

THE UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

MYTH AND SELF-AWARENESS IN WEST: A STRUGGLE FOR EQUILIBRIUM
A DIRECTORIAL PERSPECTIVE

BY

SANDRA JANE MCNEILL

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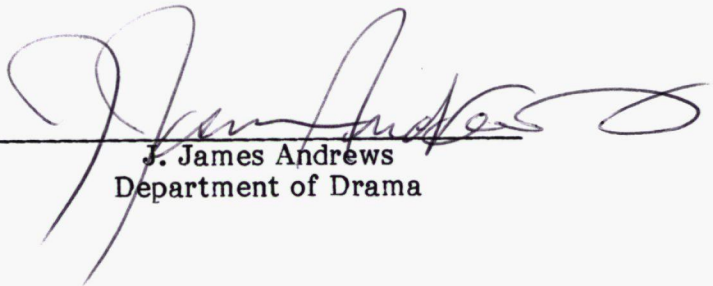
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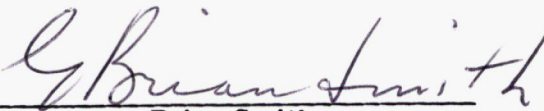
The undersigned certify that they have read, and do recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for acceptance, a thesis entitled "Myth and Self-awareness in West: A Struggle for Equilibrium," by Sandra Jane McNeill in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts.



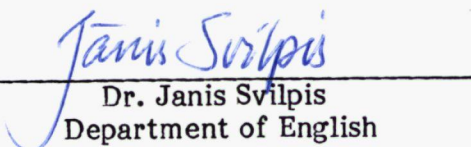
Dr. Robert B. Moore
Supervisor, Department of Drama



J. James Andrews
Department of Drama



Brian Smith
Department of Drama



Dr. Janis Svilpis
Department of English

March 15, 1989
Date

Abstract

This thesis documents the director's process of analysis and the process of mounting the Canadian premiere of West by Steven Berkoff in October 1988 at the University of Calgary.

West is a vibrant, exciting play about young people who are trying to find their niche in life. It focuses on one youth, Mike, who decides to make his own choices and face his own challenges. Berkoff demands a physical and emotional intensity in his work which is arduous for both actor and director. His style incorporates both a visual or gestural language and a highly innovative, poetic, aural language. While West's subject possesses an emotional and primal impact Berkoff's style entices the senses creating a synthesis or total theatre.

This thesis begins with a broad understanding of this director's preliminary approach to the play; it follows with interpretive, character and language analyses and ends with a detailed review of the production's development.

Acknowledgement

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Chapter I:

Building a Bridge Between the Audience and the Play

Theatre succeeds when the artists can translate or transfer the life of the play and their life within the play into the lives of the audience. It is a sharing or giving experience since without the audience the play is silent, meaningless. The artists may learn about themselves and other people through theatre but unless they can share that with their spectators and allow them to learn or experience the life on stage it is an exercise in narcissism.

Theatre is a collaborative art form. A theatre artist who wishes to express only his or her beliefs and ideas must realize that this is virtually impossible because collaboration requires ultimate respect for both your fellow artist's imaginative capacity and your audience's. The director's role in the process is a precarious one in some respects. By being the person through whom all aspects of the production must synthesize, how can he/she function as one of the collaborators? In the past directors were auteurs; they dominated the entire process by realizing every aspect of the finished product prior to the first rehearsal. It was, indeed, their personal vision on the stage. Although this method can still be found, the current trend is to allow the production to develop collectively; to allow the meaning to be discovered by all the artists, not just one.

The director, rather, must build a bridge for the audience to traverse, to enter the world of the play. He/she must be the audience throughout the rehearsal process, to see and hear the development through the perspective of the impending audience. Tyrone Guthrie believes that the one truly creative aspect of directing is "to be at rehearsal a highly receptive, highly concentrated, highly critical sounding board for the performance, an audience of one." (Guthrie, 255). This is perhaps true in the most ideal situations, particularly when the actors involved are experienced and minutely attuned to

the effect of their choices. In other cases the director guides the process, responds, listens and encourages the actors to pursue the right choices.

If directing is like building a bridge between the audience and the play, then with each new play, as with each new bridge proposal, there must be some thought as to whether the play has value. Only then can the planning stages begin. The landscape on either side of a river can be vastly different and, similarly, plays are often foreign to their potential audience. Period plays and plays dealing with foreign issues are two examples. The bridge must join the communities, and once the research of both sides is complete the director has a better understanding of what the limitations are and can begin to establish goals - the blueprints.

The next step in the process is laying the foundation for the bridge. Inevitably the ground will be murky and unstable; plays hold a lot of mystery and challenge, but by making some initial choices about production values and relevant themes the director creates a strong foundation which will contribute to the success of the superstructure. This is approximately when the actors arrive to build the actual bridge, give or take a few steps in the foundation process. They work precariously over the dark water, taking risks, diligently struggling to reach the audience's bank. The materials for success are the artist's commitment and strength of belief in the production.

In the end, if all these steps are carefully taken and critically sound, the audience will be able to travel freely and uninhibitedly into the world of the play and feed on its riches; as per collaboration, the work is done in order to share in the creative wealth. Robert Benedetti aptly explains in his book The Director at Work that

in shaping that little time of heightened awareness, which is the

living play, the director joins his or her life on a profound level with that of the community of artists and spectators. (6)

Finally, one can only examine the success of the bridge by how well the road is travelled. Sometimes the experience of entering the imaginative world of the play can reap immediate repercussions and other times months may pass before the event makes its mark on the spectators' thoughts, but generally the time between curtain up and curtain down will determine whether the bridge has been crossed.

West

West is about disaffected youth in the East End of London and particularly about one young man who faces an adverse situation in an attempt to make life more tolerable for himself, his family and his friends. It flashes backward and forward in time to portray the effects of past events on the present and the possibilities of future events. Steven Berkoff also explores a timelessness through an innovative use of language - combining Shakespearean verse with a Cockney argot. It is a melee of past and present which projects into the future.

When I first read this play, I knew there was something strong, integral and primal about the work. It appealed to both the errogenous and violent zones of consciousness without being overly simple; it appealed both to the emotions and the intellect. I knew an audience, no matter how reserved, would be drawn into some aspect of the script. I was also excited about how complex the language was, yet it was extremely expressive. Excitement or at least respect for the work is vital before embarking on the process of bringing it to an audience.

What, specifically, does West have to offer? The richness of the

language creates a bold theatrical style, one which deviates from the passive kind of realistic theatre predominant in the Western World, and this boldness serves to challenge the audience's level of initial reserve or scepticism. In other words, because of the diversity, the audience will have that much more resistance to accepting their emotional responses and thus entering the creative, imaginative emotions of the play. But once this happens, and I was assured that it would happen, the aspect of overcoming the challenge would produce a much greater sense of gratification.

Parallel to the complexity of the language is the depth of what is being said. The success of a play cannot rely on its form alone; it must have content. As West is written by a male, about a male, predominantly, and very machismo in nature, it is odd that I, a female, would choose to direct it and would find so much enthusiasm for it. This is an argument for the fact that, even though it may seem as though its subject is limited, it is pursuing questions of truth that involve all humanity.

West ventures to reveal the entangled minds of young people and their struggle to enter the adult world, the world that had previously been the adversary or the enemy. Often it means compromising themselves, losing sight of their youthfulness in order to enter the entropic, mythical world of their parents. The alternative is to courageously face their own challenges or find their own answers but, unfortunately, this kind of individualism results in isolation from the group.

The fact that adolescents and young adults go through a soul-searching growth period is undeniable. We all need to be reminded of the difficulties youth face, particularly when a failing economy and social segregation add to their confusion. We also need to be aware of the roles we play in their

development, whether we are too stringent and pushy or too negligent and uncaring. West doesn't present answers but poses valid questions to the audience about the influence of family and peers on a child growing up in a harsh city environment.

It is clear, then, that the play has validity and the argument is there for the next stage of the bridge-building to begin: the planning. This involves the research into both the play's landscape and that which the artist is trying to meet - the audience. Both sides of the river must be fully examined. Knowing the limitations of a script can free the imagination and set the director on the way toward realistic goals.

On one side of the river is West the play; a compilation of Steven Berkoff's world and my own world as director. The director's view must involve "more than a purely private, idiosyncratic connection with the material, of course; it requires also an ethical commitment to the potential value of the experience for the audience." (Benedetti, 12).

Berkoff's world is the harsh, dangerous and difficult East End of London, Hackney, Stamford Hill and Hoxton. His earlier play East: Elegy for the East End and its Energetic Waste, "shows the way things are in the East End with considerable accuracy; with more accuracy than, for example, the heavily committed and, some would say, heavy-handed 'social-realist' approach" (Plays and Players, 29). West, though it is a sequel, is a far more advanced treatment of the material. Where East treats the world in the present tense, giving the idea that there is no direction to look for (it ends with a repetition of the beginning), West seeks a future. The old cliché 'go west young man' where the future is bright echoes in the title.

It does retain the cinematic style of East, albeit less strident, which uses

vignette-type scenes that may or may not be connected with one another. Berkoff's style is unique. He strikes out at the audience using "deliberate exaggeration, grotesquerie, artifice in order to point out the very truths which more restrained presentations seem to hide" (Grant, Decadence program). Those 'exagerations' are of subjects we usually try to suppress - sexuality of all forms, incest, adultery, and homosexuality - violence and its saturation in the media -pollution of the media, the air and the food we eat. He questions the validity of myth marriages, the ones that continue, habitually, despite acute unhappiness. Happiness, basically, should be the ultimate pursuit and if it means defying the social morals, then so be it. This last theme is essentially the last moment of Greek, a modern adaptation of the Oedipus story. Rather than tear out his eyes in self-punishment, Eddy, the hero, declares:

Bollocks to all that. I'd rather run all the way back and pull back the sheets, witness my golden bodied wife and climb into her sanctuary, climb all the way in right up to my head and hide away there and be safe and comforted. Yeh I wanna climb back inside my mum. Whats wrong with that. It's better than shoving a piece of dynamite up someone's ass and getting a medal for it. So I run back....it's love I feel it's love, what matter what form it takes.

(52)

Finally, Berkoff's world is one where language is the all-important; its power can rule, teach, excite and even destroy. It is treated with such reverence and parody that it pervades the poetic consciousness and difuses into a myriad of meanings. He is aware of the need to explore the potential of language and its rhythms, choosing to use it aggressively as a "frontal verbal assault" (Berkoff, Gambit, 12) rather than passively as a reflection of the

audience's 'realistic' language.

I was exhilarated from the impact that the language gave me as a reader and the more I worked on it, the more I was impressed with Berkoff's daring. Perhaps it was my own need to explore the scope of language, to challenge myself with language, which led me to such a response. In a world where the word dominates as an organizing factor and where its communicative ability is diminishing, especially with the advent of a new computer system of words/signs, we must feel obligated, as artists, to aim at the impossible and to extend our basic abilities to their limits in language, or any other area, for the sake of growth.

Innovation is the seed and growth is the reward. When a new child enters a room it quickly becomes the centre of attention. It can sometimes serve to fill a void, to entertain and to teach us something new. Though I believe that the classic theatre is a fabulous storehouse of talent, I also feel that we must make room for the new child, despite the possible risks. Without risk, life and creativity sinks into the abyss of habit, and habit can be the death of innovation.

Habit creates an insular lifestyle, one which tends to let the world go by without being grasped. We can change the channel if we want to; dream about the "Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous" without trying to improve our own lifestyle; relive our passion for excitement through the cop's window in an action-packed car chase; and transcend our pursuit of knowledge and justice on Wednesday nights with "L.A. Law". As we get older, we lose our spirit, our drive and often our values through habit. In order to keep life burning hot we have to find the courage to take risks. The knowledge gained may not always be worth the risk but accepting new challenges and failing is better than never

taking the risk at all.

Berkoff and his play West are testaments of a different culture. Even though the language is virtually the same, the British background is richer with history and controversy than our own youthful, Canadian heritage. Although it is virtually impossible to really know what kind of an audience you will get, a theatre company can draw some assumptions and can also try to target a certain group. I was able to make certain assumptions about the city of Calgary, as a whole. One was that Calgary, like the rest of Alberta, is conservative at heart. Its occupants like to lead an ordered lifestyle and yet its sustenance is the constantly fluctuating oil industry. The residents are, therefore, weathered for change; just as they can easily adjust to the fluctuating chinook weather, they can also adjust to economic ups and downs. Calgarians are also extremely loyal to their city and its sports teams. Their dedication to the world of sports indicates a hunger for excitement and communion on a large scale.

The university community is intimately related with the city because, for the most part, its students are living with their parents and are natives of Calgary and the surrounding area. We can assume, however, that the average age and income of the university population is lower than those of the general population and that a student's interests are less fixed since a university fosters an eclectic education. Also, because of their youth, we can assume that popular music is an important aspect of the student's lives. These attributes led me to believe that the university population should be our target audience.

Another factor lent a certain appeal to the show but also added to the prior expectations of an audience, and that was the subject matter of West -

street gang fighting. Calgary is not exactly a hotbed of delinquency but the issue is not too foreign to us given the epidemic proportions of street gang violence in Los Angeles. It could be argued that given the relative calm in Calgary, a play about disaffected youth might not be relevant. I was of the understanding that the 'calm' was simply due to a lack of awareness and that the youths' dilemma existed, though the situation was not extreme. About a week into rehearsals, my intuitions were upheld when an article appeared in the Calgary Herald entitled "Mean Streets: The young and restless court danger downtown" (Harrington, B1) which addressed this issue directly.

So, after an examination of the limitations that these slightly different landscapes prescribe, the compulsion to bring the two worlds together pushes the artist/architect forward into the next step - drawing up the blueprints or goals of the production. I felt that in order to draw the audience into the play it was necessary to make the spectator forget that West is a 'language play', and it seemed that the best way to do this was to have lots of action. Look at what young people see in rock videos and concerts - the lights, dancing and editing keeps the eye, ear and mind moving constantly. In a small way I felt this angle would serve the younger audience members. The play appeals as well to our passion for violence, yet there is very little actual onstage violence. This moves us, the audience, toward 'wanting to see the fight', wanting Mike to risk his life while we "stood around to gape" (56) thereby causing us to question our own behaviour.

The next step, once the blueprints are drawn up, is to build the foundation. This foundation is the most important aspect of the production and it must be securely built with enduring materials - choices; regarding production values -genre, spatial configuration, period and location - and the

choices determining which themes are relevant and which can be set aside.

In some cases the genre or literary form of a play is quite obvious; however, you encounter forms such as 'tragi-comedy' which incorporates two complete opposites into one and makes the task more difficult. None the less, by determining the genre of the piece, the artist is directing the range of emotions that he/she wishes the audience to feel. In West the question revolved around the ending. It could either be positive and uplifting or negative and thus creating a feeling of emptiness or helplessness. The final rejection of Mike by his parents could inspire him to succeed on his own or it could represent the country/parents who have chosen to neglect their children and so, quell their initiative. I finally concluded that the play is a tragedy since Mike came "into his misfortune [no] because of baseness or rascality but through some inadequacy or positive fault." (Aristotle, 24). Also, small as it is, there is a glimmer of hope, something that gives us the impression that Mike will survive. The process by which I came to this conclusion is detailed later. The tragedy is also manifested in the total isolation; upon rejection by his parents, friends and girlfriend, Mike is left completely alone in the world.

The image of being alone on stage is a strong one, particularly while we, the audience, sit surrounded by others, communally touching elbows and sharing laughter. This sense of isolation might be infectious in the audience, despite the proximity of their neighbour through the spatial configuration which can distance the audience or draw them closer. Quite often the director and designer are working in a theatre, such as the venue for West, where the audience seating and stage area is fixed. Therefore, the question to ask is whether to work with the structure or against it. In fact, Patrick Neilson and myself made use of both options. While we broke out of the circular stage

with the use of sharp angles, we used the strong central point of gravity caused by the circle. With the chorus seated along the back of the set upstage, the audience circle was completed; the central area, or abyss was enclosed like a trap and we, the audience, created part of that trap. This creates an intimacy and includes the audience in the action of the play.

Once the choice has been made as far as the basic spatial arrangement, questions of period and location must be addressed. These production values can also play a part in the distance or proximity between the audience and the subject matter.

Bertolt Brecht, one of the great directors and playwrights of the Twentieth Century, preferred to use geography and history to distance the subject from his contemporary German audience. His theory was that by viewing the events as foreign, the spectators would remain objective and critical of the issues the play provoked. Eventually the audience members would realize that though the characters were foreign and of another age, they reflected, precisely, their own idiosyncrasies, emotions and thoughts and their criticisms were soon turned inward.

I chose to accept the validity of this theory by retaining the Cockney dialect and thus placing the play in its rightful city - London. It would have been possible to perform the play in a 'Canadian' dialect but I feared that much of the rhythm inherent in the Cockney would be lost and a vocal flatness would be the result. It occurred to me that the audience would have previously made the assumption that our fair city need not worry about youthful delinquency: I felt that by presenting a foreign picture they would more readily accept the subject matter.

The period of the play was another special consideration. The

information given in the script is both vague and specific; vague because the specific references such as a "Crombie satin lined with slanting pockets" (16) did not coincide with other specifics like digital watches. Patrick concluded that if topical references were to be the guide, then the play spans a twenty-year cross-reference of style. We made the assumption that, in fact, Berkoff was probably talking about the late sixties and very early seventies era when the 'Mods' and 'Rockers' battled for the London streets. My reservation about adhering to this era was that it negated the timelessness, depth and sense of future which emanated from the hybrid use of language. Similarly, it separated the audience from the characters too much. The 'Mods' and 'Rockers' can now be viewed as a fad or phase that the youth were experiencing and rather than broaden the impact of the 'human' story it threatened to reduce it to a fad. I wanted to tap into the audience's sense of legend, their dreams of heroes and evil. The design, which is discussed in more detail later, reflected this choice. By imbuing a sense of past and future onto the present time of the play, the audience is given a more expansive imaginative journey.

This foundation must also be built of materials that will hold up in the climate specific to the audience and the play. Some themes that the play suggests, for instance, are less relevant than others and so a choice must be made about what issues are suppressed and/or highlighted.

Two themes which I chose to suppress were essentially regional issues. The underlying criticisms of Margaret Thatcher's economic policies in West are not as relevant in our comfortable economic climate as they are in a British theatre. In Britain, since the influx of immigrants after the Second World War, racism has been a fact of life and viewed as an inherent aspect of

society, while in Calgary it might be overly offensive. We are much more protective and restrained when it comes to being reminded of the existence of racism here.

I felt, rather, that the global issues such as individualism and the element of contemporary myth (which is examined in the following chapter), the lack of communication and the issues of sexuality and violence were more exoteric or suitable for the Calgary audience.

West is unmistakably about Mike. He is the only clearly-defined, articulately-drawn character in the play and if you were to remove Mike there would be no focal point. The other characters are generally unrelated except through Mike. Basically, Mike strives to achieve more than the simple expectations laid before him by his family, selling ladies' underwear or grovelling to a boss - 'kissing his ass' for advancement. In a world where there are so few opportunities, Mike chooses to follow the road that leads to self rather than what others perceive you as. This journey for Mike is a singular one since the others - his parents, his girlfriend, and his friends - are all guided by a system of beliefs or myths about their roles in society and to each other.

These beliefs contribute to the lack of vital communication in the world. This prominent theme manifests itself in many ways, through the recurring image of the telephone, through a scene where Sid and Pearl talk, but not to each other, and the fact that Mike doesn't really talk to his parents until the end of the play. Even the opening scene, the pub scene, shows each character singing a different song, clearly indicating the inability to communicate successfully with one another.

What happens as a consequence is the need for, and pursuit of, a vital communicative experience through sex and/or violence. This is another

globally-relevant theme. In West, because the characters crave a passionate exchange in any form, they find sex and violence equally exhilarating and gratifying. They are soon confused about which is which and love becomes violent as violence becomes an act of love.

Making choices about relevant themes and production values provides a good solid foundation for the superstructure. It is at this point that the actors or builders contribute their part in the construction. There are always variables and though the architect or director has made the preliminary blueprints and formed the basis for the foundation, these things can change. The subtleties of a play are explored, torn apart and put back together again. It is through a commitment to the goals and choices laid down as a starting point and a strength of belief in the structure that the bridge is completed. The play can then be shared with the audience; the bridge provides a way into the world of the play. It is only in performance that we can determine just how well the road is travelled, how willingly our audience accepts the invitation to cross. Ultimately the audience will appreciate and remember the journey; they will return to their homes and families enriched with the knowledge of a new landscape.

Chapter II: Interpretation

Myth and Self-Awareness in West: A Struggle for Equilibrium

Theatre, above all else, should appeal to the human sensibilities of its audience. Beneath the pomp and bravado lies the human soul, laid bare, stripped of its external alibis - environment, psychology or fantasy. Simple human choice, the coalition between the brain and the heart, shines brighter than any lighting instrument and rings louder than any electronic sound. If choice does not exist on the stage there will be no transference of choice to the audience. While the inner conflict journeys toward a resolve, the audience moves with it; the audience too must lay bare its collective soul and, at some time, whether it be a year after the performance or a minute, it is made aware of the potential of human choice. It is this phenomenon which makes theatre live and reverberate in an audience.

The director, as an interpreter of the playwright's script and as a representative member of his/her audience, must act as a liaison between these two entities. He/she must strip away the outer layers, like Peer Gynt peels each layer of the onion, to find the play's heart. Undoubtedly, the director operates instinctively and consciously, combining both the audience's societal and environmental conditions and those of the playwright while also injecting his/her own opinions of those conditions. Steven Berkoff's West can be interpreted as a very regional script, commenting on the London city life and the socio/political hardships caused by the present Thatcher Welfare State and its perpetual division of social classes. This kind of interpretation would fare badly, however, in any place except Britain. Instead, this director has found West to be a comment on human nature. Despite its regional overtones, which by the way cannot be ignored, it is a story about a young man's discovery of self, growing up amidst a world of people who are denying self in favour of existing within safe and comfortable myths. This is a story which

can exist in any political, social or cultural background but the fact that it takes place in Britain puts an emphasis on the harsh and increasingly immovable obstacle that youth face.

The director must use the circumstances that are presented in the play to the advantage of the audience for whom the production is being performed. We are, for the most part, aware of the varying degree of difficulties that youth face all over the world. In Tehrān, for instance, the young people are caught up in basic survivalism; they must forgo an examination of self to concentrate on living. In Britain where the expectations exceed the capabilities, given the social class system, the youth must sacrifice self for acceptance in the society. In Canada, though the youth face fewer obstacles, there remains the difficulty, particularly with an educative system that breeds compliance to authority, of finding their own unique personality. This is the struggle and the choice we are faced with at some point in our lives - whether we should believe what is presented to us on a silver platter, or whether we should believe in ourselves.

In the following pages, this writer will attempt to define both of the ideas -myth and self-awareness and prove their existence as prominent issues in West. Then the question is asked: why must there be a struggle for equilibrium between the two? The way in which this struggle is emulated will follow and finally a discussion of how this concept is relevant to its audience will ensue.

The idea of myth usually conjures up images of heroes, fair damsels, monsters, gods and goddesses, men battling with the forces of Nature or men trying to explain the forces of their idiosyncratic world. Ancient cultures created myths to offer an explanation for their world; there are myths

surrounding the four seasons, the sea, the sun, the rain and death. Not only did they create the myths but they documented them with symbols or words and relayed them to their younger generations. To these cultures, their explanations were truth; their belief in the myths made them their reality. Our own culture denies the 'actual' existence of gods and goddesses yet we do not deny the existence of our own mythical figures and thoughts.

When we are confronted with a reality that frightens or confuses us, our reaction is to deny the actuality or reason and envision alternatives: a burning bush becomes a sign from some figure or deity greater than ourselves. For children, darkness is a substance which harbours and protects evil creatures whose sole objective is to seek out and eat little children; this was an explanation for our fear. As we get older our fears change; the creatures of the dark are replaced by fears of failure, isolation, and death. To deal with these we create a system of beliefs which allow us to escape the responsibility of confronting our fears - myths. The same type of process happens when we are faced with a desired reality which is out of our reach; although logic decrees that the chances of winning a lottery are slim, we continue to foster the dream by buying our ticket once a week. We create the myth of the possibility which allows us to escape from the poverty of our lives.

Roland Barthes, a contemporary mythologist, describes myth in a semiological format - it is a "type of speech" (109). The semiological process involves the signifier, for instance a photograph of a woman; the signified or the subject of the photo - her naked body - and the sign which is the final association of the process, which is exploitation or pornography. According to Barthes, myth becomes the next step; it becomes the "global sign" or myth is the presence of male domination in the world, the fact that male superiority

must constantly reaffirm its possession of women. It most nearly expresses "the characteristic or prevalent attitudes in a group or culture" (Websters). As is clear, since a male viewer's response to the above photograph might be radically different, myth is subject to individual history.

Our beliefs, however, are also influenced by those around us - our family, peers and employers. Myths, which create for us a desired reality or protect us from having to confront our fears, permeate our consciousness through those people and things that surround us. They are not simply the stories of gods or heroes like the myths created by the ancient cultures but are contemporary rationales for our insufficiencies and replacements for reality. The "global vision" serves to suppress our fears and spruce up an otherwise mundane existence.

Steven Berkoff uses this idea of modern myth in West to examine the process of growing up in an adult world and learning the value of self-awareness and freedom of choice. Against a backdrop of British tradition, he portrays the prevalent attitudes of the lower middle class East End London, their dreams and fears, "the myths that man has invented to chart the inner life." (Berkoff, East, 84).

There are three categories of myth in West. The first is illustrated by the representatives of society - Sid and Pearl, Sylv, Curly and his gang and the Chorus. The second is that of the hero myth which Mike and the gang believe. The third mythical element arises on a different level - that which permeates the audience. It is within these myths that Mike is caught and from them he must emerge to encounter self-awareness.

Society, or more specifically, the environment where Mike lives - the East End lower middle class London - has its own character. The picture we

get is one of a fragile, tumultuous social order. The youth are without focus or direction and there is a distinct lack of essential, vital communication. The family unit is on the verge of deterioration, the sense of 'neighbourhood' has been distorted into 'war zone' or territorial claims and love between men and women is either non-existent or impetuous and unsavory. Its inhabitants are not the most fortunate people in the world, to say the least, and as an escape from this grim reality they have their beliefs. Some are simple and some are not but they serve to provide either an explanation or a dream.

Sid and Pearl are less than content and beyond the point of rectifying the emptiness of their lives. They are beyond being able to communicate with each other, as Berkoff so clearly signifies in the stage directions for the 'Soho Scene': "They speak but not to each other." (27). The point is that they continue -they live out each day content, though perhaps in a small way, with their mythical contributions to the world. Through the misery of slogging day in and day out in his job, struggling to provide for his family, Sid sees his role in the light of the working man myth. He is able to justify his pain by knowing that he is part of the working class, making an honest living and earning his wage with hard work. He sees his contribution to his family as the ultimate in satisfaction, providing "a haven for my family/which is a little heaven" (46). He is the living manifestation of the working class hero myth, following the rules of society and never straying from the beaten path - "we keep our noses clean/smile our social smile/and leave when they call time." (56).

Pearl's myth is that which encompasses her role as a mother, nurturer and protector. Because there is little else in her life, she sees her role as mother as the only fulfillment. She even extends this image into her

relationship with Sid, and the fact that there is very little evidence of a sex life between them increases the probability of this concept. A mother nurtures; in their first scene together Sid asks Pearl to make fishcakes and she refills his teacup. In fact, in each of their scenes, she is fulfilling some need of Sid's or protecting him against Mike.

We rarely see Pearl with her children but in a couple of instances she exemplifies the mother image. For instance, when Sid responds to her sympathy for the dying child with "they should've let them bleed to death.", she responds appropriately by saying "He's still a son to some poor mother." (20), and in the memory about the movie Sid asks "Where's little Mike?" she replies, dotingly, "Bless him." (18). The subway scene is the first time we actually see Pearl with her son. Her adoration is excessive, she uses every cliché imaginable; "my joy and pride/jewel of my loins/apple of my eye..." and so on. Mike tells her that he is going to a "fight to the death" and her response is apt according to the mythical picture of motherhood; "Well wrap up warm/it's bitter out" (39). Pearl devotes her life to her kids; she emulates what a mother should be archetypally.

Sylv symbolizes the myth of possession of women. She is an appealing, inquisitive, independant young woman before she meets Mike. Her strength of spirit is what is most attractive to Mike but his charm seems to put her under a spell. In the space of one evening, she is transformed from independent to dependent; her life doesn't exist without Mike because she exists only for him. After their first night together she says "And he asked me out the next day/and from then on all I wanted was to be a sacrifice/like an offering." Mike wasn't "like the others but someone wanting someone like me" (31). Sylv does become a sacrifice, she waits patiently at home for him to ring; she

agrees to an abortion, even though she wants to be a mother, and she feeds him. Everything she does or says involves him and Sylv becomes a non-entity.

This so resembles Pearl's situation that we cannot help but think of Sylv as also representing the married life. Like Pearl she wants to nurture Mike and she says "when he looks at me with those hurt eyes/I just want then to mother him" (23). When Mike does come over they "sit in and watch some old flic on telly" (23) and, in fact, when Sylv does regain her senses she sees the emptiness of these simple pleasures, "to sit and wait is not my idea of paradise/in case you decide this is the night that you decide to come/and what do we do but pass the time until it's time to go and "see ya! Be in touch!"". Apart from the fact that they don't live together, they are playing the parts of a married couple, simulating the myth that Sid and Pearl's marriage represents.

Is this love? There is a continuous battle in West between love and violence. Sylv, because she is the only girl, apart from Mike's mother, signifies love. But because she is unaware of what love is she falls into a pretense, sacrificing her self and becoming one of Mike's possessions. She does not present a clear picture of love's potential until, possibly, when she gives Mike up.

On the other hand, Berkoff's representatives of violence are not clearly violent either. Curly and his gang are the purveyors of the myth of violence. They are, according to Les, working men and bricklayers who get together on Saturdays to watch the game on television and drink beer. They lead what we might view as a regular normal lifestyle, yet they are described as monsters by Mike's gang. Curly fosters this image of himself and his gang by becoming what people view him to be. They romanticize their myth, sitting in the dark

and silence, imagining themselves to be a flame into which Mike wishes to venture like the moth. On the other hand, they reveal an alternative motive for Mike's wish to fight. They think practically, explaining that Mike wants to join the evil side of life "so he can stand up West and join the firm of grievous/rape/robbery and death/solicitors to the realm." (43). They see Mike's aim not as heroic, necessarily, but as the first step toward the "path of hate" (43). It is not entirely clear that this gang is pure violence, though they perpetuate the myth and revel in the fear it instills in others, they have more of a function in society than just members of a gang, which is all that Mike's gang can claim.

Les, Ralph, Steve, Ken, Ron and Harry do not have any other role in society apart from being members in a gang. They are still living at home where their mothers wash their "knickers" (38) and feed them. We are never informed of any jobs they might have; basically, they hang out together, get girls, party and get into the occasional fight. They are the embodiment of the myth of friendship. By succumbing to a tribalistic impulse which is due, in part, to the nature of the city, they are able to feel that they are not alone - protection is in numbers. The unity of the group serves as a substitute for real friendship. If this really existed there would be no hesitation whatsoever in supporting Mike and following him into battle.

Mike goes alone, he steps into the fray, conquers fear and nerves and fights nobly until the end. He stands alone, surrounded by the myths of the working class hero, motherhood, marriage and love, violence and friendship, but he is not devoid of the tendency to believe in a myth. Berkoff's treatment of the hero myth creates a sense of timelessness; it elaborates on a theme that has existed through our literary past and will exist into our future. Mike

believes that he has been chosen to be a hero by fate.

He dreams of a one to one, the ultimate battle for honour. He sees himself as the only contender and of tremendous proportions. Mike believes that he is above the trivialities of life, refusing to waste away at a mundane job, or marrying himself to a life like his father's. When Pearl asks Mike where he is going in the tube, he replies:

For a fight to the death/a battle of honour/destruction of a
a monster/to kill the plague/to slay the dragon/ to defend the
weak/ to prove my worth/to destroy the mighty/to avenge the
dead/to annihilate the oppressor (39)

Throughout the script there are references to great heroes - Achilles, Samson, John Wayne, St. George. These heroic figures are constantly making an imprint on our lives through literature, the television - which is, in West the principal element of communication - and films where we see "James Bond giving her one at the Essoldo" (33). Mike's myth is reinforced through these images and by the need to be something greater than what he is - to create a bright spot in the darkness of the city.

The existence of myths is due, in part, to the fear people have of their reality. Myths detract from self and allow us to conform, to be anonymous. We would much rather be in a state of entropy - "the degradation of the matter and energy in the universe to an ultimate state of inert uniformity" (Websters) - than be recognized as an individual. The concept of self awareness is the antithesis of the belief in myth - to be conscious of one's own ideas, questions, shortcomings and fears; in short, one's individuality, and to recognize it as individual is to be self aware.

All of the characters in West are afraid of something. Their fear is

generated by the fact that for whatever action they might take there are consequences to face. In most cases their actions become less and less adventurous or more habitual, in which case the consequences are safe; they are known and easily accepted. They deny an awareness of self in order to feel safe and comfortable (which is, as we will discover, a more ferocious beast than any other - habit). There are essentially three primal fears governing the characters in West and those are: the fear of failure, a fear of isolation, and a fear of death. The Chorus, or Mike's gang, suffers from all three of these fears. They are the most entropic group; even after reading the play several times, it is difficult to picture the gang members as individuals. Berkoff has deliberately drawn them without the same density as Mike to emphasize their role as a chorus and as representatives of society as a whole. Consequently, they most clearly signify the lack of self awareness.

Les, Ralph, Steve and Ken are afraid of failing in life. Because of this fear they avoid the challenges. They do fight against the Hoxtons in the beginning of the play but since Harry's death, the hard reality of the fight causes their fear to grow. Les reacts to Mike's plan of attacking the Hoxtons in their own territory with a hesitation. He sees the danger,

To go into the lion's den is begging for it/they'll smell us at a
mile/they'll see our homespun spotless faces/not scabby/lined with
tracks like Clapham Junction/they'll sus us out before we're even
near and wipe us off the streets. (22)

He is concerned only with the consequences of the failure of the plan, instead of the possible victory. Even when Mike attempts to inspire the glory of a victory, the gang decides to drink and "celebrate the plan" (22) and delay the action for another day.

This delay leads to their own demise and they are attacked, ambushed by the Hoxton fiends. It is at this point that the Messenger arrives to deliver the challenge - the one to one. For Mike, it is inconceivable not to accept, especially after the recent defeat, but the rest are quick to find cause for fear. Les says "I do not doubt some foul play" and Ken adds "What if he should lure you into some forbidden trap and there...phut!" (27), to which Mike responds that he has nothing to fear with the power of a "giant strolling in his veins" (27).

Not only are they frightened of failure in the field of battle, they are afraid to confront Mike with their forebodings. Instead they murmur and confide in others and let Mike continue to prepare; Ralph says "I've seen the brutish thing he has to slay fancy his chances/I don't know/I hate to tell my mucker/my best mate that I might carry in my heart/a little doubt/so I'll keep schtumm/and render him my total confidence in this night's caper." (32-33). Les continues, then, to describe the Hoxton king's last victim in detail, lying in a hospital bed, broken and torn inside and out. It is almost as though they are creating the rationale for their fear of failing in the fight - "Afraid in case you lost" (47) - and making the decision not to go with Mike. We get the impression that by refusing to face the possibility of failure in anything, not just the fight, the gang will continue life without taking risks and will in time regret this choice like Pearl.

On a different level, Sid and Pearl sacrifice personal happiness and self because of a fear of failure. Pearl regrets remaining with Sid instead of trying to make a life on her own. She might have gone except that she was afraid to make an effort only to fail. Now she blames it on her kids "but for the kids/I'd have slipped out long ago/but when you're tied it's difficult/how could I leave

them or support them in a furnished room." (28). This blame transforms her motherhood myth - sacrificing herself for her children.

Sid is afraid of failing in a social context. The fact that they don't go out any more or invite friends in, or get invited back, is because Sid is frightened that they will see his failure as a father. He avoids the inevitable by staying in and watching television. He can also hide behind his caustic social criticism, putting his failures on the sidelines while he berates other peoples': "Outside the door in all weathers/waiting for his mum and dad who's sinking down the pints inside/and now and then peek out to see the kids alright/buying them a bag of crisps to keep them happy" (20). Sid and Pearl's fear of failure has contributed to their unhappiness and unceasingly habitual lifestyle. We can imagine that the gang, the youth who while they are young, have a chance will be unhappy and yet content in their habit-ridden lives.

They will be just a small portion of the larger component of life - THE NORM. They will follow the path that others take because of another primal fear: isolation. Northrop Frye contends that the fear of "exclusion of an individual from a group" is the "deepest fear in ourselves that we possess." (217). It is not the fear itself that is wrong but the fact that, because of it, they abandon their 'friend' in his moment of need.

From the beginning of the play we are given clues that support the theory that the gang represents the whole society rather than distinct individuals in that society. This is the description Mike gives on the second page:

you scum/impressionable as the tides that lick on any shore and
gather up the muck and floating rubbers from some hectic night
that others have/ you who feed upon the blood that others shed and

wipe the bums of hard-faced villians/living by their very farts that
 you gulp down/and think you are so favourable to be near/that don't
 go down with me you chorus. (14)

This indicates their reliance on other people and their tendency to act only according to another man's principles. Mike also refers to them as a "chorus", a fact which confirms the theory.

Even Berkoff's literary structure in some scenes reinforces the idea of a lack of individualism in the group. They often speak as a group, as in the dance hall scene, very much like a Greek choral ode, they speak simultaneously and identically. As well, in some cases, though they speak individually, each of their lines is only part of a complete thought. For instance, in the scene following the big fight all of their individual lines comprise the whole thought:

Ralph: My heart was out there for you...

Steve: Stomping in my chest...

Ken: Like fifty insane drummers.

Les: When you got up and curled your right...

Ralph: I said a little prayer for its journey into space. (53)

In the final scene Berkoff makes it clear to us that the gang members will not stray from the 'Norm' and that they will avoid facing the fear of being alone by being part of the crowd; his stage directions read "Gang as respectable people." (56).

It is not, however, just the fear of being isolated or of failing that deters the gang from accompanying Mike; it is a combination of those two and a fear of death. Harry's death, a significant inciting action, and the description of the mutilation of the other victims of the Hoxton wrath are very real, present

and frightening. Even Mike is aware of the possibility of dying; he says "my mates have fled/left me for dead" (50), while the gang sits sheepishly in a cafe wondering why they aren't there helping him. The gang knows too well that "Hands can be the instrument of life...Or death" (47).

By avoiding the risks that life presents you avoid an essential part of your self. Fears are part of nature and are not isolated in one individual but in order to feel whole, to be aware of self, the fears must be confronted and not left to fester like an open wound in your heart.

Amidst this entropic society of characters who resort to a belief in myth rather than facing adversity stands Mike. Considering the fact that Mike occupies the stage seventy percent of the play and that he is the person with whom each group is primarily concerned, we can safely assume that he is the lead character, the protagonist or the central action figure. Despite the fact that Mike himself is caught in a myth - the heroic figure myth - he is not unaware of self like the others. There is instead a struggle, a desire to find the answer to these fundamental questions: Who am I and do I have a choice? He must be able to pierce through the myths to find what is real in life for himself and from that point begin to make choices that are relevant to himself and his desires. If we do not define our own choices we fall into a trap: we become what others want us to be. We know that Mike gets pressure from his parents to be like "Harry's boy" (29) or to be an underwear salesman like his "cousin Willy." (41), but he is not content with those choices and throughout West we see his struggle to believe in and stand up for his beliefs. Berkoff says in his introduction that,

West is about courage: the courage to live according to your spirit and the guidelines laid down for you by others, to be true to

yourself which may involve alienating others but your truth is worth pursuing since it defines who you are. It shapes, forges and hones you into something that is not vague but clear cut and definite (11).

As the play progresses, we get a sense that the ensuing fight between Mike and Curly is not just simply that; it is the epitome of Mike's struggle to find his niche, somewhere between his mythical beliefs, the encompassing entropy and his reality or awareness of self. The following will illustrate the steps that lead up to this ultimate struggle.

Mike is either confronted with reality or he is lost in his myth. From the beginning of the play his manner and arrogance are testimony to his mythical heroics, particularly when he tells us he is impregnable and brags that his body is unbelievably toned in order to quell any disbelief amongst his gang that he can defeat any enemy. In the same speech, he denies that he is in any way a perpetrator of the working class hero myth which his father propounds:

you think I'm a powder puff or soggy stuff thus to be shaped to humping ladies underwear round retailers or flogging stockings out of suitcases on Oxford Street or doing knowledge on a moped with the dream of owning one fat stinking taxi cab.....no boy/that's not for me. (16).

By denouncing this myth he is able to see himself, somehow, as above normal, as possessing greater aspirations.

What happens as a result of the first fight is like a slap in the face. Harry's death is real and permanent. Archetypally or symbolically his death represents a sacrifice; the image of the innocence of youth suddenly cut short prompts Mike's first step. From this point he begins to search for what is vital

to self awareness, but he loses his way occasionally.

Mike frequently gets caught up in the idea of fate. He believes that there is a system of predestination that has placed him in the position of defender or hero. Just before the Messenger arrives to deliver the challenge Mike yells out "My fate cries out and makes each petty artery in this body as hardy as the hardest villain's nerve." (27). He is here again engrossed in the hero myth and from this standpoint the one to one is the ultimate in heroic bravery and revenge, like St. George and the dragon. The excitement of the battle overwhelms the reality of the outcome and to his mates' cries of caution he retorts, "now I could slay whole armies all alone/a one to one/I wish there were a hundred just like he" (27). The feasibility of this proclamation is, indeed, questionable and it is clear to see that Mike is deluded by mythic grandeur.

Berkoff then diverts our attention from this action to portray a character history of Mike through Sid and Pearl and Sylv, appropriately introducing the concept of love or the myth of love and marriage. One of the more striking examples of Mike's enquiring mind comes after the flashback of his first night with Sylv. They are rapt by each other's sensuality and they make passionate love on the first night despite Sylv's request not to. Afterwards Mike is struck by the similarities between love and violence and tries to find a plausible excuse for the pursuit of either - trying to determine what is vital for himself. He says it is to

exercise your passion in the dark or private/with a bird/or a bloke
for violence or love/or be in love with violence/so when two

tearaways decide to bundle/to inflict some GBH upon each other's
form/they might be making love/and seeking out the soft parts to

inflict upon them some unsightly woe/and finish the night in blissful satisfaction (32).

Unfortunately, the reality of a non-communicative environment decrees that any communion between people, be it loving or not, is more desirable than not experiencing any "passion" at all, and so Mike "decided that it had to be and so prepared himself for the onslaught" (32).

Once he has made this decision, based on a realistic outlook and reinforced by his need to be heroic, he places himself in the hands of fate. No matter how frightened he becomes or how much the danger seems to increase, he must follow his chosen path, "what has to be will be." (33). It is a simple principle - put your money where your mouth is - and the first act ends by presenting Mike as a shining example of purity and resolve against the backdrop of the city's demons, illicit sex and crime.

The second act opens with our first meeting with Mike's ferocious enemy. Curly and his gang "march around the stage with East End macho-animalistic precision, jutting head and threatening stares, to a drum beat." (35). Berkoff then, brilliantly, interjects five minutes worth of witty social commentary where Mike plays a "Cockney Lenny Bruce" (35). Mike is alone on stage, which sets us up for the isolation he will experience later, and twice during his monologue, juxtaposed with the comedy, Mike confesses his fears to us. The line "I'm worried about that fight", while we are chuckling over a humorous story about a man with a mouse in his pie, creates an overwhelming sentiment, a sympathy for Mike's dilemma, his fear. Our view of his struggle is put into question. The story in which the man submits to eating the mouse makes us question the validity of such an existence. For Mike, the only alternative is to pursue greatness at the risk of losing his life. Which way is

best - to live, albeit a less than passionate life with "frayed cuffs and souls" (37), or to risk life in the pursuit of heroism?

Rather than answer this question, Mike chooses to divert his thoughts by going dancing. For a few moments he is swept away from worry by Sylv's beauty and the sensual magic of the dance and music. Soon afterwards, however, he is plunged back into his mythical fantasy by the pressures of his mates - "You're avoiding your destiny by diversions" (40), says Les and the struggle begins again. Mike claims superiority over both the grips of love and the Hoxton king, thus sparking a furor of triumph in the whole gang. The excitement soon ends with another slap in the face, metaphorically. With about as much energy as the whole chorus put together, Pearl erupts reminding Mike and the others of the pressure of working for a living, of pursuing a normal lifestyle. Mike's reaction is to reaffirm his disapproval of the mythical "9 to 5" (42) lifestyle, describing the ineffectual attitudes that pervade the "dreary gang who sway together on the tube" (42). He is convinced that to be true to his own desires is more important than "aggravating your spine to warp/while grovelling for a buck or two/smiling at your boss" (42), which is the image he has of his father, Sid.

Mike is faced with one more step before he goes to the fight and that is to reject the myth of marriage. He goes to Sylv's place in hopes of rallying some support or simply a vote of confidence and he is given quite the opposite. Sylv by this time has found her own truth, and decides to give Mike an ultimatum. Either he stays with her or he goes to the fight; she will not sacrifice herself to someone who would rather fight. Mike retreats to the idea of fate, that he is "to be delivered this night" (49) and the cowardice of avoiding what is inevitable. Sylv's offer is, symbolically, one of marriage and

children, of a rebirth; a life of love instead of violence. The choice to relinquish his fears and abandon the fight is tempting, and a definite possibility. These lines, "I come to you don't I/there's no one else/at least...you get the best/sometimes the worst/that's what it's all about/that's how it goes/ that's what they spout in church even/for better or for..." (50), seem to indicate his desire to accept Sylv's offer, until the end. By not completing the ritualistic line he has suddenly seen the reality - that happiness in marriage is lost in myth, that marriage is only a sacrifice of self.

What he is then faced with is the frightening reality that he is alone in his fight, as well as the realization that he is not superhuman. He is wracked with fear and superstitious images attack his vulnerability. His strength is apparently gone, a loss which he foolishly blames on demons, saying, "they sense victims and hover over like bats/the filthy beasts" (50). This is the lowest point that Mike ever reaches. He, like a child, creates an unreality - a myth to deal with his overwhelming fears. In a moment, however, he returns to reality and in a somewhat unsteady way, prepares himself for the fight, his heroic fate.

The fight, itself, is a myth. Mike firmly believes that by facing the "plague" (21) he will rid his society of its ills, avenge Harry's death, and gain respect and honour from his family and friends. Somehow this fight will resolve all of Mike's problems - with girls, his parents, and his role in life. During the fight, in an advantageous moment he cries "alive again as if the blows have woken me from some deep sleep/I'm myself again." (51), then only a short while later he loses belief "as if my own powers mean nothing/see hopelessness and fear now flooding in as fast as strength is flowing out" (52); it appears as though Mike will most certainly lose, unable to protect himself

properly. Ironically, the Hoxton king then falters from too much confidence, and Mike wins the bout. Curly in his agony then "raised his head/spewed between his bloody teeth the words 'Nice one'". With these two words the hero myth is shattered. All the glory and pomp, the agony of fear, the fate, the myth of restoring order and ridding the world of its plague are unearthed and replaced by a sense of futility; a realization that the fight is not a purge or heroic sacrifice but just another fight. The fact that the whole event is narrated increases the futility of the myth surrounding it.

It is this sense of futility that causes Mike to realize that he has risked his life for other people who don't care either way. He then begins to make choices, the first one being to leave his unfaithful gang because they stand for nothing. Northrop Frye has written that "in tragedy, the chorus, however faithful, usually represents the society from which the hero is gradually isolated." (218). He is also rejected by his family even though Mike attempts to reconcile their differences. Sid and Pearl are unable to accept or see the change in their son and as a consequence Mike is isolated from everyone.

In his final speech Mike confronts us, the audience, and our myths. Now that he has discovered self awareness all the answers he was hoping to find have only created new questions. The myths that he once denied now seem attractive in light the alternative - isolation. Mike's victory results in a loss of all the comforts of believing the myths of friendship, motherhood, working class hero or marriage; what he is left with is nothing but himself and a determination to find answers and to be successful at finding his way:

the most moving thing the theatre can show is a character creating himself, the moment of choice, of the free decision which commits him to a moral code and a whole way of life. The situation is an

appeal: It surrounds us, offering us solutions which it's up to us to choose. (Sartre, 4).

We are left to choose - to face the 'beast' we fear or to continue to let others like Mike face it for us, to transcend our lack of courage through others, daring them. This is the myth the audience must face, the myth which is set up by Berkoff's King Kong scene and by the reference to Lenny Bruce. Both of these figures were 'beasts' according to society; they were a threat to our comfortable, unassuming, 'safe' lives, and were ultimately destroyed. Yet we transcend our own desire to be the king, the hero, the Hercules through these figures and "stand around to gape" (56) while they enact what we should, and then they are eliminated. Most of us are not like Mike; we disappear within the safe confines of entropy and find satisfaction in transferring our repressed impulses and fears onto our victims:

We watch him [King Kong] die, and by extension kill the ape within our bones, but these little deaths of ours occur in prosaic surroundings. We do not die on a tower, New York before our feet, nor do we give our lives to smash a few flying machines. It is not for us to bring to a momentary standstill the civilization in which we move. King Kong does this for us. And so we kill him again and again, in much spliced celluloid, while the ape in us expires from day to day, obscure, in desperation. (Kennedy, 179).

In fact, the struggle for equilibrium between myth and self awareness is never resolved because it is transferred to us. Mike's journey must continue through us, the audience.

Character Analysis

Chapter III:

Drama is about people, their relationships and the choices they make in reaction to other people. What would Hamlet be without the person Hamlet? Why would he begin to question his father's untimely death except in reaction to the Ghost, and how else might he confirm Claudius' guilt but by observing his reaction to the players? Consequently, studying and knowing characters thoroughly is vital to the understanding of a play.

Just as Hamlet determines the truth of Claudius' character through his reactions, so can directors and actors use reactions as one set of clues to the complexity of character. Other clues can be found in the character's language -through syntax, choice of words and diction. Social class, intelligence, nervousity, racial background, and psychological background, among other aspects, can be determined through language. One can also learn about a character through what others say about him/her or how others react to him/her. Finally, quite often the playwright gives specific character descriptions which are helpful, or mentions specific costumes or props which will help to determine character. For example, a man smoking a pipe is distinctively unconnected from a man smoking a rolled cigarette.

Some character traits are very firm and concretely envisioned as they are derived from "explicit" information, for example, descriptions of one character by another. Other information, "implicit", is vaguely defined and cloudy. (Benedetti, The Director at Work, p.57) Either source can be equally clear or misleading;for instance, what Claudius says about Hamlet would be radically different from what Ophelia might say about him. It is up to the director and actor to sift through the clues and determine appropriate choices for specific character traits. Once you know how to find the clues you must also know how to analyze and categorize the data to be able to objectively

shape the character.

There are variations in the approach to character analysis so to be sure of covering every possibility, this study will use a combination from Francis Hodge's Play Directing, Analysis, Communication and Style and Robert Benedetti's The Director at Work. Hodge's method is, principally, an analysis based on dramatic action which evolves from the character's needs or desires, his or her will, and his or her moral stance. Benedetti uses broad, 'external' specifications such as physical and social qualities and psychological traits. For Hodge a character's desire is that which the character wants most, usually in an esthetic rather than materialistic sense. Hodge's 'will' determines the character's strength in obtaining his desire and his 'moral stance' covers the characters' values; for instance, the Machiavellian who justifies the means by the end and achieves his desires through immoral acts would be placed low on the moral scale. Physical qualities are the external traits - age, sex, body type and vocal characteristics, to name just a few. The social qualities cover the way in which a character relates to others as well as his or her role in society as son, mother, working man and so on. When Benedetti talks about psychological traits, he is essentially looking at how the character thinks; whether he rationalizes, questions or ignores some things and what they might be. Benedetti's approach gives the director a basic understanding of character and type, sufficient for casting, whereas Hodge's approach is the next step, necessary for actor coaching and shaping the actor's work to create the framework for the whole, the unity of idea.

The director's and actor's jobs are virtually the same until you consider the question of the 'whole'. Actors tend to follow the process with the focus on their role, while the director must keep the full picture in focus, a task

which requires a second stage of analysis. The second stage is an investigation of the relationships between characters, how one might resemble another metaphorically, heretofore called pairing; the density of the character's life and his or her function within the whole. If we use Hamlet as an example, we can find similarities between Hamlet, Laertes and Fortinbras - all young men avenging their fathers' deaths - which can prove to have thematic significance. Each character, despite the size of the role, has some importance, a function or a purpose for being, which contributes to the overall interpretation of the play, and very often the smaller the function the less developed the character. Hodge contends, "The density of a character - how simple or complex he may be - is determined from how much he participates in the action of the play and from the quality of his participation and what kind it is." (38). In West each character's relationship with Mike is more significant than his or her relationships with other's since almost all of the interaction is through Mike. As well, Berkoff borrows from the Greeks in their use of the Chorus as a character with a function, indicating variants in the density of character development and complexity of function.

Characters, their personalities, backgrounds, motives and relationships are the purveyors of action, a fact which is to Aristotle, the father of dramatic criticism, the key to drama (12). To understand character then is to open up the possibilities to understanding the dramatic action.

The Characters in West

Mike: Physical Qualities

Mike is not, necessarily, a big man. We know he is the leader of his gang, that he is accepting the challenge to a one-to-one, but in comparison to the Hoxton king, he is small. In the first gang scene Mike tells us that "500 squats

a day with poundage on my back of two grown men have made my thighs the girth of oaks" (16), but considering the faltering control over his men at this moment, we might assume that his is trying to bolster their opinion of him. However, he is no "snivelling worm" (15); he should have an impressive stature - a tall, confident posture.

Sylv gives us a few clues to his physical appeal when she compares him to a movie star: "rugged like, not poofy" (23) naming heart-throbs like Marlon Brando, Paul Newman, Robert Redford and Cary Grant as comparisons. While being considerably handsome, Mike also has a sexual prowess. Ralph tells us that Mike's hand is good for "unhooking bras one-handed, whilst the other like a subtle snake seeks other pastures." (16); Sylv reveals that he "felt good to me all the time/and often" (31), and finally, the most conclusive evidence to Mike's sexual health is the fact that he and Sylv conceived a child.

Mike is often described as 'hard'; Les says "I know you're hard my royal Mike-the King of Stamford Hill" (15), and Sylv in her final scene says "be a hard man/cause hard covers the soft/the soft that's underneath is what you fear" (49). This kind of description gives us a sense of rock, of impermeable materials which extends into a steadiness and surety of stance and gait. On the other hand, Mike reveals his 'softness' in the scene before the fight, when he must conquer his fears. He broods about the outcome, describing his fist as "jelly/like a baby's paw" and wishing "if only I had the strength of a kitten I could win" (50). Mike's exterior is hard and strong but he is also, inside, a warm and soft, feeling human being.

Social Qualities

Mike is the leader of his gang, the person upon whom the members can rely; they look up to him. He is also their friend and mate, joining in with

their parties, jokes and games. He is his mother's son, still living in his parents lower-class Jewish home; Pearl describes him as " my son, my joy and pride/jewel of my loins/apple of my eye..." (39), and Curly capitalizes on the situation saying "I'm hungry for the blood of victims/I need another jerk like you/a mama's boy to slay." (35).

In what seems to be a hopeless situation, Mike is a young man trying to find a decent job, something that he likes. He has worked; he tells us about selling worthless jewelry out of a suitcase on Oxford Street - a sleazy salesman. Fortunately, as far as his integrity is concerned, he quit.

Considering Mike's sexual prowess, it is not surprising that another of his roles in society is that of lover. In the subway he is "performing frottage against a piece of taffeta" (36); Steve sets him up with something "dishy" (38); and Sylv suspects him of "getting something else to play with" (24).

Psychological Qualities

The channels of thought to which Mike switches cover a wide field, from sarcastic comments on the world surrounding him to the entertainment of superstitious visions.

In his role as leader he provides ideas, sways the group in the direction he chooses. The first instance is when the group decides to fight the Hoxton Mob, and the second occasion is when Harry dies. This time he comes up with the idea of attacking the enemy by having the gang members camouflage themselves and by planning a "concerted armed attack" (22). This is rational, logical thought.

The 'Lenny Bruce' speech at the top of Act II is filled with sarcastic social commentary. Mike calls the tube a "compost heap" (36) which, when it pulls into the station, "heaves us like a bad case of diarrhoea". He comments

bitterly on the routine of going to work; "I'm channelled up the elevator still holding my dangle/and briefcase with the squashed up sandwiches/churned up like the debris of human rejects/bits of machinery on the conveyer belt going back for repairing/ or destroying" (36). His portrayal of the greasy manager of a cafe who harks back to the glory days when "three million men fought the Second World War on food like this" (37) illustrates a keen, incisive wit, unabashed and confident.

Mike questions his situation; this is not to say that he makes a judgement about it all the time, but he wonders and will not be swayed entirely without some consideration. When the rest of the gang are describing how they were overwhelmed by the Hoxton fiend Mike retorts that he "would seem a normal sort of bloke/a fraction harder than the most at most/ but not a raving Cyclops crossed with Hitler and Goliath thrown in as well" (14). He tries to see through their frenzy, questioning the validity of their report.

On the other hand, through all of this seemingly rational, logical thought exists the irrational - thoughts and visions originating in superstition. In the first scene with the gang, as a scare tactic no doubt, he sends a curse: "those that do not fight with us this day will think themselves accursed/they were not here" (17). Later when he is alone and preparing to fight the Hoxton fiend, his superstitions almost take over in his fear. He sees a "deaths skull" (50) instead of his reflection in the window and then concludes that "a demon came and sucked my blood/they sense victims and hover over like bats/the filthy beasts" (50). Instead of the mental preparation Mike bragged about earlier to Les, he is overtaken by fear and irrationality, explaining his plight through unseen, untouchable fantasies.

Desire

Mike's desires might all be contained under one heading: his wish to be successful. He wants to succeed by having faithful friends, a vital function in the world, stability, and he wants to succeed within himself by facing his challenges and conquering his fears.

Will

Mike's will to succeed is the driving force in the play and appears to be what will drive him forward after the play. Though he questions the outcome of the fight and its validity he never swerves from the fact that since he has committed himself he must follow through.

Sure there is always a day that has to come/that you would much rather avoid/postpone/send a card/forgive me but I can't make it this week/you lie in bed and hope the daylight never comes/it's not tomorrow anymore/it's now/the readiness is all (49)

Mike has a "will of iron" (16) and an uncompromising spirit which is the key to his individuality.

Moral Stance

Mike sets high standards for himself. He knows the value of experiencing life to its fullest and so he is not prepared to give up vitality for a mundane existence, trapped in a "9 to 5" (42). He is addicted to the surge of adrenalin he gets when he meets a new day and when he fights or makes love.

Mike also values his role as the leader of his gang, loyally protecting them and defending them. When Harry is killed, he is prepared from the beginning to avenge his death. Ken recognizes Mike's loyalty when he confronts the rest of the gang in the cafe; "He'll swallow nothing/so he'll taste nothing bitter in his mouth like us/he goes because he has to/and for us/you know that's true/he goes for you!" (45). Even after the fight Mike is aware

that the reason for it is to avenge Harry's life more than to prove his own worth.

Mike's loyalty to his friends far outweighs his loyalty to Sylv or his parents, however. He may at one time have been very close and attached to Sylv, but when the threat of commitment looms he backs away. This action comes from a fear of becoming like his parents; his need for vitality prevents him from accepting Sylv's "sacrifice" (31).

Mike does not respect his parents' goals for themselves nor what they see for him. Consequently, his loyalty to them suffers; he does not call home to relieve his mother's worry; he does not stay in to read - his father's hope; nor does he try to better his situation with education. One senses that, despite this breakdown in familial ties, Mike truly loves his parents and Sylv but he cannot comply with their demands to conform and be what they want him to be. In this way Mike is loyal to himself, hence he is acting honestly toward others.

Sylv: Physical Qualities

Sylv is an attractive, well-developed, healthy young woman of about 20 - 22 years of age. She buys her make-up at 'Woolworths' and 'Boots Drugstores', or at least this is Mike's assumption, saying that she smells "like the perfume counter at Boots" (30). He describes her lips as "blood red" (40), and her teeth as "hard and sharp and wicked looking" (40). She is wearing a garter belt and stockings and probably a mini skirt, all of which exhibit her shapely legs and thighs.

She, like Mike, is warm and soft on the inside but remains hard and cold on the outside. Her line about the abortion "like opening your doors to killers

in white coats and saying/it's in there - you will be quick/it won't hurt it - will it?" (24) shows a certain hard outer shell, a nut which holds a softness within.

Social Qualities

Socially Sylv's toughness reigns. She does not appear to have any real friends, wandering the bars "with or without mates" (30), caring for neither. Her solitariness sets her apart from the others, shows her independence. Mike notices her habit of looking down on people when he says "she had that look about her/like I couldn't care less if you dropped dead look" (30). Her attitude toward guys is pretty cool; one gets the idea that she wants men for sexual satisfaction as opposed to commitment and love, referring to them as "lines of faceless trousers stomping up and down" (30). This attitude changes as her involvement with Mike grows deeper. Her independence disappears the more she stays in and waits for him to ring. She talks about a different kind of outing - going up West "to meet some people for a change" (25), and she learns that commitment and love are strong bonds and that they are, if unrequited, painful, distressing traps. As a rebellion against Mike's inattention she strikes back in an even colder, exterior form of communication. When Mike asks what she is doing on the tube she replies that she's "giving head to accountants in the rush hour" (38). This is a move from one extreme to another; from being a recluse while she waits for the phone to ring to blatant aggressive contact with strangers and crowds.

Psychological Qualities

Sylv is a very full character in regards to how she thinks. In one instant she is an "airhead", confused and ignorant, and in another she shows a great concern for her fellow man.

The first introduction to her character shows us her simplistic nature; in

her preparation for Mike's arrival she makes plans about what to feed him, to please him. Many girls would consider spending time preparing something special by hand but Sylv can only think of buying fast food from takeaway, Fray Bentos pies or frozen curry; she finally settles on chop suey and chips. Her comprehension of the reality of child prevention is astonishingly poor when you consider the fact that she has already had a traumatic abortion. In this instance one would expect a girl to keep a close eye on preventing a recurrence, but Sylv is somewhat unimpressed by the rules of birth control.

I can't remember did I take the pill today or not/piss I lost my little card/oh never mind/but then suppose he wants to then what do I do/oh never mind one day won't hurt or will it/no I shouldn't think it would/or would it/rules are rules and if you break them then you take the risk - men! (24)

The impression these lines create is that her complete obsession with Mike has sucked the power of rationality out of her.

She is slowly becoming aware of her shortcomings, if her defensiveness is any clue. In every speech of that first scene she makes excuses for Mike and herself, "he ain't half nice - really he is/he has his funny ways/I mean who don't/and sometimes I could strangle him/but when he looks at me with those hurt eyes/I just want then to mother him." (23). She changes the subject to food, defensively, when her instinct is trying to tell her that Mike isn't interested any more, particularly since the abortion. The question remains - is she purposely closing her eyes to Mike's rejection or is her outer core subconsciously protecting her inner vulnerability?

As the play progresses Sylv's mode of thought begins to change. We see her sink further into the mire, drinking alone, and it is at this point, ironically,

that her rationality begins to seep through. She questions her position, her role as one resident among many in the world by asking "how many others are like me/alone in boxes/waiting for someone or the phone to ring/what's the use to wait" (45). We get the impression that she is on the road to recovering her independence, at a cost, of course, which is the pain of lost love.

Desire

There is a line during Mike and Sylv's final scene which draws attention to Sylv's desire. As she tries to unfold, for Mike, the beauty of love she says: "Td like to be there for a man/who lives for the moments/so I can live for the moment too/when we can meet/and protect that which we grow together within me" (49). She has, by this time, come to terms with herself and has learned that happiness lies in mutual admiration and dependence. She wants a man who can give himself wholly to her as she would to him.

Will

This aspect of Sylv's character is somewhat confusing because she is, basically, unsure about her desire until later in the play. In the beginning, sexual satisfaction seemed to be her only need and in this she was capable and successful. As she regains her reason from the temporary insanity of love, however, and realizes her own potential for love, this becomes her overwhelming desire. In this her strength of will is staggering; she denies her own emotions and sends Mike away because she knows that he is unable to fulfill her. Instead of compromising, she decides to start over.

Moral Stance

Sylv is clear and crudely honest about her associations with other people when we first meet her, but she is, on the contrary, dishonest with herself and her feelings about abortion for instance. While she tries to regard it off-

handedly, she definitely wants to be a mother; and yet she agreed to the abortion.

She is straightforward and direct in some cases but in others she is genuinely confused and unaware of her ability to make integral distinctions and choices. We see that by the time Mike visits her before his fight she has become cognizant of her abilities and uses them to try to open Mike's eyes - "the soft that's underneath is what you fear/my woman's body tells me/is soft to make things grow/its softness breaks down your rocks like water wears down stone" (49).

Sid: Physical Qualities

The most repetitive physical image we get of Sid is that his spine is warped. He has worked as a cutter in a clothing factory for close to twenty years, which has caused a bad cough and calloused hands. He talks about food a lot which might give the impression that he is flabby and unfit. He works hard to provide for his family but the money is rarely enough to accommodate the unexpected, let alone entertainment. With his affinity for soapbox preaching about the ills of society, his voice is either strong and billowy, or very hoarse. Generally, Sid is a tired, middle-aged, middle-class father suffering from an ulcer, whose only entertainment is the television and the occasional outing to the pub.

Social Qualities

Socially, Sid is inept. His marriage stays together because Pearl is too weak to leave; he has not got any more friends because his pride, disguised as independence, prevents him from inviting people over. That they don't phone him is reason enough not to phone them, yet sadly, he is quite anxious for someone to call.

At the opening of the play we see Sid and Pearl in the pub but as the play progresses we discover that Sid spends a lot more time in front of the television. Pearl laments that he never suggests they drive to Brighton for a day any more or that they never entertain their family or friends; she says "they don't invite us anymore...and I can't go alone/he says he's too tired to go out/and/what have they done for him he says/you've only got to entertain them back/so we sit in and watch the telly." (29).

Sid is racist. He resents the fact that he has to work with other races, and blames them for society's problems. This is part and parcel of his envy of other people and their successes, whatever their race.

Psychological Qualities

When Sid tells us about his experience with the prostitute he reveals a determinism in his way of thinking. While he stands below her room, visions of fantasy draw him up to temptation; then when the visions disappear and are replaced by the grim reality of a rancid, over-used, old hooker he continues in his course of action, despite the many reasons for leaving.

I thought I can't do this/I had my wages in my belt/not much since
times were hard/and mum needed the gelt/for rent and clobber for
the kids/a coat as well/but even so I couldn't now turn back/I

hurttled through a quick time for ... don't ask/it cost a bomb (45)

The fact that he walked in the door precludes any reverse action even if overwhelming reason supported it.

This determinism leads naturally to defensiveness. Quite often, when Sid is reminded of his own disgraces, like Mike, he starts to defend himself, delivering speeches about the youth today or maintaining that he did everything the way a father should, and laying the blame on Mike himself.

After Mike confronts Sid, in the final scene, and the resolution to send him away is firm, Sid turns to Pearl and says "I did me best," and when Pearl's reply is less than assertive he says, defensively: "Didn't I? ... You sound as if I didn't well/didn't I or not/did I show him those ways?" (55). He cannot answer his own question. In fact Sid's contribution to Mike's delinquency is caused by a blindness to the problems that closely affect him or his family.

He rants and raves, passionately and sympathetically, about society and the unfed children but never reserves any passions or sympathies for his own family; his concern is misplaced. Instead of confronting his own child's problems, he denounces the treatment of other people's kids - "Unwanted bastard of some brass no doubt/brought up by waiting by the pub...Outside the door in all weathers/waiting for his dad and mum who's sinking down the pints inside" (20). It is commendable compassion that never finds its way, unfortunately, to his own son.

Desire

Sid's overwhelming desire is to have a life without worry; to drive along a smoothly paved road, swerving to miss all the bumps and grinds. His reason for throwing Mike out, in the end, is to have "a bit of peace in our old age." (55).

Will

The best way to achieve the goal of smooth sailing is to put up little resistance. The image of the warped spine extends to include Sid's will; he has very little backbone to put up any obstacles so he follows a path of submission: "we keep our noses clean/pay the rent and rates/smile our social smile/and leave when they call time." (56).

Moral Stance

Sid thinks he lives by very high moral standards but he falters. The most serious moral deviation is going to the prostitute and not turning back. Fortunately, Sid feels remorse and thus vindicates his deviant act. This shows that his high standards are questionable and that his weakness of will overrides the strength of his morals.

There is also a sense of commercialism tainting his morals; although we see his remorse and believe that he won't stray again, the last words we hear about the incident are "it cost a bomb!". This brings into question whether he feels remorseful for having committed adultery or for wasting his hard earned money. Sid is a good provider for his family but this accomplishment tends to become the sole source of moral responsibility toward his family: "Where did it go wrong" he asks himself "she never had to do a stroke of work/I brought home all my wages every week/not all mind you but they never went short." (28). Just as the government dispersing the dole cannot see the importance of surplus funds to buy Christmas gifts or a short trip away, Sid cannot see a need for taking Pearl out more often or going to Brighton and so he morally denies her.

Pearl: Physical Qualities

Pearl is probably between the ages of thirty-seven and forty-two years old -younger than Sid by quite a few years. She is not unhealthy but she takes pills to help her sleep at night. Her voice is always calm and soft - soothing. She has all that a giving mother should have, softness, warmth, the smell of baking in her hair, the roughness on her hands from doing dishes and the laundry, the smile and lightness of touch that consoles her children.

Social Qualities

Pearl's role in society is the archetypal mother and housewife. She

probably sees very little beyond the local drugstore and grocery store. The opening of the play gives us the clue that she is starved for social contact, for outings and parties. She would like to play the role of hostess to her friends and family or go out visiting but she doesn't. Because she is Sid's wife and because he doesn't like to go out, they both stay in and watch television. She does manage, however, to get out to the Bingo on occasion.

Psychological Qualities

The most prominent aspect of Pearl's psychological nature is her complacency. She gives in to everything - Sid, time, habit. By complying she can save her own dignity; she can never be blamed for an action because she is a follower, not an instigator. When Sid refuses to phone their friends Pearl's response is submissive: "You're right Sid/you're quite right." (21). She gives in to time and lets years and years of discontent be her defence for inaction, "sometimes I'd like to pack my bags and leave him to it/just run out and go/I don't care where/just up and off/and never see his face again/it's too late now/I should've done it long ago." (28).

Through all her discontent she can find happiness in memories. The only bright spot in either of their lives is when they reminisce, relive the past. Instead of confronting Sid and asking to go to Brighton, she remembers previous outings and relives the joy in her mind. When she laments over not having any parties, she can revive a memory and find contentment for a few moments.

Unfortunately, these moments are not enough to give Pearl any real hope for joy in the future. She is wrapped up in the habit of their lives and sees only one way out.

I look at him and think what have I got but habit and some sleeping

pills/to send us into oblivion at night or ease the pain of our
 arthritic bones/to soften his loud snores and give an hour or two of
 sweet forgetfulness/one day I'll take the lot. (28)

Whether she has the courage to take such a drastic step is questionable and what is left, ultimately, is the image of a woman taking no step at all; she neither leaves, nor commits suicide.

Desire

Pearl's greatest desire is to be happy from the love of her children and their successes. She might have left Sid long ago except that she could only think of their well-being; she lives for them - "it's for the twinkle in my baby's eye that I can soldier on." (28).

Will

Pearl has very little will as far as obtaining her own desire or her personal needs goes. She feels she has little control in the upbringing of their children which is evident in the fact that she blames Sid for Mike's delinquency: "He never took an interest in him the way a father should/to show him what it is he should know." (30). In the end Pearl realizes that her own lack of will power and decisiveness to achieve simple needs was, in fact, the cause of Mike's need to be aggressive. She allows her drudgery to continue out of fear of failing on her own.

Moral Stance

Pearl seems to be without her own moral standards, moulding herself to fit in with Sid's morality. Her devotion to her children, however, supersedes this invisibility. She places their well-being above her own and when she knows the answer to Mike's aggressiveness we feel that she has not compromised anything, but has opened her eyes to see her own contribution.

This kind of enlightenment or learning broadens a person's life and shows that her mind and emotions are working toward a moral goodness.

Curly: Physical Qualities

Of all the characters, the one described in the most detail is Curly. Members of Mike's gang spend the first five minutes, at least, relating his ferocity, strength and monstrous form. Mike brings a welcome sense of logic to the discussion when he says:

you chorus that exaggerate some slimy punk/as big in your esteem
as you are small/when seen with normal eyes and not those/bent
with envy/and weighted down with fear/would seem a normal sort
of bloke/a fraction harder than the most at most/but not a raving
Cyclops crossed with Hitler and Goliath thrown in as well (14)

Indeed, Curly must be big and intimidating with a less than attractive face, but as Mike suggests he is, fortunately, just a man.

Social Qualities

Curly and his gang are bricklayers; they hold a position in society other than being members of a gang, which is more than can be said for Mike's gang. Curly is the leader through sheer brutality and strength. He tells us that he is known as "the avenger" (35), who is, ironically, a person who "exact[s] satisfaction for a wrong by punishing the wrongdoer" (Websters, 1976). Although the other gang believes Curly to be the enemy, he sees himself as providing a service to society -like a school for delinquents.

Psychological Qualities

Unlike Mike, Curly has little need to ask questions because, for the most part, he is very confident of his motives. He does not need to impress his gang with unrealistic displays of strength because he knows he is intimidating.

Rather than question the confusion between love and violence, as Mike does, Curly unabashedly uses the imagery to describe his plans for the fight:

I'll make love to him/my caresses will start their long journey in hell...I'll embrace him like a hungry bear...we'll dance and then I'll look into his eyes/wet with tears of thankfulness/as I do renovate the house he lives in/he'll whisper like a gasping lover/to the background of splintering sounds (43)

He is sure and confident in his role as "King", so he envelops himself with his power and becomes the flame to others' moths.

This power presents another psychological mode in Curly - malevolence. He fears not and so he relishes in the fear he instills in others. He frequently refers to himself as "hungry", anxious and impatient for the kill. His malice shows in his relentless description of the fight, essentially conveying that he stops for nothing except death.

Desire

Curly wants, more than anything, to be respected by both his peers and his enemies. Even in his defeat, he raises his broken head and in a sportsmanlike manner, he congratulates Mike with "Nice one" (52).

Will

There are two ways with which Curly succeeds in his desire to be respected. One way is through fear, which takes less will and more intimidation. The other way, which requires a strength of will, lies in accepting defeat. We barely see this aspect of Curly except that it is related to us through his gang. The power of Curly's will has permeated their consciousness and they follow his lead, a fact illustrated by the description of their action: "they parted quietly for me when I left" (53).

Moral Stance

The one thing that gives Curly a higher morality than the usual 'enemy' or 'evil' character is the fact that he is unpretentious. He is loyal to his gang and straightforward with women ignoring them completely rather than leading them on to believe something exists when it doesn't. He is pure in his unswerving tyranny; however, he is capable of sly, devious, unfair action - the ambush of Mike's men is one example. In Curly's eyes this is strategy, pure and simple.

Mike's Gang

Les:

Les is, essentially, the second-in-command in the gang. He is probably close to the same size as Mike and wears a coat with a little more flash. He doesn't have the kind of calm and security needed to be the leader although that is his goal. Les is not brave; he would rather "forget the bundle/let's scout out what muff walks lonesome streets tonight/and drag them back to forty watts of Eric Clapton or The Queen." (16). A pragmatist, he presents the rational side of an argument which will ultimately save the gang's hides, but not their souls. He would like to be a poet, but without having to experience the bumps and grinds that make life an experience.

Ralph:

Ralph is the next member in the hierarchy of the gang due to his size. He is a big guy, cumbersome and unattractive. While he seems stupid, taking pleasure from "making rude and gamey gestures from fast cars at thick brained yobs from Romford" (16), he is also capable of judging the gang's own stupidity when they chose to talk about action instead of doing it: "We planned too late our deed/we should've struck when he was bloated in his bed

as he found us/instead of deeds/we fell to carousing as if to celebrate the victory before it's won." (26). Ralph wants to be assertive but he hasn't got the will power to step outside the pettiness of the group. In the cafe scene his assertiveness is really weak because it is squandered on a non-threatening, helpless individual.

Ken

Ken is somewhat singular; there seems to be a strength of character within a weak exterior. Of all the gang members, he has the potential to be a leader but cannot because he knows that "knights are born not made" (48). Ken has a conscience; he will suffer for his inaction and disloyalty to Mike. He speaks of Mike to the others in the cafe: "He'll swallow nothing/so he'll taste nothing bitter in his mouth like us/he goes because he has to/and for us/you know that's true/he goes for you!" (45).

Steve:

Steve has a malicious nature, like that of a wayward child, unnecessarily torturing frogs and other unfortunate animals. He enjoys fighting as much as getting girls; he hasn't any fear of getting hurt yet he, too, declines to accompany Mike to the fight. Steve is loyal to his friends but unable to act by himself; he hasn't sufficient courage to break from the group, the norm. His conscience will be secure if it follows the same path as the majority.

The members of the gang function as more than individual characters; they also function as a group or chorus. This is why the character analysis for each of them is less fully drawn. As a chorus they "should be regarded as a constituent part of the whole, and should share in the action." (Aristotle, 37).

This chorus functions as a representative of the general public; as members of the community; as the environment, the future and Mike's alternative to the fight with Curly.

Sid and Pearl are Mike's parents and their function is to reveal to us the environment of Mike's youth, his past, and the present - a detached, fragile family. They also represent the future; they represent Mike and Sylv if they were to choose to marry. Sid and Pearl are almost caricatures in the simplicity of their lives. They are also part of the chorus, representing society as a whole.

Sylv is another of Mike's alternatives. When he visits her before the fight he has to make a choice between love as represented by Sylv, and violence as represented by Curly. Sylv puts pressure on him to make a choice and she will not allow him to entertain both.

Curly and his gang function as the evil side of life, the opposite of Sid and Pearl's existence. Berkoff sets up an interesting parallel, however, when he calls for Mike's gang to play Curly's gang. Suddenly there is very little distinction between 'evil' and so-called 'good'. But in the eyes of the society as a whole the Hoxton gang is extreme, relentless, and diabolical.

There is also a pairing of the women in West. Pearl is a woman who sacrifices her own needs for those of her husband and children. Sylv, we discover, is doing the same for Mike, even though she is a stronger woman. Similarly, the prostitute that Sid visits in Soho functions as a sacrifice to male desires. To show three women sacrificing self-worth for men is a grim outlook on their role in society. Fortunately, Sylv breaks this pattern by sending Mike away. One cannot ignore the sense of release and of chain reaction, the sense that Pearl may also, one day, find her own self worth.

None of these characters would exist if Mike did not. Each of them functions around Mike; they are the walls of the "maze" (56) he is trying to break out of. They make up the world of circumstance; he is the son to lower class parents, the leader of lost and frightened friends, the lover of a submissive girl; they are both his barriers and his life.

Chapter IV:

Berkoff's Blend of Metre, Imagery and Colloquialism: A Timeless Trilogy

A director approaching a play must use its words and text as his/her guide. In most cases the playwright is not living and the only existing realm of information is the body of words provided in a script. The playwright knows that each person in life chooses a particular array of words, has a vocabulary, some times indicating his or her station in life, age and experience or race. An author also knows that the way in which a characters uses words is significant. Steven Berkoff has advanced one step further he has borrowed from the past, from a theatrical tradition of poetic blank verse and superimposed this onto an imagistic yet colloquial frame of language. By doing so, he has effectively removed the language from a realistic/worldly domain and elevated it, or extended it into a mythic domain; he has given it a "global sign" (Barthes, 114). Berkoff's combination of traditional metre, of classical and modern imagery and of a colloquialism specifically indicative of East End London creates a universality, a timeless legendary quality which not only makes Mike's story an exploration into the persona of youth but taps into a dream fantasy world. Since West and other Berkoff plays are pioneers in a contemporary aberrance of theatrical language, the following will explore how various and sometimes contrapuntal linguistic elements serve to augment the play's mythic and timeless quality while also commentating on today's society.

Our first impression of the play, the first two pages, exemplifies this uniting of past with present, of tradition with innovation. The songs which are sung at the top of the show are traditional pub songs, passed on through the interaction of the elderly and the young, sung with verve every night in the pubs. They inspire a nostalgic mood and remind most people of a time when they themselves gathered with friends and enjoyed boorish exuberance.

This mood is soon forgotten with the attack the guys make on the audience's focus and begin the first gang scene. The descriptive passage that Les delivers is rhythmic; it resembles lyrics to a rock and roll song more than it resembles everyday speech. On the page the words are divided both into sentences and into cadences with the use of slashes (/). The placement of these slashes coupled with the arrangement of words and the choice of words give the passage a unique rhythm.

Within the first sentence the audience member who knows his/her Shakespeare would recognize a quotation from A Midsummer Night's Dream. It is not set apart from the rest of the script but embodied in the idea of the line...

Breathless, I was aghast [when I saw/standing between the full moon
and the blinking lamplight, this geezer/all armed, a certain aim he
took] and felled the swarthy git from Hoxton with a deft and subtle
chop (14)

Whether it is a direct or accurate quote or not, it has the flavour of the Shakespearean iambic foot, the unstressed - stressed form of poetic metre. The quotation is also imbued with ingredients which make it colloquial - the word "geezer". The words are sometimes presented in a reverse order that gives a sense of poetic reverie. The way in which this leather coat is described, "venom and gross form in leather stacked/his coat stitched and embellished with a fine lattice work of studs" (14), is nothing less than royal.

During Mike's speech on the next page, there are words spoken in the same breath that conjure up both classical and contemporary images. He calls his men a "chorus that exaggerate some slimy punk" (15); though it sounds plausible, it is unlikely that Euripides or Sophocles would use the word "punk".

The next sequence brings the juxtaposition of past and all too present enemies, "a raving Cyclops crossed with Hitler and Goliath thrown in as well" (15), and the beat ends with Ron's "of course we doth, my dearest lovely Michael". The word "doth" is Elizabethan, the Cyclops is an element of Greek mythology, Goliath of Biblical mythology, while Hitler is an entity we are still recovering from, and Mike's use of derogatives are today's, frequently heard in most English speaking societies. In the first two pages Berkoff finds the blend, the combination of past and present which is then delivered by our youth - the future.

Some critics have determined that West is, for the most part, written in iambic pentameter, the metre of Shakespeare's work. Metre is the structure of the rhythmic poetic verse; iamb refers to the arrangement of syllables which is, in this case, unstressed (x) - stressed (/); pentameter refers to the number of syllabic patterns in a line. Below is an example of a line written in iambic pentameter taken from Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet:

Bŭt sóft!/wĥat lĭght/thrŭgh yŏn/dĕr wĭn/dŏw brĕaks?

The scansion of this line shows clearly that there are five metric feet, consequently the term - pentameter, and the arrangement of syllabic emphasis is unstressed - stressed - the iamb foot. If the slashes printed in West are indicative of the verse structure, there are anywhere from four to nine metric feet in any given line but the overall metrical variation in most frequent use is the iamb, which is in fact the natural rhythmic pattern of ordinary English speech (Berry, 52).

Berkoff also creates a juxtaposition between this elevated, poetic language and the simple 'ordinary' language of Sid and Pearl. Consider the following line:

Pearl: I'm nervous going to bingo even and that's only down the road. (21)

There is no special attention to metre here but rather there seems to be an attempt to make it irregular and as distinct as possible from the high poeticism and metre which is evident in the gang's speech.

Though it may not be strictly 'Shakespearean', because it resembles that form, the language is elevated. Berkoff uses this literary tradition to play with a contemporary issue. Shakespeare generally wrote blank verse for characters who were members of the royal and upper classes and prose for those characters less fortunate; there was a distinct class difference in the linguistic form. The characters in West are lower class, thus their language should resemble the prose of the lower class, not the elevated structure of royalty. When Mike speaks a unit of thought which has a rhythm and cadence resembling that of a line spoken by Prince Hamlet, the system of social order is reversed. Cicely Berry talks about actors using "a formal speech of a different class" and their difficulties are "not because you cannot do it, but because it does not seem fitting to one's own outlook - and this is a political point." (33). Pete Townshend also makes reference to the impact of this device in his introduction to West - "the challenge he [Berkoff] proposes is directly aimed at all the preconceptions we British hold dearest". Berkoff uses a tradition - a linguistic poetic form rooted in British literature - contrapuntally with a contemporary vision of class structure to comment on the existence and persistence of imbalance in the economic wealth of certain classes of people.

Not only is there an amalgamation of past and present through the metrical structure of the language but in the imagery as well. While Berkoff

uses a literary tradition to make a contemporary statement, he uses imagery to increase the sense of historicity, expanding on the mythical qualities of the script by combining images from the past with the present.

The young guys who form Mike's gang are his confidants, his supporters and his enemy. Rather than existing as individuals who make up a whole they are each a "constituent part of the whole" (Aristotle, 37). Berkoff has borrowed this idea of a chorus from the Greek theatre. The group's cohesiveness and lack of individualism create a societal view; they become representatives of the world surrounding Mike. This image removes the immediacy of action from each member and, instead, the action or choice becomes our own, moving from the past to the present.

Berkoff has modelled his gang after the ancient Greek chorus and he has also borrowed that culture's sense of mythology as well. The Greek citizen knew all of the characters and the stories in the plays of his time; Berkoff in the same way incorporates our own contemporary knowledge of mythic characters to broaden our imagination and spark a sense of recognition. He makes references to Achilles, Samson, and St. George, the patron Saint of Britain who killed the dragon and brought fertility to an impotent land. Then there are images of contemporary myths - Charles Atlas, John Wayne (a "prince of celluloid" (47)), and Bruce Lee, the human fighting machine. These references tap into our dream world, they remind us of our deep desires to emulate these people so that we might have "a memory to chat about on wintry nights to all the kids....Of how you were a hero" (47).

In many of the great tragedies, Oedipus Rex and Hamlet for instance, there was a plague in the land, a curse of some sort preventing the advent of prosperity and happiness. West also follows suit but, in this case, the

symptoms of the plague are current issues and, in some cases, contemporary versions of plague imagery.

The abortion issue in Britain, as in most of Western civilization, is a fiery one. Every person has either a strong opinion for Pro-life or Pro-choice, or they are torn between both. Berkoff appears to have an abhorrence of the idea of cutting a child's life short; the reference to it in Greek sends this message.

Meanwhile men in white masks are penetrating the holy crucible where life may have slipped in, and armed with scalpels and suction pumps tear out the living fruit and sluice it down the river of sewage, the future Einsteins, Michelangelos and future Eddys. The blood and plasma of creation is swept and flushed away with gasps of 'don't' inside the tender packages not yet fulfilled. (42)

The fact that Sylv has recently had an abortion is no accident. It is meant to be a symptom of the illness in the country and synonymous with murder.

The gang is suffering from another symptom of the plague and that is the frequent recurring image of swallowing bile. Rather than face their problems and fears they swallow it and become filled with regrets and shame; they "swallowed some offence...A mouthful of slugging vile." (47). They are also vain, overly concerned with facial purity. If a mark or scar marred their face, such as a bulbous plague might do, they would be outcast amongst their own gang - quarantined and thus isolated. It becomes an impurity, a loss of innocence and attractiveness. Curly's face, for instance, "looked like a planet that'd been boiled in nuclear wars or struck by meteors/razed by hurricanes," (14); it was the epitome of disaster.

The most damaging symptom of this contemporary plague is the constant

juggling of the values of love and violence. There is confusion about the difference between them since one could be the same as the other and both are equally satisfying. Passion can be found in either love or violence; it is an exertion of the emotional psyche, an expression of one's libido, or it is simply communication. The youth in West are so starved for any kind of vitality that their energy overrides their reason; they find the same fulfillment with either love which is often violent or violence which is as communal as love. Mike delivers an entire monologue questioning the difference between them; he sees that the "very spot where now you gaily spray your spunk/was where two nights ago you splattered blood" (32). Even the words "spray your spunk" which should be describing a moment of loving communion connote, through their sound, a much harsher and colder exercise, like a spit contest. Berkoff also uses oxymorons like "strife-warm" which reinforce linguistically the plague imagery. It is a classic entity with which we, a modern audience, can identify especially when we are confronted with issues such as the quarantining of Aids victims; it shows our fear of and our need to avoid disease at any cost to human generosity.

The imagery in West, though it is spoken by contemporary people and deals with contemporary societal issues, is borrowed from the classics; the chorus, heroic mythical figures, and the plague serve to increase our sense of history and timelessness.

Berkoff's third predominant linguistic factor is the colloquialism which "refers to the highly informal, conversational language of particular times and places." (Benedetti, An Actor at Work, 139). This element clearly places the characters in their social class according to the British historical tradition. The Cockney dialect with its unique form of rhyming slang is the most

predominant colloquial exponent; parallel to that is the use of simplistic repetition, much like Samuel Beckett, and the use of cliché.

The Cockney dialect "is the symbol of the condition of life in the slums" (Matthews, 151) and has been considered a language of thieves and also one of the reasons why the British felt they needed to create an 'accepted speech' (Matthews, XXI). It is the most distinguishing factor of the lower class and in order to be considered a member of the gentry class, as G.B. Shaw has proven in Pygmalion, one must speak like the gentry. The characters in West, however, are deeply embedded in the East End of London, born beneath Bow's bells and Cockney inside and out. There are telling signs - the replacement of 'f' for 'th' on page 40 when Sylv asks for a drink: "I fink I'll have a gin and tonic."; the terms "sod it!", "pooftah", "not a jot", an "old flic on telly" and the expression "he don't half love it" are all indicative of the region but the most frequent and convincing element is the rhyming slang.

Rhyming slang was thought to have originated amongst businessmen (or thieves) in order to elude the authorities. Instead of using a word, for instance 'table', they would create a rhyme which would stand for the word - 'Cain and Abel'. Before long they were omitting the rhyming word, 'Abel' which then made comprehension even more difficult. There are quite a few instances of slang in West. On the first page, for example, is the word "titfer" which means hat and is a derivation of the rhyme 'tit for tat'. When Mike is narrating the night at the dance hall and tells us that in the karzi the guys are "doing their barnets" the connotations are numerous but what he is really saying is, 'they are combing their hair'. Barnet is the derivation of Barnet fair which rhymes with hair. Mike also describes a person "kicking up a big pen and ink" (37) which, translated, means he's kicking up a stink; "Hampsteads" (40)

are teeth because they rhyme with Hampstead Heath and a "boat" is a face when it rhymes with boat race.

The slang and dialect clearly place the characters as far as their social station but they also serve as a commentary on tradition. The Cockney dialect and slang have been in existence (or at least documented as existing) since the 16th Century. They have their own tradition; just as Shakespeare is adopted as the literary tradition of the upper classes, Cockney is the vocal tradition of the lower classes. Now, however, with the advent of 'accepted speech', "The Cockney dialect is being gradually suppressed." (Matthews, XII); it is being forced into the back room like an uneducated, poor relative. Berkoff infuses a mockery of tradition by combining one with the other, by creating an inextricable bond between one tradition and the other.

During Sid and Pearl's scenes, there is less attention paid to the elevation of the language and even to the traditional Cockney slang, but more is paid to the choice of words and universal expressions. They are continuously talking about the past and incorporating cliches into their speech which, in effect, makes the characters stagnant and unoriginal with very little sense of a future time.

The passages which are recalling their memories of better times are simplistic and repetitious, incorporating short sentences, names of movies and food. They are reminiscent of Harold Pinter and Samuel Beckett in the sense that they portray a boredom and the inescapable habit of people who do not look to the future. Consider the following passage:

Sid: They'd make a great cuppa then.

Pearl: They were famous for it then.

Sid: The pastries were delicious then.

Pearl: They made the best then. (19)

Though this is somewhat stylized it is closer to realistic speech and to their pathetic, stagnant lives.

Cliché is also a form of tradition, albeit one with a shorter history. It is the repetition of a phrase which allows for the phrase's survival over a period of time; the phrase's recognizability, however, makes it unoriginal and hackneyed.

Their use of cliché shows their unoriginality and reliance on standards and accepted definitions rather than risking the truth. When Pearl meets Mike in the tube she showers him with accolades but they are only clichés: "the apple of my eye/the light of my life" (39) and so on. The impression this device creates is one of non-communication. Pearl doesn't really have anything to talk to her son about, she is beyond comprehending her son's growth and so relies on the standard expressions. Sid also uses cliché; instead of succumbing to an emotional forgiveness he says of the victim of gang violence that "They get what they deserve/what they sow/they reap/they get as good as they give". His insensitivity toward the problems of youth is enhanced by the fact that he uses cliché.

The language, the choice of words, imagery, metre, and colloquialism all have elements which add to the timelessness of the script. Through incorporating traditional nuances, the language creates a historicity, a layering of different times and eras on top of each other. The play has a past, a present and, because the main characters are young, there is a drive for the future. Mike, in particular, looks ahead into the future; he knows that just because he's hurdled over one obstacle time does not stop - "there'll come another beast/for every one you kill/there will grow another head." (56).

Chapter V:
Production Analysis

There are three stages involved in the process of directing a play. The first is the pre-production period, the second is the rehearsal process, and the third is the technical rehearsal process wherein all the elements finally converge. In the following chapter I will discuss (I take the liberty of using the first person as directing is a phenomenological process) the development of the Department of Drama's mainstage production of West by charting personal discoveries, challenges and influences. I'll comment first on the pre-production period, citing useful research which led to a production style and concept, the design process and the development of music and choreography. Then I will extract from the rehearsal log instances of exciting, collective discoveries, the development of ideas as well as conceptual or performance problems and the overall atmosphere of rehearsal. Finally I will outline the process of technical rehearsal.

The areas of research involved in the pre-production period vary greatly depending on the play. Generally speaking, the areas covered in play research are vast and encompassing and one of the major concerns is covering as much as possible in a short period of time. Because of the nature of this program, however, I was able to cover a great deal as I had a lot of time to spend with the play. Although at the time there was no great design or plan in my approach, in retrospect I can categorize my research into three areas: stylistic, societal, and interpretive. The first, relating to style, deals with the physical access into the play - acting style, the physical configuration of space, and the sound scape.

My first concern was to familiarize myself with all of Berkoff's work. Berkoff has fourteen published plays and one collection of short stories, however, finding any printed material about Berkoff or his work was difficult.

Although his work is popular in Britain, Germany and Los Angeles, there is not a vast collection of articles about him. What I did find gave me some insight into his particular performance style. Words like "frontal verbal assault" (Berkoff, Gambit, 12), "acrobatics", "mime", "wide vocal range" and "compulsive pace" (Birtwistle, 242) gave me a sense of a formidable and aggressive theatrical style. One of the best sources of research into Berkoff's singular style is an adaptation of Edgar Allen Poe's Fall of the House of Usher which includes a "Commentary on Production". On each page Berkoff writes a detailed description of atmosphere, lighting, sound, and imagery created through mime and gestures. For instance, the commentary for Scene 12 reads: "Valuable piece of plot - pure narrative in original story and aided by instant picture reinforcement of each line -the gesture the actor must find should somehow encapsulate the essence. It is like a cypher image." (106). This kind of information is exceedingly valuable; while not stating outright the specific gestures, it denotes an acting style or a physical manifestation of an idea, rather than relying simply on the verbal transference of idea.

I was fortunate to see Berkoff in action in his remounted version of Greek playing in the Wyndam Theatre in the West End of London. Berkoff's own performance was untiring as the father; his face seemed to be made of rubber stretching to its extreme limits of expression; broad physical, comedic bits were reminiscent of Charlie Chaplin and the use of extended, stylistic, choral mime provided both new ideas and an affirmation of my own. A drastic and unabashed use of extreme tonal shifts gave a clear indication of Berkoff's sense of shock value. There were jumps from a soft, sincere tale of love and romance to the blast of city noises and crimes - very contrapuntal. There seemed to be a major attempt to combine visual and aural sense imagery.

This aspect prompted more than one critic to cite Berkoff's theatre as a component of "total theatre": "Few enterprises in experimental drama illustrate the achievements of 'total theatre' as vividly as the productions of Steven Berkoff" (Gaines, 110). As a consequence of the recurring reference, I began researching the idea of total theatre as background to the style approach.

The idea of total theatre originated with Richard Wagner in the 19th Century. Originally called Gesamtkunstwerk, it was "a united art work using all genres of art..." (The Reader's Encyclopaedia of World Drama, 905). E.T. Kirby, in his introduction to Total Theatre: A Critical Anthology, decrees that "there must be significant interplay among the various elements or a significant synthesis of them" (XIII). This "synthesis", the crux of total theatre, applies both to the physical properties of theatre - aural and visual - and the metaphysical properties -the explorations into human nature. During the transition from the 19th Century to the 20th Century the argument between reason and the senses became the basis for much of the art. Some theatre was criticized for its reliance on feelings and emotions for effect and for its lack of rationale and objectivism while certain other forms were criticized for entirely opposite reasons. Edward Gordon Craig argues that actors should be wary of feelings and emotions in order to remain objective/intellectual, whereas, only a short distance away, Stanislavski was teaching that these emotions and feelings were the actor's essential tools (Lyons, 76). The duality continued with Meyerhold who developed a system of acting even further removed from feeling in his biomechanics. He also ushered in the era of a futuristic technical theatre by incorporating slide projections, large scale set construction and constructivist design which placed

an emphasis on the mechanical engineering of things. Yevgeny Vakhtangov attempted, in his creations, to find a synthesis between Meyerhold's form which was non-realistic and theatrical and Stanislavski's approach to acting, the height of realism. He "takes the basic methods of role study from the 'system' and supplements them with theatrical means of expression derived from the non-realistic theatre in order to achieve a synthesis which he called fantastic realism" (Kuhlke, 161).

This analysis of Vakhtangov approached what I saw as a potential problem in West. The demands on the actors required that they be, at one time, a component of the stage picture and at another time, emotionally and inwardly involved in relationships and conflicts. Having identified this as a challenge, I moved on.

As well as a "synthesis" in the balancing of acting styles Kirby tells us of a stress toward converging what you see with what you hear - "the involuntary transference of representation from one sense to another" (XX). Archetypal imagery, hieroglyphic staging, sculptural lighting and spatial music are physical elements that can be used to make the production "emblematic rather than representational" (Kirby, XXI). The Kabuki Theatre of Japan is one which uses these devices to help tell its story visually as well as aurally. The key is to use symbols in the form of design, staging or music to enhance the action of the words. I would have to say that in directing the play these ideas permeated through to the staging/blocking though in many cases, I was not conscious of it.

I then attacked the language of the play. Robert Benedetti has a very detailed chapter about the metrical structure of theatrical/poetic speech in his book, The Actor at Work. I discovered that, though at first glance the

language seems to be Shakespearean in its use of iambic pentameter, it is not. There are some passages which are five metrical feet of unstressed, stressed syllables, but there is no specific pattern. It seems to work only on the basis of the lyrical inflection of the Cockney dialect and on a rhythm which could be synonymous with experimental jazz music. Apart from this very structural approach to the language, I also had to learn the meaning of a lot of words which were foreign to me, but clearly indicative of the East End of London - the Cockney rhyming slang. The fact that the language combines an elevated formality with a low vernacular precluded a specific choice as to the delivery of it. I had to decide whether the actors should retain a kind of formality, a Shakespearean elevation which would, ultimately, soften the Cockney or whether they should emphasize the vernacular, thereby speaking the language of their lower class. I decided that because the rhythm of the lines seemed to be so strongly linked with the Cockney inflection, it would be best to concentrate on that and allow the Shakespearean to be the super-element.

Apart from the style of the production which is, essentially, the outer core/the form, I needed also to research the content of the play. West takes place in the East End of London and most of the clues point toward the early sixties as the time period proper. It was necessary to look at the politics of Britain to understand the development of the Welfare State policy and the influx of immigrants both of which drastically changed the face of British society. I found that there was and is a huge interest in issues concerning abortion, education and housing. The British are far more outspoken about their politics and social issues than we are, for instance. My most useful research into British society and the East Ender's specific situation was a trip

to London for two weeks which was made possible by a Thesis Research Grant from the University of Calgary's Research Services.

The innumerable topical references in the script would have been almost impossible to envision had it not been possible to experience the city first hand. I spent a lot of my time in London riding through specific districts on the bus and taking notes. One of the most emphatic images I retained of the city was its constant duality. There seemed to exist, side by side, the old with the new, the traditional with the radical, art with commercialism. I was also impressed by the idea of council flats - that the British government is the largest landlord in Europe. The weather, the architecture, the tube, the sense of tradition and the people in the pubs all contributed in some way to my understanding of the play.

Another area of research I found distinctly useful was a study of gangs. A Glasgow Gang Observed by James Patrick, though it dealt with a much more violent gang, helped to evoke a sense of the hierarchy, the infrastructure and the level of loyalty involved in gang warfare. It influenced my view of the creation of gangs and the rituals which help to fill up an essential emptiness in the gang members' lives.

As I mentioned earlier, the time period of the play vaguely indicates the early sixties, the time of the wars between the 'Mods' and the 'Rockers'. One of the best sources of research into the problems of youth during that time was the film Quadrophenia created by the rock group 'The Who'. It follows basically the same theme as West; a young man living in London, having trouble with his friends, girlfriend and parents and trying to find something meaningful in his life. The keynote or impact of the movie was the incredible energy, the unbridled fury and initiative of the gang.

I also watched Clockwork Orange, a Stanley Kubrick film, because of its fantastical treatment of, again, the same kind of theme, and in a way that was also distinctly British. In this one, the young man has more of a battle with society -Kubrick's version of the society. There is a slim borderline between what is caricature and what is real which also extends into the language. Anthony Burgess, the author of the original novel, created a futuristic language which incorporated classical nuances. The film version uses much the same language only less ornate. I found that both of these films had had some influence on Berkoff in the writing of West and gave an insight into the social implications of the text.

The author's reference to Lenny Bruce gave me another route to explore. I was fascinated by Bruce's story; that a man whose only crime was to use words -words that would grate against society's well-poised barriers, words that exposed many of society's hypocrisies, and words that denounced society's fascination with violence - should be so persecuted. He was a comedian who cared deeply about the world he lived in and that world, basically, ostracized him. Lenny Bruce stood by his beliefs like a rock; he didn't care what the consequences were because, perhaps, the consequences of not exercising his freedom of speech were more critical to the growth of his society. Lenny Bruce knew that in order to protect its narrow but safe beliefs, society would sacrifice the truth; it would continue to foster beliefs in racism, for instance, instead of facing the fact that one race is not superior to another.

As a result of my research into Lenny Bruce I began to question Mike's outcome. It became clear that he, like Lenny Bruce, was seeking truth, but how did Mike benefit from the discovery of truth, or did he? I questioned the end of the play, and was trying to resolve whether Mike would choose a route

of evil, or whether he would be the beginning of a new and better society. Did the end represent an epiphany, Frye's explanation of the hero's inevitable fall, or did it represent a rebirth? Instinctively, I felt that the ending was more negative than positive but there was no conviction in the feeling. I continued on in the process without resolving this question but reviewing it constantly.

My study of Northrop Frye's Anatomy of Criticism was useful while also causing some confusion. From this I tried to determine what genre the play fit into, whether it be a tragedy, a mythos of autumn; or a quest romance, the mythos of summer. In some ways we could say that Mike's story is one of "the search of the libido or desiring self for a fulfilment that will deliver it from the anxieties of reality but will still contain that reality." (193), which makes it a quest romance, but since the reward of the quest is usually a bride this did not seem to apply to West. In the tragic phase, according to Frye, "we cross the boundary line from innocence to experience which is also the direction in which the hero falls." (193). This seems to be a negative idea. Because we generally sympathize with the hero (or in this case anti-hero since Mike is not a royal figure but of lower class birth) the act of falling at the point of epiphany - "a usually sudden manifestation or perception of the essential nature or meaning of something" (Websters, 1976) - is transcended into our tragic loss as well. Oedipus falls when he discovers the truth about his birth and Mike begins to fall when he discovers the truth about the fight. Owing to my instinctive sense of a negativity at the end of West I concluded that the play was indeed a tragedy but with some elements of the quest romance story.

The last portion of research I'd like to mention was listening to and reading Shakespeare's Richard the III, Hamlet, and Henry the IV Part I. This was helpful in two ways. First, by listening to recordings of the plays, I tuned

my ear to the Shakespearean metre, which helped me, in turn, to hear West as I read it. The second way in which this research was helpful was in furthering my knowledge of the influence these plays had in the writing of West. Richard the III was not quite as influential as Hamlet, where a young man's choice is examined in view of exacting revenge, and Henry IV Part I, which portrays a young man's journey to acceptance into his parents' world.

This does not cover all the research that I conducted but it is a summary of what I considered to be useful information in developing ideas of style, understanding the given circumstances, the society of the play and the interpretation of Berkoff's intents.

Throughout these academic and/or investigative exercises Patrick Neilson and myself were meeting regularly to discuss the set and costume designs. At our first meeting, he hadn't actually made a final decision about which areas of design he was interested in but I suggested we meet in the venue, the University Theatre. It was exciting to begin visualizing the project. I had an outrageous idea of creating two huge slides or rakes out of the side banks of seats. From this, Patrick no doubt got an idea of the physical nature of the play. We talked about the characters a little and came to the consensus that casting them would be most significant in regards to the outcome of the play, particularly casting Mike.

By the time we met again, Patrick had decided to design sets and costumes. One of the first ideas he mentioned was the story of the minotaur and the labyrinth. I was very pleased that this early view of the play was in the realm of myth and legend because my own feelings leaned in that direction. Our next meeting focused a little more on the visceral impressions of the play; describing materials - hard and unyielding, images of the city, the

sense of angular edges as opposed to circular and so on. We talked some more about Mike and his situation, his relationship with his parents and we came to the agreement, at this time, that illustrativeness, or representational aspects should be kept to a bare minimum, for instance, very few properties. I mentioned my interest in total theatre and some of its properties like hieroglyphics and geometric staging. Also, stemming from a question of whether to have garbage on stage, I came up with an image of a child's abandoned swing set. The swing set has sharp edges now, is dangerous, and presents few answers to life's imminent problems. In retrospect, I believe that this was an overriding visual metaphor for the play. We rarely came back to it but I have a feeling we somehow worked with it in our unconscious.

When we met again, we came up with a very rough sketch of a space which had a strong gravity pull toward the centre. This was appropriate to me since Mike represented such a strong centre to the play. It also gave me images of a maelstrom and a war zone which I found appealing. We had also begun our discussions about the costuming of the show. My initial direction was to create a contemporary look which was not indicative of any particular time period but which portrayed or added to, the legendary qualities in the play. Patrick brought in some Italian men's fashion magazines which displayed a wide range of styles from the very effete to the extreme of machismo. We left the costumes at that stage and went on to develop our acting space.

After having created a space that we were both happy with Patrick, in a state of exploration, came up with an entirely different configuration. My immediate reaction was a feeling of upset, turmoil and tension. This was because I had begun to accept the other design however, I retained an outward calm and on my own examined the pros and cons of each space. What

attracted me about the first space was that it was symmetrical, monolithic, structural and more accommodating as a performance platform. The predominant features of the second space were: cyclical, conceptual, sculptural and asymmetrical. After discussing both possibilities we agreed that the most important and complex aspect of the production was the language and, consequently, the actors. The second space was too intricate, visually, which might have served only to detract from the language. Finally, the first space allowed for a greater agility in movement.

I was having some difficulty determining specific character traits and types for each member of Mike's gang. In terms of costuming these decisions were absolutely necessary. In order to get a better idea, I invited a few people to read the play, as well as reading two people who were potential Mikes. After the reading I asked the actors if they saw anything outstanding about any of the gang members. Their answers were, as I expected, vague, indeterminate and contradictory. In the end I made choices based on my knowledge of the script and on instinct. What Patrick developed was a contemporary look which combined elements of the Elizabethan costume, 1920's Al Capone, the 1950's and a Greco Roman armour look. Each costume was individual while also maintaining a connection with the rest of the group. They were of varying degrees of grey to black with splotches of colour.

The design process went smoothly apart from two tense occasions. The first occurred in a fitting for Mike's jacket. It had been cut as a 'Teddy Boy' suit jacket and took me completely by surprise. I had expected it to resemble the other short, bomber type of jacket which was what we finally agreed on. The idea of a suit jacket seem to be a complete diversion from the rest of the gang and though Mike is different, a gang wears the same style as their leader.

In retrospect, the tension could have been avoided by having a rendering of Mike with his jacket on. The only rendering we had showed the jacket flung casually over his shoulder.

The second problem occurred during set-up and was, in fact, resolved with very little resistance. The steel poles, which had been designed to be functional, were originally attached to the lighting booms which made them useless and purely decorative. This problem was soon rectified and we were able to hang or swing on them as much as possible. The design of both set and costumes evolved wonderfully out of what I felt were productive, creative and collaborative discussions.

The next step in the process I would like to discuss is the music and choreography. From my first exposure to the play I sensed a percussive sound, perhaps because the lines came across like lyrics there seemed to be a suggestion of a background beat, a drumbeat. I was also influenced by the Kabuki theatre's use of music, which does not aim at "the realization of a sound picture but give[s] impulse and pace to our emotions through a medium purely rhythmical and tonal, more direct and more brutal than the spoken word." (Claudel, 202). I then spoke to Windsor Viney about composing for percussion which he said he could do but he would not be able to play it. He suggested that we consider using a prepared piano which involved placing miscellaneous items such as erasers and clothespins amongst the strings of the piano. Preparing the piano in this way effectively creates the equivalent of a percussion orchestra. I was intrigued by the simplicity of the idea and to understand fully what it was I listened to some of John Cages prepared piano pieces. It reminded me of the principle behind 'found object' sculpture, that is to say, its inventiveness, the economy and the distortion of something real.

The prepared piano had a playfulness and sense of adventure which I felt was analogous to the action and characters in West. We went ahead with the planning and found obstacles not in the creation of music but in finding an instrument to use.

The late arrival of the piano created a unique challenge for Lucinda Neufeld, the choreographer. Rather than work from the music, she was required to create the rhythm of the dance from which Windsor then created the music. When I first gave the script to Lucinda I asked her to look at the first fight scene, the two dance hall scenes, Curly's scene at the top of Act II and the final fight scene. As with Windsor, I explained that we were not trying to be specific to any time period and found that this was their most difficult challenge. I gave Lucinda a book called Combat Mime by J.D. Martinez which covered a variety of stage fighting moves and mentioned karate as another guide for the fight scenes. For the dance hall scenes I asked her to see the movie Dirty Dancing since these pieces primarily needed to exude sex. The fact that Lucinda had a background in drama was advantageous because she was dealing with actors who were not necessarily dancers.

The optimum circumstance would have been to cast experienced actors with a considerable background in dance; however, the optimum is rarely the instance. I had wanted to be able to cast a good portion of the roles and specifically Mike before the winter semester was over to allow those people cast the opportunity to get to know the script. Unfortunately the turnout was too small to make any choices. I had been considering Jarvis Hall as Mike from early on and was reasonably convinced that he had the capability to do the role. Two events convinced me: his performance in Tears of a Dinosaur and the impromptu reading we held during the summer. His vocal qualities

were the most impressive factor; his voice was chest-resonant and flexible and he already had a grasp of the Cockney dialect so I cast him.

Once the lead was cast there was a basis from which to expand. The auditions were extremely demanding, physically and mentally. It was important to determine each actor's physical, vocal and interpretive abilities. After those auditioning had completed an extensive physical/dance component, they were required to read a speech of their choice from the play. Everyone remained onstage and either created the stage picture or sound effects. By doing this I was able to see who had a sense of the stage picture and who was most adventurous; it also relieved the burden of performance from the auditionee. They were then given a piece of non-sensical composition and were asked to make sense of it. The final component incorporated improvisations to see how they reacted to each other, how they used the space and their bodies and how loose their creative imaginations were.

Overall, I was pleased with the auditions as they were but not with the number of people. For ten roles I had about twenty-five people which didn't even give a one in three range to choose from. Most of the auditionees were in first or second year, which meant that they were far less experienced than I had hoped. What was inspiring about the group was its youthful vigor, energy and enthusiasm. In the end, time and their enthusiasm influenced my decision to go ahead and cast from the people who came to the auditions.

The first reading was absolutely horrendous; they all had difficulty with the accent, the language and the interpretation but I did not despair. This is quite often a terrible experience given the director's high expectations. I tried to impress upon the actors my ideas about style, themes and what my

expectations were. I stressed the need to develop actor skills - gestural, vocal and psychological; Berkoff's love for extremes; the themes of non-communication and the confusion between love and violence and, finally, everyone's responsibility to create the environment of the play.

My overall approach to the rehearsals moved, stylistically, from outward to inward; more specifically, we worked first on the outward physical expression and blocking, then slowly working on scenes, interpretation, and one to one rehearsals. This decision was influenced by Berkoff's own concern for the outward/physical expressive skills of the actors and also because I felt that the actors needed time with the script to know it themselves before making critical interpretive choices. In the following discussion I will outline each of the four weeks of rehearsal, detailing only momentous decisions, problems and exercises.

The first week's plan was to block the play and finish with a stumble-through to assure that transitions and patterns were visible. My attention was drawn to the particular function of the first gang scene; because it is the first real scene, it would either gain the confidence of the audience or lose it. It also introduces the conflict between the Hoxtons and the Stamford Hill gang in a language which is relatively foreign to the audience. Having realized the challenge that scene presented we continued. My favourite moment during this week was in working the subway scene. I had had some ideas about how to stage it but nothing seemed to sparkle until it came time in rehearsal to block it. I opened up the opportunity for everyone to throw in ideas and when no one responded, I began placing people instinctively, and by the end we had a rough sketch of an emblematic representation of the London tube. It was the spontaneity of choice which made this rough sketch work throughout. As well,

during this first week, I approached the problem of having actors onstage while they are not involved in the action. The key word was statuesque; while they were not involved, they were to become an extension of their chairs, objects, a choral backdrop. It was mechanical but theatrical.

During the first stumble-through I looked for rhythm and patterns in the movement. Although I had been reasonably satisfied with each night's blocking, I was generally disappointed after seeing the whole thing. In some ways I felt it was because my expectations were excessively high for a first run-through. In retrospect, this feeling was confirmed since very little of the original spatial relationships was radically changed. My concerns lay mostly with the action of the gang; there was no cohesiveness, no relationships among them and this led to a lack of overall rhythm. This problem resulted in our spending a lot of time with the gang in the next week.

My intention in the second week was to approach the play through the groups, for instance; we had two rehearsals with the gang, one evening with Sid and Pearl, one evening with Mike and Sylv and the Friday night with Mike.

We began by having a round-the-table read-through and discussion about where the beginnings and ends of scenes were, their specific rhythm, and in some cases titling them. I was really hoping the actors would be actively involved but they were bored or uninspired by the process. The read-through was, needless to say, concurrent with the general mood - boring and uninspired. Consequently I, in a semi-panic, began researching games, exercises and improvisations to build the energy level in the group.

The following night indicated that I didn't have to panic and that the act of sitting and methodically picking through a play was the cause of the group's ennui. I had found quite a variety of exercises in Robert Beneditti's The Actor

at Work and Viola Spolin's Improvisation for the Theatre which helped to bring a new insight into some scenes and also awakened their creative energies. Some of the most helpful were: acting with parts of the body, rhythmic movement, singing dialogue, deaf audience, and silent scream (I will leave the content of these exercises to your imagination). We then worked on the first gang scene, trying to incorporate a sense of rhythm through punctuating movement. The actors were hesitant to begin with but I realized that it was something that would take time.

It was in this week that we, myself included, were first exposed to the choreography. The actors were surprisingly adept, for the most part, at picking up the steps, but it was still very rough. I was pleased with the moves as they were consistent with what I had envisioned - low body weight, sharp and percussive.

The next night we worked on the hospital scene, focusing on sensing, feeling and showing the environment and emotions toward death. A problem arose while working on the ambush scene: when had this taken place? I had always felt that it had just happened when Mike arrives, but the guys pointed out the expression "last night" in the script. We agreed, after a short discussion, that it had indeed occurred the previous evening, and that this was, now, a discussion about it.

One of the most difficult scenes in the entire play was what I call the Soho scene. This is where Sid and Pearl "speak but not to each other." (27). I felt that they needed to have a sense of competition for the listener and a struggle to communicate their stories so we tried the scene with them both speaking simultaneously and were very excited by the effect and the discovery. I agreed to hang on to this execution of the scene but with strong

reservations - the audience would lose too much of what was being said if they were to speak simultaneously for that length of time and as a result we might lose their involvement.

The rest of the week produced a few more answers and questions. We uncovered in Mike and Sylv's scene that there was in fact a choice; an existence of two extremes - stay and marry or go and be alone. After watching Lucinda choreograph the final fight scene, which seemed excessive at first, I questioned whether there was room to build within the fight. My reasoning was that, in actuality a fight doesn't necessarily start small and end big, but that the whole event is frenzied and intense. I chose to let Mike learn the moves before I decided to cut or adjust them. Jarvis had also, on this night, found the key to the Lenny Bruce speech that he, the actor, must enjoy telling the story. I was very impressed with the progress that he had made with it. We then looked at Mike's demon soliloquy. This had always been, for me, the most difficult moment for the character to face because of the fear. At one moment, he is yelling irrational, frenzied thoughts from which he tries to run, and then he finds reason, though still surrounded with anxiety. Jarvis gave this moment a childlike expression which was so evocative of a feeling I had about the play, a moral - 'don't send our children into battle'. It was a fleeting but very exciting moment and with this the week ended.

We started the third week, again, with a read-through around the table but this time the emphasis was on vocal articulation and colourization. Michael McHugh, the dramaturg, had been doing some work with Shakespeare and Peter Brook so he conducted some exercises with the cast which incorporated the above elements. He tried to stress the importance of actor choice, of making specific interpretive choices through a knowledge of the

script and of ourselves. The read-through was by far the best one to date and a good beginning for a week where the intent was to work through the acts.

The next night I began the rehearsal with the gang by talking with them in the group, asking questions like "who's your best friend?" and "what do you think of so and so?" - a kind of confession session. It proved to be an excellent approach and came at an appropriate time. In little or no time they picked it up, teasing and laughing at each other, talking down to some and subservient to others. As an extension to this I gave them an imaginary ball and asked them to play soccer. I was happy to see that none was in the least bit hesitant or reserved; from this point I felt that the group camaraderie was finally coming to the surface.

On the other hand, Sylv and I were struggling with the November scene. It is Sylv's first scene. Michelle Pearson, who was progressing well in her subsequent scenes, was still having problems with this one. The big question was, why was Sylv telling the story? I continued to reassure Michelle that the appropriate answer would present itself and that we had time left to make the right choice.

We then moved from one scene which had had a lot of work to another, the final scene between Sid, Pearl, and Mike, which had been unfairly neglected. It was an extremely insightful scene; here we saw a depth in Sid and he and Pearl communicated. We also discovered Mike's real pain, his sorrow for the family's disintegration. Dewa Grant, who played Pearl, found that her final line to Sid, "From me he saw that not to fight was to give in/he saw that I never fought back/so he had to." (55), was not in defiance, as we had originally thought, but that it was her final compliance, her final giving in. It worked.

We made one more important discovery during that week which concerned Les and his relationship with Mike. It was while we were rehearsing the subway scene that I asked the actor, Wade Laing, what he thought was happening in his lines to Mike. He felt, instinctively, that he was teasing Mike and when asked why he was teasing him he subsequently answered "because I want him to fight and lose.". He was so excited by the detection of rivalry that I could see the play flash before his eyes summing it all up.

We did a run-through this week for Jim Andrews, the lighting designer. it was uneventful apart from the realization of the problem of clarity and articulation, particularly in the first scene. We also encountered a properties problem; because of the final image of the "gang as respectable people" (56) we had accumulated an unmanageable number of props under each chair. Cathy Crumb, the stage manager, suggested that we have one of the actors bring them on, and a thought occurred to me: create a ritual out of the process of distributing the props. It was an excellent solution to the problem and also became an elemental, integral image of a societal ritual.

I decided, during the fourth week, to hold short one on one rehearsals with each of the actors, which proved to be a great confidence booster for most of them. Sylv and I found that the vital question she was faced with concerning the November scene was: when did you begin to doubt Mike's love? Also, adopting a radical approach to the time frame of the opening speech - a cinematic approach -helped to clarify the purpose of the first speech. John Dedominicis, Steve Garber and Jack Michalchuk graduated from hesitancy to bouyancy and determination as a result of the meetings. John Hong's meeting uncovered an inner conflict which created a deeper, more meaningful

relationship with Mike. All in all, I felt these personal encounters gave them a springboard from which to dive into the action. Our final run-through before moving into the University Theatre proved to me that we definitely had a show.

To have felt, at that point in time, confident that the show was solid in its unrefined state eased the route into the technical rehearsal portion of the process. The following discussion, rather than detailing the day-to-day process, will cover each department involved - the lights, sound, stage management and, briefly, makeup. I have omitted costumes simply because they were essentially complete by that time and there were no drastic costume changes to rehearse.

On September 20th, two-and-a-half weeks before we began cueing, the lighting designer Jim Andrews, Patrick Neilson and I held our first lighting session. I had prepared a fairly comprehensive list of lighting cues, where they came in the show, an assumption of the time value for some and, in other cases, a description of the cue. As an example, the entrance of the gang needed an explosive light to accompany their explosive entrance. Jim indicated that the list coincided with many of his own ideas but said that he needed to know the overall concept of the show in order to synchronize, conceptually, with the lights. Patrick and I both responded; he with more visual imagery and myself with a more critical analysis approach. I began by saying that the action of the play is Mike's journey; his evaluation of freedom of choice, that, in effect, he could have made the choice not to fight. I was taken aback slightly when Jim reacted, incredulously, with "Where is that?". I responded by suggesting that Mike's soliloquies, when he questions the values and beliefs of the world, indicate a search for something, whether it be a

freedom of choice or self. The meeting continued with a short discussion about the play's war imagery and about Jim's idea to use back lighting. Unfortunately, I left the meeting disappointed; I felt as though my conceptual argument was too analytical and that I had somehow lost the emotionality of the play.

The outcome of the rendezvous made me forget my apprehensions since the result was very exciting indeed. Our first cueing session reminded me of someone trying to kick-start a reluctant motorcycle. We forced out about one or two cues and then Jim stopped what was a rocky beginning to show me the full range of possibilities; they brought up every cue. This was the proper beginning to the process. I felt positive about the progress, generally, except that it took longer than expected, which is always the case.

I tried to prepare myself for the event of incorporating sound by talking to Michael Taugher to find out what the capabilities were of the sound equipment. I asked about reverb, echos and location of speakers, which I believe was an advantageous move. Sound is always difficult to cue because the levels are so variable. Ours was doubly problematic because we had both live and recorded sound. Windsor, who was playing live, had to take his cues from a monitor backstage which was in some cases insufficient; however, Michael's expertise and the sound operator's patience and skill made the process smoother.

Ultimately, at a technical rehearsal, the stage manager's abilities and patience determines the outcome. I stop short of saying that our rehearsals were perfect in every way, for we did have the occasional heat-up, but on the overall they were quite painless. I was particularly flabbergasted at our first technical dress rehearsal when it went so smoothly (secretly wondering where

the errors were hiding). I attribute this to the accuracy of the stage manager's work. In fact, the most disconcerting aspect of the entire process was when the makeup designer failed to show up.

The convergence of the elements was immensely exciting for me (probably less so for the actors); the music Windsor had created, though happening late in the process, was sensitive, haunting and playful. The lights were dramatic yet never overpowering and their effect on Patrick's set painting drew its full depth to the forefront. The choreography took some last minute cuts and adjustments but worked intrinsically with the rest of the show. Finally the actors, with all of their energy and enthusiasm, bonded together, gained momentum and confidence and by opening night it was there, unified and complete.

Conclusion:

The Road Travelled

The audience, as far as I could ascertain, was drawn into the world of the play. For some spectators the presentation was too harsh - assaulting them - but for others this aspect enticed and intrigued them. Those people who liked the challenges that the show proposed did, in fact, cross our bridge. I believe that they sympathized with Mike and felt his isolation; they experienced a build in their excitement leading up to the fight; and they laughed at and identified with the myths of marriage, friendship, love and possession.

I think, however, that the audience members did not take enough of the new landscape home with them; that their own lives were not as deeply touched as I would have hoped. The reason for this is unknown to me at present but with distance, time and new experience I may know the answer.

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