearing people. Foreman's theatre is designed to make this power — the medium of directorial theatrics — manifest. *It is on show*. He does this not to destroy illusion — there is no illusion to be destroyed in this

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<sup>7</sup> E.g., when the first "little house appears on top of the cliffs," a projected legend remarks that perhaps Sophia and Rhoda came to the meadow below the cliffs to be watched by somebody in the house, "a small person because the house is so small... Did they wait for the moment to appear... the house, the house. Oh, the house says the house and appears at the moment it is thought about, like a flash in an appearance."

<sup>8</sup> A legend in Act I says of the room that though it "itself is not doing the speaking: (reading) it is moving."

theatre — nor to make philosophical points about the reality status of role-playing individuals and the world they (we) are in. He does it, partly, as an admission that the exercise of this power gives him satisfaction and to boast of its possession. But these private motives (possibly typical of playwrights and directors) apart, he does it, I think, because it seems to him the modern, hence natural, way to utilize, hence enhance, the power of theatre — of theatre taking up the challenge of film, as painting took up that of photography. Like the modern painters, Foreman declines the overpowering intervention of the industrial process but strives for its sovereign mobilization of the subject matter (in the case of theatre, a human subject matter). This mobilization in the movies is apt (but cf. Warhol, Brakhage, Luc Godard) to come out as the Machine's play with space (with the external realities of the characters), but in Foreman's theatre it appears as the living play of the author-director's mind and as movement (life) of the realities of the characters qua reflections of their subjectivity. The Nouveau Roman novelists, grooving on Joyce, James and Proust, tried for a similar mobilization of the subject matter.

The development of a play done as manifest exercise of the power of directorial theatrics takes on the aspect of a magical process — of doublings, inversions and metamorphoses — in which the realities of people (not just the characters) are engaged: these realities — their worlds-for-them — seem to move with a life of their own, which also, however, is that of the author-director. Consider the last part of Act I and the beginning of Act II:

A projected legend equates (for the first time in the play) the room in which the action is taking place with the inside of a house: a double viewpoint and double reality, transition from one to the other. The movable screen is wheeled on. On it is projected, as the lights dim, a "set which is like a cabinet whose open doors reveal different locales," a house with a landscape upstairs, an interior with people below on the left, an outdoors (tree and horse) below on the right: the image of an image of the worlds making up the theatrical world of this play,<sup>9</sup> a pre-view. As the lights go back up, the image dimming without quite vanishing, one of the characters in the room, Rhoda, talking about herself in

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<sup>9</sup> The upper-level landscape in the cabinet has a string strung across it diagonally, as Foreman's stages often do.

the third person, points out the screen to the Mountaineer, and "the soft voice" of the author-director reminds them (and us) that "the cliffs still exist outside the house in the distance." Rhoda, refusing to adopt this outside view of herself, objects: "Oh, this isn't a house, this is just a room." According to the stage-direction, at this point "behind the room, on the cliffs, the houses light up" (the world affirms itself as primal given), and Rhoda says, "I can't see them. My own house interfears [sic] with my vision, not a house complete, a room. I was very quick to correct myself." (The new viewpoint and reality is invading her, even as she fights off its further implications.) The Mountaineer exits, a "crowd comes into their houses on cliffs." The "Mountaineer returns and tries to press through wall," the room *is* a house. Stage-direction: "Room off, back to cliffs. Houses with people's heads, plus below on the meadow, the real model cabinet-stage. Whistle. People on cliffs whistle, on and on — it becomes a tune as cabinet sits there, happily": the world celebrates its reality as house of many dwellings. Rhoda and Ben fuck, and "Max enters, staggering, with a stage-set built out of his forehead," thinking, watching what they are doing: exposure of an interior to the author-director and exposure (in the double sense) of this exposure to the audience. After diverse divertissements in the outdoors, people dancing. "One person takes flowers out of a magic hat, as the room pushes back on, pushing people out of the way who still keep dancing. In the room, Ben and Rhoda each other...": perennial reaffirmation of paradoxical solipsism.

Act II. After various actions, easy chairs are brought into the meadow, and the principals, connected to them by ropes, go offstage, once the ropes have been made long enough: they leave the outside as though it were another inside, which any particular outside is. A legend: "The Cliffs. The difficulty of making art happen within the confines of nature. The transformation of the natural setting into an artificial setting. That has already happened of course. But it has not happened effectively enough": reaffirmation of the author-director, as maker, in relation to the audience, as ingesters: the maker in his perennial struggle to overcome the perennial institution of his artifact as self-referent addendum to nature, and thus to keep the ingesters alive in the act of ingesting.

Act I, in terms of locale, separates into seven scenes alternately taking place in the room and in the meadow. The characters are in one or the other, do not enter either from the other. Inside and outside are sealed off from each other. Foreman has not strictly assigned one type of action to the room, another to the meadow, but grosso modo the room is a place of inward concentration — thought — and activity for each individual, the meadow one for attempted socializing, outgoingness, relatedness — sex. The action shuttlecocks between something like the individual's absolute primacy in the room and his finding himself with another or others relating in a close group. The room keeps reasserting itself, the fourth time brutally (crowding into a dance in the meadow).

The larger world of or comprising the cliffs — and perhaps the valley below (a valley mentioned only once, incidentally, and which may be where the house that the room is in is situated) — does not enter into the action in Act I. But it gradually emerges into relevance. Its first emergence is as physical extension of the reflective, observing Max. His house appears first. Then other houses appear, and a watching crowd, then the crowd enters the houses, then makes itself heard without addressing the principals, the name-bearing individuals of the play. Toward the end of Act I, the crowd that gathers on the meadow to watch, and with whom the principals dance, may be from the houses. The characters who have names do not refer to the inhabitants of the houses. Though Max points out that Rhoda is a factory-girl, and a legend invokes the hard life of "the workers," the cliff dwellers are not identified as workers. They figure only as others who are there watching. The larger world remains an other world, and hardly begins to exist, even as other, for the principals or for us, but figures chiefly, though in the course of the act diminishingly, as something the author-director has in mind and has provided. Its tiny size testifies to its unreality.

Act II, announced as being "about the houses and their relationships," shows the disintegration of that private, personal world. There is the suggestion of the sacrifice and rebirth of a personage perhaps representing sexual drive (Rhoda), of the apotheosis of another, perhaps representing thought (Sophia), and of the crucifixion of a third, perhaps representing chaste aspiration and charity (Karl). Something like an asexual paradise seems instituted. In terms of locale, it divides into three parts: meadow (1), room (2), meadow (3), but:

In (1), the action of the private individuals in the meadow is from the beginning paralleled by action of the cliff inhabitants, now identified as workers inhabiting the industrial suburbs. They demand a role, return of their possessions, their own kind of music; they address the private individuals, who, it is hinted, are aware of them and respond.

In (2), as the sex-life continues in the room, the room is taken over by workers, the self-contained privacy of those in the room is broken up, and the room opens up into, becomes one of the houses. There is no more action or speech from the cliffs, nor any legends invoking them as alien territory, presumably because the world has become one: what was out there has become the place where the house containing the room is situated. Also, the room now communicates with the outside of the house of which the room has become the interior: the individuals with names look in and out.

In (3), the outdoors is no longer specifically a meadow, or any particular place at all, nor anybody's, but an open "post-revolutionary" world: first a city of workers, then a natural paradise. This development culminates in the absorption of private/personal interior and of territory into world.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Two references in this part of the play, to the people or faces in the houses, conflict with this identification.