San Fernando Valley State College

ACTING: THE MAKING OF A SYMBOL

A Reconciliation of Selected Views of Acting through Susanne Langer's Theory of Art

A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in

Drama

by

Barbara LeCocq Dowd

June, 1971
The thesis of Barbara LeCocq Dowd is approved:

Committee Chairman

San Fernando Valley State College
June, 1971
CONTENTS

ABSTRACT ................................................................. iv

Chapter

I. INTRODUCTION ......................................................... 1

II. BASIC IDEAS OF LANGER ............................................ 6

Symbolization and Abstraction
Characteristics of Art
Characteristics of the Drama

III. THE ART OF ACTING ............................................... 12

Relation of Acting to Drama
Basic Characteristics of Acting

IV. TWO COMPLEMENTARY ASPECTS OF ACTING .................... 19

Expressive Form and the Abstract
Illusion and the Abstract
The Abstract and the Actor
Expressive Form and the Representational
Illusion and the Representational
The Representational and the Actor
Complementary Aspects of One Expressive Form

V. EMOTIVE MATERIALS ................................................. 34

The Special Problem
How to Render Emotive Materials
Virtual Emotions
Virtual Emotions Corroborated
Virtual Emotions and the Actor's Consciousness

VI. SYMBOLIC ANALYSIS ............................................... 51

An Example of Symbolic Analysis
Results of the Application of Symbolic Analysis

VII. CONCLUSIONS ....................................................... 70

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY ........................................... 73

APPENDIX: Adolphe Appia ........................................... 76
ABSTRACT

ACTING: THE MAKING OF A SYMBOL

A Reconciliation of Selected Views of Acting through Susanne Langer's Theory of Art

by

Barbara LeCocq Dowd

Master of Arts in Drama

June, 1971

The present confusion and conflict in views of acting is harmful to the growth and creativity of the actor. It results from contradictory theories of acting based on incomplete theories of art. A comprehensive theory of art is that of Susanne K. Langer. Langer defines art as the creation of perceptible forms, or symbols, expressive of human feeling. Acting is an art and shares the fundamental characteristics of all arts. The actor is a maker of expressive forms. The expressiveness of all art works derives from two factors: their perceptible qualities and their structures. Thus the actor's realization of the abstract elements is essential to its expressiveness. However, the representational elements, too, have perceptible qualities and structures given to the "sense" of imagination. Furthermore, they create the primary illusion of acting and of the drama, virtual life. Thus the realization of these elements is likewise essential to the artistic expressiveness of the role. Prominent among these representational elements are the feelings of the
character, which must be rendered through mimicry, actual experience, or something in between. Neither pure mimicry of emotions nor the actual experiencing of personal emotions during performance is satisfactory. Langer states that the actor "conceives and enacts" emotions. The writer develops a concept of "virtual emotions" genuinely experienced by the virtual being onstage, arising out of the total artistic circumstance and entering into the artistic form as a part of its expressiveness. The actor as maker of the complete form naturally includes all of its aspects in his single consciousness. A procedure called symbolic analysis, derived from Langer's theory of art, can be applied to acting. The actor experiences as a result greater artistic creativity and satisfaction, new facility in making artistic choices and in integrating various techniques, and increased confidence in his result.
I. INTRODUCTION

I am a professional actress. During some fifteen years of performing and studying in various theatres and studios throughout the United States, I have personally experienced, and I have observed among my fellow actors, a great deal of confusion about what this activity called acting is and how it is to be accomplished. "Real" acting is often described as beautiful speech and movement, or skillful impersonation of a character, or genuine experiencing of emotions.

Some authorities on acting consider these qualities to be mutually exclusive and debate them in relation to theories of art in general. The Aesthetician says that art is art and life is life and never the twain shall meet; therefore acting must be as stylized, as non-lifelike as possible. The further acting is from life, the nearer it is to art. The Aristotelian believes that life is art and art is life and drama is imitation; therefore acting must be an imitation of life. The nearer acting is to a perfect detailed imitation of life, the nearer it is to art. The Romanticist claims that art is the artist's means of expression; therefore acting is the expression of emotions. The more the actor is involved in genuine emotions, the nearer his acting is to art.

Any attempt to combine these qualities is challenged by the proponents of these different opinions, who are quick to claim incompatibility on another score: the actor's consciousness.
The Aesthetician claims that emotion has a devastating effect on the actor's ability to control his external techniques; therefore, he says, the actor must be sure to remain aloof from any feeling. The Romanticist believes that the necessity of controlling external techniques interferes with the full savoring of emotions, which brooks no interference; therefore the actor must ignore outer effects entirely and allow only such external results as spring naturally out of his genuine emotions. The Aristotelian may align himself with either the Aesthetician or the Romanticist; but the possibility of a "double consciousness" is in any case denied from both sides.

The majority of teachers, directors, and methodologists find it impossible to limit their thinking to one particular theory, recognizing some value in each of the different approaches; but they find it difficult to combine them. The actor of genius—say, Dame Sybil Thorndike at her best—does this naturally. The genius instinctively combines the three techniques which have resulted from these three opposing philosophies into one total art, working "from the inside out" or "from the outside in" or both, spontaneously maintaining an awareness and control of internal and external factors.

The actor of more modest gifts would often like to follow suit, but in practice a genuine integration of techniques is difficult to achieve. Teachers and directors are seldom able to point out the interrelationships between the approaches. The so-called "formal techniques" of voice and movement, and the study of the inner facets of character and emotions, seem to exist in separate limbos.
External techniques of characterization are very seldom taught at all. The result is that; even though the actor takes as much training as possible (and many serious actors never stop studying), when it comes to creating a role he is faced with artistic choices or compromises that he does not know how to make. He tends to ask himself questions like these:

Shall I try to speak and move naturally (relative to myself or to the character?), or artistically and beautifully? Shall I search for naturalistic business or make a few symbolical gestures? Shall I work on a subtle, natural scale or a vivid, theatrical scale? Shall I try to be the character and lose consciousness of everything except his situation? Shall I try to feel emotions? Shall I do exactly as the feeling of the moment dictates, or shall I try to plan effects?

If I decide to combine abstract, representational, and emotional elements, how shall I go about it? What are the right proportions? Will the result be a real integration or just an artistic hash?

Such questions are likely to be in the actor's mind (perhaps only subliminally) as he builds a performance; but since he has no comprehensive basis for arriving at a valid answer, they tend merely to make him insecure and in turn stifle his creativity. The director is seldom able to help, for he, too, is faced with the same problem. The underlying problem is that there are three major theoretical views of acting which conflict with each other and also with the experience of most great actors and the instinctive desires of most serious actors.

Present theories of acting skip like stones over the surface from art in general to the actor's creative process, with no
connecting reasoning. The theories of art in which they are based are not right or wrong but too limited to suit any purpose. An adequate theory of the art of acting must be broad enough to comprehend the three main approaches to acting as complementary aspects of one art. Any philosophy of art in which this theory of acting is based will take into account both the similarities which unite all arts and the differences which distinguish them.

Thesis and solution

Such a theory is Susanne K. Langer's philosophy of art as set forth in five published volumes: Philosophy in a New Key,\textsuperscript{1} Feeling and Form,\textsuperscript{2} Problems of Art,\textsuperscript{3} Philosophical Sketches,\textsuperscript{4} and Mind: An Essay on Human Feeling.\textsuperscript{5} Mrs. Langer approaches art in general, and then each art, first from the point of view of the thing made, the art work itself. Then she finds what implications the nature of the work has for the artist's creative process. Her theory reveals in the three approaches to acting an essential underlying unity which solves the problem of the actor's consciousness and suggests a procedure—symbolic analysis—which can help the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{1}Philosophy in a New Key: A Study in the Symbolism of Reason, Rite, and Art (New York: New American Library, Inc., 1951).
\item \textsuperscript{2}Feeling and Form: A Theory of Art (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953).
\item \textsuperscript{3}Problems of Art: Ten Philosophical Lectures (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1957).
\item \textsuperscript{4}New York: The New American Library, Inc., 1964.
\item \textsuperscript{5}Vol. I (Baltimore: The John Hopkins Press, 1967).
\end{itemize}
actor to integrate his techniques in practice.

Procedure to be followed

The steps in this study will be as follows: First, a brief exposition of Langer's basic concepts on art and drama will be made. From these concepts two steps will follow: first, a view of acting as art will be derived, and secondly, the separate aspects of acting will be analyzed to see whether they qualify as art and whether they are complementary. Next the problem of emotional expression will be given further consideration as a special factor in the actor's process. Then the procedure of symbolic analysis will be described and demonstrated through application to one sample role. Finally, the results and conclusions will be summarized.
Symbolization and Abstraction

The key idea in Langer's philosophy of art is that human understanding is essentially transformational. In fulfillment of the basic human need of symbolization the brain works continuously, even during sleep, translating impressions and experiences into symbols, which are our elementary ideas and which are necessary for formulating as well as communicating knowledge. Symbolization leads to abstraction.

The simplest perception involves abstraction: we see faces, not blotches of white or yellow or brown with lumps and patches of other colors. On a more complex level are the abstractions of art and of science: science abstracts through generalization, art through particularization. Any device whereby we make an abstraction is a symbolic element, or a symbol.

There are two kinds of symbols and symbolisms: discursive, and non-discursive or presentational. Words as used in ordinary or scientific discourse are our commonest discursive symbols, while art works—including literary works—are examples of non-discursive symbols. Discursive symbolisms have vocabularies of definable and interchangeable units; meaning is built up sequentially, logically, according to laws of syntax. In non-discursive or presentational symbolisms there are no irreducible and definable units, no rules of
combination; the symbol and its import are presented all at once in a gestalt of thought and emotion. Langer's theory of art rests on the recognition of art works as abstractions, i.e. as non-discursive symbols.

**Characteristics of Art**

Art works are defined by Langer as "perceptible forms expressive of human feeling." They may also be called art symbols, symbolic forms, expressive forms, or artistic forms.

**Structural characteristics**

Art symbols are organically constructed; that is, they have certain characteristics which are similar to those of biological organisms. Among these characteristics Langer lists dynamism, interdependent construction, rhythmic continuity, inviolability, tendency, growth, and completion. Because of these organic qualities, art works convey an impression of vitality, of livingness. The parts of an art symbol are vital and expressive only within the total form.

It is important to understand that an artistic form is more than a structure or a shape; qualities enter into it as a part of it. All the elements of an art work—all similarities, differences, and degrees of all the qualities, as well as all their interrelationships—make up the form.

**Qualitative characteristics**

The two chief qualitative characteristics of art works are expressiveness and virtuality.
Expressiveness.--The expressiveness of an art work is a product of the two factors in its form: its sensory qualities, which are natural symbols of feeling, and its structure, which is analogous to a pattern or form of human feeling. Thus, artistic expressiveness derives entirely from artistic form and is created entirely through artistic techniques.

What the art work expresses is the artist's idea, or knowledge, of the continuous, personal life of feeling. Langer calls this symbolized feeling the import, to distinguish it from a discursively attainable "meaning." Feeling means anything that can be felt, from the simplest physical sensations to the most complex intellectual and emotional tensions. Human feeling is not a vague mass, nor is it one-dimensional; it is a highly complex pattern of interdependent and interdetermined tensions and resolutions, and the artistic form reflects this complexity.

Virtuality.--The essentially transformational nature of human understanding has been mentioned as a key factor in Langer's theory of art. This notion is represented in her theory by the important concepts of the virtual and illusion. "Virtual" and "illusory" are very similar in meaning: both refer to something created—ordered, independent, abstracted from the physical and causal order, something existing only for perception. Their opposite in Langer's terminology is not "real" (for they do indicate an independent, non-material existence) but "actual." Art incorporates and often represents actual materials; but if the work is
successful, participation in the artistic form creates a sense of illusion which transforms these materials into virtual artistic elements.

Illusion refers specifically to the thing created, the sheer sensory appearance or apparition, a virtual substance. The function of the illusion, or the appearance, is to lift the work out of the context of belief and disbelief and allow it to be accepted as a self-contained, virtual entity. The forms embodied in a work of art are "more freely and wholly apparent than they could be if they were exemplified in a context of real circumstance and anxious interest. It is in this elementary sense that all art is abstract. Its very substance, quality without practical significance, is an abstraction from material existence." \(^6\)

Differences between the arts

Each order of art has its **primary illusion**, the basic creation wherein all its elements exist, its specific kind of apparition which is always established where any elements are given at all. It is this which accounts for the fundamental differences between the arts. There may be some latitude in labelling the primary illusions of the various arts. Langer sees the primary illusion of music as an image of time—virtual time; that of the visual arts, virtual space; of the dance, virtual powers; and of literature, virtual life. These particular designations are of less importance than the central concept of the primary illusion—

\(^6\) *Feeling and Form*, pp. 50-51.
the virtual thing created—as the source of the special characteristics of the arts. Of course the arts differ also in their materials and techniques.

The primary illusion of any art may be evoked as a secondary illusion in any other art: e.g., music may evoke a sense of space.

Characteristics of the Drama

Dramatic works share the basic characteristics of all other art works: They are non-discursive symbols. They are perceptible forms, expressive of human feeling, whose substance is illusory, or virtual. The specific characteristics of the drama may be considered in terms of its primary illusion, its materials and elements, and its basic abstraction.

Primary illusion

The drama evokes a special kind of primary illusion unlike that of any other art. Langer designates this primary illusion as virtual life in the mode of dramatic action, or destiny. The acts and events of the drama, as has often been observed, take place in the present; but the only really dramatic present, says Langer, is one which is "filled with its own future." The making of this future before our very eyes gives the produced play its strong quality of immediacy.

Materials and elements

The materials and elements of the drama are a blend of representational and abstract, of verbal, visual, and experiential,
so that any discussion of this art is inevitably very involved.

**Basic abstraction**

As an aid in analyzing the complexities of the arts whose primary illusion is virtual life, Langer develops a special term, the basic abstraction. The basic abstraction is the kind of element (or image, or symbol, on a very simple scale) in terms of which the primary illusion is created and sustained. The basic abstraction of most literary arts is given as the event; but because the drama is oriented toward the future, its basic abstraction is the act, "which springs from the past, but is directed toward the future, and is always great with things to come." The act is "any sort of human response, physical or mental. . . . all reactions are acts, visible or invisible." Acts are not, like events, finished realities, but "immediate, visible responses of human beings." The total structure of virtual activity is an illusion of life in the dramatic present.

**Acting**

Langer's works contain no actual discussion of acting and very few remarks on it. However, we may assume that she regards acting as an art and not merely a skill or technique, since she refers to all contributors to dramatic production as "dramatic artists" and she calls performing "as creative an act as composition." Since her principles are made to be applied, we may apply them to a consideration of this art which she has left almost untouched.

III. THE ART OF ACTING

Relation of Acting to Drama

The dramatic symbol is complex, made up of sub-symbols contributed by many artists, each of whom, Langer says, has a similar, fundamentally histrionic talent. It is not, however, made up of a variety of other art forms, for each of these sub-symbols is created in the mode of dramatic action. Each contributes to the primary illusion of life as destiny. All the sub-symbols in a given production, taken together, have a fundamental unity growing out of the commanding form of the script. The end product of all the sub-symbols of dramatic production is a single, organically unified, highly articulated symbol. This symbol is the produced play.

Langer goes no further in analyzing the various arts of dramatic production. However, it is possible to extend these ideas to produce the basic concepts needed to solve the problems being studied.

If we begin with the produced play, we find that in current practice the director is the person responsible for the final unity. He creates the total dramatic symbol out of the sub-symbols created and contributed by the various artists—the actors, designers, and technical staff. He uses these sub-symbols as organic elements in the ultimate symbol.
The actor's role, then, is only one sub-symbol in the total dramatic symbol; but for purposes of analysis it can be assumed to have a complete organic form of its own (the playwright has not written any incomplete symbols), and it can be considered as independent. When building a role, the actor regards and analyzes his character as a totality, within the larger totality of the play. From his point of view the produced play is a situation, a context, from which his role is derived and into which it must fit organically. Since the present study is undertaken in the hope of finding a way out of the actor's confusion, this point of view will be adopted here. Acting is an art; we are temporarily raising it to the status of an independent art in order to analyze it more easily. Later it will be put back in context.

The creation of a performed role may be influenced or shared by the director; but the process itself is to the actor a distinct one, the creation of a complete organic symbol. Since it is not the actor-director relationship which is in question here, but the making of the symbol which is the performed role, this process will be referred to simply as acting, and its creator as the actor.

Basic Characteristics of Acting

The basic characteristics of acting can be derived from the fundamental notions of art as expressive form and drama as virtual life.

The actor makes an organic form expressive of human feeling. The form which he must realize is an image of a person in a situation. The primary illusion of his art, the thing that he must
create, is a virtual individual life. Its basic abstraction is his own act; the rest of the acts are seen as events or things which happen to him. His materials and elements are both imitative and abstract, both inner and outer. Most of his materials are given by the playwright and the director and await his realization out of his own resources. His chief resource is himself.

Defining the actor's art as the creation of a single symbol expressing virtual life in the mode of dramatic action is a first step in raising it above the morass of confusion. Three apparently contradictory theories of acting have been identified. It has been proposed that the three theories represent three aspects of one art. We may label these aspects abstract, representational, and emotive.

The representational properties inherent in the primary illusion, the basic abstraction, and the materials and resources of acting create one set of problems for those who see acting as abstract. The abstract properties create another set of problems for those who see acting as imitative. The contrived circumstances and the presence of any given, fixed factors create a third set of problems for those who see acting as emotional expression. Susceptibility to influence from all sides confuses that majority of actors who have no firm idea of the art of acting.

Alternative terms may sometimes be used. The abstract aspect may be referred to as "non-realistic" or "non-representational." These terms are clumsy but slightly more accurate than "abstract", since all art is abstract in the sense that its substance is illusory (see p. 9 above). The representational aspect may be called "imitative." This term would be used without its common pejorative connotation of pure mimicry devoid of inner content.
To understand the complexities of the actor's art, Langer's sequence may be applied. First, from the viewpoint of the audience or contemplator, the finished product, i.e. the art work itself, may be analyzed. Then, since this analysis is being undertaken not for the audience but for the artist, the actor's creative process must be considered. A curious thing happens in the first phase of analysis: The emotive aspect is found to be most easily and directly analyzed as a special kind of representational aspect; thus the three aspects appear to become, in effect, two. To understand why and how this should be, the three aspects will be defined in terms of materials and elements.

Abstract materials and elements

The abstract materials of a role are the specifically sensory qualities of sound and movement. For example, they are the vowels, consonants, and rhythms of words, the patterns and intensities of gestures, as considered apart from any resemblance these words and gestures may have to actual life. When abstract materials are combined in an organic form, they become elements. The structure, too, is abstract—it does not represent anything in life, though it is a living form. The non-representational qualities and their interrelationships, taken together, are what will be referred to in this study as the abstract aspect of the role.

Representational materials and elements

The representational materials of a role are those which give it a direct resemblance to actual life. They are mostly
supplied by the playwright in the form of speeches; but the speeches are the highlights of a larger implied activity. Thus the imitative materials are all the acts—the lines, gestures, activities, all kinds of lifelike behavior—as considered apart from their abstract values of sound and movement. These materials are structured; and their structures, too, bear a direct resemblance to the pattern of occurrences in actual life. The acts and their structures taken together are what will be referred to as the representational or imitative aspect of the role.

Emotive materials and elements

The emotive materials of the role are the feelings of the character. They are seldom specified by the playwright; rather they are part of the total implied activity. This is why we may regard them at this stage of analysis as a certain kind of representational material. It will be remembered that Langer's description of acts, the basic abstraction of the drama, stresses that they may be physical and visible, or mental and invisible; all human responses are acts. Thus the feelings of the character—considered as product, though not as process—are among the representational materials of the role.

To clarify the relation of feelings and overt behavior as inner and outer acts, we may refer to a term which actors often use in analyzing a role, Stanislavsky's psychophysical actions. Actions

8 They are not, of course, the same as the symbolized life of feeling which is the import of the role, although both would include "anything that can be felt."
are complex combinations of many separate acts. For example, say that you are teasing me. I feel angry. I throw an ashtray at you, to try to stop your teasing. Not succeeding, I feel frustrated. All these are separate acts in Langer's terms. In Stanislavsky's terms the feeling of anger resulting from the teasing is the cause and the feeling of frustration is the result of one psychophysical action whose physical side is throwing and whose psychological side is trying to stop. To feel angry or frustrated is an act in Langer's sense but not an action nor even an "element of an action" in Stanislavsky's sense. Where Langer has designated acts as physical or mental, Stanislavsky regards actions as physical and mental.

Looked at in this way, emotive materials are a certain kind of imitative material. At this point, when our analysis is in terms of the actor's product, there is no need to make a special category of them. They could be analyzed separately; but it is simpler and more direct and therefore more effective at this stage to include them with the other representational materials being analyzed, as though they were in no way special through being intangible.

Later, in another phase of this study, it will be seen that emotive materials have special complicating features which will

9In Sonia Moore's The Stanislavsky System (New York: Viking Press, 1965) the following are listed as "Elements of an Action": the "magic IF," given circumstances, imagination, concentration of attention, truth and belief, communion, adaptation, tempo-rhythm, and emotional memory. This shows how Stanislavsky's concept of the psychophysical action unites all the important facets of his system and is probably more useful to the actor in actually constructing his role than Langer's "act,"
necessitate considering them separately. At that stage they will be considered a third factor in the actor's process. Now, when the aspects of a given dramatic symbol are being analyzed, we will say that this symbol has two aspects---abstract and representational---with the understanding that the second may be subdivided into inner and outer.
IV. TWO COMPLEMENTARY ASPECTS OF ACTING

Art works have been defined as perceptible forms, expressive of human feeling, whose substance is illusory. The product of the actor may be regarded as an art work, and for the purpose of analysis it may be temporarily raised to the status of an independent art work. It has been postulated that the major theories of acting are not contradictory but represent complementary aspects of a single art. At this stage of analysis these aspects are considered to be two: abstract and representational, the latter including emotive.

It is necessary to subject this postulate to our accepted definition of art to determine its validity. First, the abstract and representational aspects of the role will be examined separately, through a fuller presentation of the concept of perceptible forms expressive of human feeling. Next, they will be considered with respect to the concept of illusion. Having determined that each aspect is "art" in our sense, we will see what implications this has for the actor in terms of his creative process. Finally, the concept of organic expressive form will be summarized to show in what sense these aspects are genuinely complementary and what this means to the actor.

**Expressive Form and the Abstract**

Abstract materials are formal and are expressive of human
feeling according to the definition in this paper. Therefore they qualify as art.

Expressiveness

Langer's view of art works ascribes their expressiveness to the two factors in their forms: their sensory qualities and the structure of their interrelationships. Both of these, she says, directly symbolize human feeling.

Sensory qualities.--Sensory qualities are natural symbols of feelings. "Surfaces, colors, textures and lights and shadows, swift or heavy motions—all things that exhibit definite qualities—are potential symbols of feeling, and out of these the illusion of organic structure is made." ¹⁰

Sensory structures.--Structures, too, have an inherent emotive expressiveness. There is a perceptible analogy between the structure of the art work and the knowledge of feeling it symbolizes. For example, "The tonal structures we call 'music' bear a close relationship to the forms of human feeling—forms of growth and attenuation, flowing and stowing, conflict and resolution, speed, arrest, terrific excitement, calm, or subtle activation and dreamy lapses—not joy or sorrow, perhaps, but the poignancy of either or both—the greatness and brevity and eternal passing of

¹⁰Problems of Art, p. 80.
everything vitally felt."^{11}

Abstract elements and the role

The foregoing discussion of sensory qualities and their structures indicates that the abstract elements of a role—which have no characteristics except quality and structure—are expressive as well as formal. These materials divide themselves very neatly into verbal and visual. (The visual are probably partly kinaesthetic, but the distinction is not material to the present study.)

Verbal elements.—In Racine and Shakespeare, for example, it is obvious that the words are selected at least partly for such qualities as their expressive vowel and consonant sounds, their rhymes, alliteration, and metrical stresses. The lines have swift, slow, smooth, or sudden rhythms. The patterns of speeches and scenes are constructed for balance and proportion, for relationships of qualities symbolic of feeling. Shakespeare's mixture of prose among the poetry achieves just as precise an artistic effect as Racine's more obviously stylized structures. Taken all together, these sounds and structures help to create the organic form.

In a well-written realistic play purely abstract values are discernible. There are expressive combinations of sounds; the rhythms are written with expressive precision as well as naturalistic

^{11} Feeling and Form, p. 27. For a discussion of the way in which an art work which does not involve temporal sequence can express vital experience, which is always progressive, see ibid., pp. 370-374.
verisimilitude; and the balance and proportions of the speeches may be so artistically right as to resemble musical form. Long speeches which might not seem naturalistically justified may still seem "truthful," for they are justified by the form. Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf? is an excellent example of a play with no obvious abstract values in the dialogue; yet every word is right for the movement of the expression. There are a few "uh's" and "well's," but not one is superfluous. Every rhythm of every phrase has the right momentum; and the mix of speeches resembles that of the recitatives, arias, duets, and ensembles of a beautifully constructed opera. In short, Albee displayed in this work a brilliant command of "musical" materials.

Visual elements.—What is true of the verbal elements of a role is true of the visual elements, though they are harder to examine for they are in the most part only suggested in the script and must be supplied in production by the director. The stage is at any moment a picture composed of shapes, colors, masses, and lines; it may evoke virtual worlds beyond its dimensions or a pinpoint in space. A given stage picture may throb with the rhythms of life. When its elements shift and change, it forms new living pictures, and time is evoked by means of space. This is true of realistic plays as well as the more obviously "poetic" ones. The "poetic" play is generally staged in a patently symbolic, simplified style, with color, line, mass, and other factors in composition immediately apparent. But even in a naturalistic play, with full realistic staging, every cross, every gesture, every bit of business must be
guided and controlled by the sense of total visual form—the sense of line, balance and rhythm.

_IIlusion and the Abstract_

A second characteristic of the abstract aspect of a role is its contribution to the illusion. It is often claimed that abstract materials are "not natural" or "not lifelike," and that therefore any realization of them "breaks the illusion" and destroys the "believability" of the acting performance.

Langer's concept of _illusion_ reminds us that it is precisely the unbroken sensory appearance of a work which _creates_ the artistic illusion, detaches the work from actuality, and allows the spectators to disengage their belief in its literal truth or falsity. The abstract, sensory qualities and structures, then, make the break with the "context of real circumstance and anxious interest."

Far from destroying the illusion, the abstract materials help to create and sustain it; they help to give the work its independent, illusory existence.

The abstract aspect of a role meets both of the requirements which qualify it as art according to the definition accepted in this paper. First, it is directly related to the expressiveness of the form. Second, it fulfills the specific function of creating an artistic illusion.

_The Abstract and the Actor_

The handling of abstract materials is one of the actor's
essential artistic techniques. A common misconception is that this technique consists of applying some special stress to the words, some special attack or grandeur or flow to the movements, as if there were a reservoir of generalized "expression" that could be tapped at will and as needed. This sort of "expression" (if it exists) has nothing to do with the expressiveness of abstract materials.

The technique of handling abstract materials consists of, first, sensitivity to artistic form—to sensory qualities and structures and the way in which they symbolize human feeling; and second, the ability to adapt the body and voice so as to render the particular qualities and structures which the actor finds a given role to have. The second ability is vastly more common than the first, which the writer believes distinguishes the artist from the craftsman.

The actor, as he builds a role, realizes in sound the given verbal materials. He discovers the articulations of the form in order to balance tempos, pitches, vowel and consonant sounds, and intensities, and in order to render the rhythms (not necessarily meters) of the lines. Similarly, he keeps a sense of the interrelationships of the form in his movements. It is not necessary that his gestures and bearing be beautiful; but there must be a sense of continuity and cohesion, of rightness, of growth, development, and completion. All his movements arise out of artistic necessity, with nothing superfluous added merely because it is "like life." When he handles the abstract elements in this way, he renders their expressiveness and creates the illusion.
Through its sensory qualities organically interrelated in its structure, every art work expresses life analogically, without necessarily imitating or representing it. The abstract elements of an actor's role are vital to its expressiveness—not, perhaps, to the character's personal expression, but to the total emotional impact of the character and the drama.

Expressive Form and the Representational

Imitative materials can be shown to have a formal expressiveness beyond that accruing from their resemblance to life: thus they qualify as art according to the definition accepted in this paper.

Perceptible forms

Langer defines art works as perceptible expressive forms and explains: "I say 'perceptible' rather than 'sensuous' forms because some works of art are given to imagination rather than to the outward senses."¹² The novel is read with the eyes, but is not addressed to the sense of vision; the dance, too, is perceived through the eyes but appeals to deeper centers of sensation. The sounds in poetry are important; but the words in poetry are not the same as the sonorous structures of music; their primary function is to create illusory events.

Perceptible qualities and structures.—The events in poetry acquire qualities in the telling. "The appearances of events in our actual lives are fragmentary, transient, and often

¹²Philosophical Sketches, p. 76.
indefinite"; but the events of the poetic illusion have the aspects they are given; "they are as terrible, as wonderful, as homely, or as moving as they 'sound'"\textsuperscript{13}—that is, as they seem. These perceptible qualities are interrelated in perceptible expressive structures. Events are condensed or extended, gradual or sudden; they occur singly or simultaneously or in rapid succession. They are manipulated for expressiveness of structure, and they are always simplified of the fortuitousness of life.

Thus the representational materials of art works have perceptible qualities and interrelationships analogous to the sensory qualities and interrelationships of the abstract materials. This means that the representational aspect of a role is symbolically and artistically, as well as directly, expressive.

Representational elements and the role

The topic of perceptible qualities and structures given not to the outer senses but to imagination has been introduced with relation to the events of poetry. Let us now apply it to the acts of the drama.

Perceptible qualities of acts.—The representational materials of a role, i.e. the acts, are mostly given in the form of lines by the playwright, but these lines imply the total structure of inner and outer activity. All of the acts—verbal and visual, inner and outer—are in essence experiential, but they

\textsuperscript{13}Philosophical Sketches, pp. 212, 214.
have perceptible qualities. Just as a surface has color and texture, or a motion has velocity, activities and emotions have different degrees and kinds of intensity, of radiance. Remarks are soothing or caustic, but always purposeful. A character speaks bluntly or unctuously, mutters darkly, walks buoyantly amid events which seem golden with promise or weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable. These are examples of qualities, not of the feelings which may be symbolized. To label even the qualities this way is something of an oversimplification, for non-verbal materials cannot truly be verbalized; and like the abstract visual materials, experiential materials are difficult to discuss at all when there is no specific art work to which to refer.

Perceptible structures.—The perceptible structures of a role can be somewhat better described. Acts on the stage acquire their particular qualities through participation in the form. The form is a strongly articulated virtual experience, i.e. a situation which is conceived in terms of acts and which grows and develops from moment to moment as acts motivate further and further acts. The virtual experience is cast in the mode of destiny. In actual life, Langer observes, the future is only vaguely felt, except at moments of peculiar emotional stress. In the theatre, however, it is paramount; each act is performed in anticipation of a result. "Dwindling options and growing necessity, widening options and receding necessities make the 'tide in the affairs of men.'"14

14Mind, I, p. 221.
It is this interaction between past and future in the theatrical present that endows acts and situations, and their constituent elements of tone and gesture, with what is called "dramatic quality."

**Illusion and the Representational**

A second characteristic of the representational materials of a role is that they have an illusory nature. It is often claimed that representational materials have no formal relation to any order of art—that their expressiveness derives solely from their resemblance to life and is extra-artistic. Therefore, it is said, they must always be stripped of this resemblance and reproduced in as stylized a manner as possible.

However, it is now apparent that, along with the abstract materials, the representational materials of a role have perceptible qualities and structures which help to create and sustain the illusion. This sets the work apart from actuality and gives it an independent, symbolic, virtual existence. When the illusion is created, its entire substance is virtual; and "virtual," it will be remembered, means abstracted from the material order, existing for perception alone.

Virtual space is not experiential space; but it is recognizably related to, abstracted from, experiential space because of analogous qualities and relationships. Similarly, though the resemblance between a drama as represented on the stage and the actual occurrences of daily life may be very close, dramatic life
is virtual life, in the mode of destiny or dramatic action. It is not actual, but neither is it unreal. It is an illusion, a form, made of qualities and structures.

Function of representation.—Representation has a specific function in the artistic process: to feed the artist's imagination. "The artist's eye sees in nature, and even in human nature expressing itself in action, an inexhaustible wealth of tensions, rhythms, continuities and contrasts which can be rendered in line and color; and those are the 'internal forms' which the 'external forms'—paintings, musical and poetic compositions, or any other works of art—express for us."\(^\text{15}\) (Italics mine.) The artist may or may not, in creating a form symbolic of these values, choose to represent those actual things or events, though it is a natural thing to do if they were outstanding forms. In any case, says Langer, the vital feeling which is the import of the art work is conveyed not by what is represented but entirely by artistic techniques.

The representational aspect of a role meets both of the requirements which qualify it as art according to the definition accepted in this paper. First, it has a formal expressiveness beyond its resemblance to life. Secondly, it creates an artistic illusion.

The Representational and the Actor

The representational elements of the role are of first importance to the actor, whether they are rendered in a stylized or

\(^\text{15}\)Mind, I, pp.86-87.
a naturalistic mode, for they make the primary illusion which the actor is to create, the virtual individual life. Because everything in an art work is virtual, both extreme stylization and extreme naturalism, if skillfully handled, are acceptable modes of dramatic representation; choices must be made by the director and the actors for each production. Gordon Craig proposed to replace the actor with, or turn him into, an "Ubermarionette"; and at the Bauhaus in the nineteen-twenties there were experiments in which the actor was bundled up and stiffened up into something resembling a very stylized doll. Both of these ideas were based on prescriptions for art as abstract or symbolic; and both are now seen merely as interesting possibilities for a certain kind of theatre. On the other hand, such homely activities as Chekhov invented for his characters—for example, the billiard-playing of Epihodov and the magic tricks of Charlotta in The Cherry Orchard—while naturalistic, were at the same time symbolic and expressive.

The techniques of handling representational materials, like that of handling abstract materials, consist of two factors: first, sensitivity to their formal properties, to the perceptible qualities and structures which make the representational factors of the role artistically expressive; and second, the skill to represent those qualities and structures with the particular kind and degree of naturalism or stylization required. The sense of the words and the larger meanings, the sensations, tensions and resolutions, elation and depression, motivations and causes, all these are controlled and ordered by the actor-artist's awareness of the
impending destiny which is implicit in each smallest part. When the actor has an active awareness of form, and the ability to reproduce it, his character is perceptible on the stage, transparent and complete, as its counterpart in the actual world is not.

**Complementary Aspects of One Expressive Form**

It is evident that Langer's concept of expressive form is much different from the traditional separate notions of expression and of form as commonly applied to acting. In this field, "expression" has referred only to emotions expressed and possibly experienced by the actor. "Formal" has signified only the abstract aspects of a role, which were thought to create beauty but not expression; and "form" has meant merely shape or pattern. Now, however, all the aspects of acting—abstract, representational, and emotive—are seen to have perceptible qualities and structures which make them, first, expressive of human feeling, and second, formal.

In a successful work of art there are no "non-formal" elements and no "non-expressive" elements. Abstract elements are formal. Imitative elements are formal. Emotive elements are formal. All these elements are expressive, and they are interrelated in the form. The form is expressive of human feeling. The feeling is in the form.  

---

16 Adolphe Appia was perhaps the only theorist who recognized that form itself, even in acting, was expressive. See Appendix for further discussion.
This is one reason why art is sometimes found to be more intensely moving than life. Whatever is represented is embodied in patterns of emotional, imitative, and abstract elements. Each detail is selected for expressiveness; the patterns themselves are expressive, and they are interrelated. Everything onstage is given its emotional value and is a factor in the one expressive form.

If the actor is to make a symbol out of all his given materials in order to give it its full expressiveness and create a powerful illusion, he must relate the abstract, representational, and emotive aspects of the form with each other. He must see how the specific qualities of the various elements express the import of the symbol, and how the pattern of inner activity is reflected or contrasted in the outer patterns. He must relate his creation—his character—to the total dramatic symbol. The form is the only valid basis on which he can make most of his artistic choices. In a thing as infinitely varied as a theatrical production, which proceeds among many individuals without benefit of a conductor, an extraordinary awareness of form would seem to be required for the finest possible acting.

It is the writer's belief that sensitivity to form is the essential unifying quality of acting; yet it is the quality most often lacking in actors and almost completely lacking in actor-training. Techniques of speech and movement, of inner character building, and sometimes of external characterization, that is, of particular ways of speaking and moving are taught; but the actor who cannot perceive the interrelationships of the form has no way
to integrate these techniques with each other. The genius may possess this sensitivity to form inherently, and he may instinctively develop it into a technique through practice. However, the writer believes that this sensitivity is in some degree present in all actors of any talent, and that it can be developed and strengthened through study. There are many valuable methodologies, but all of them should be modified to include the relation of the technique to the expressive form; and perhaps perception of form should be studied also independent of technique (possibly with relation to other orders of art).

Having found that abstract, imitative, and emotive materials are organic aspects of one art, we shall now turn to the problem of emotive materials as factors in the actor's process.
V. EMOTIVE MATERIALS

The Special Problem

The emotive materials of a role are found among its representational materials. Along with all the other materials the feelings of the character must be rendered and the structure of their interrelations found so that the actor can make sure of relating them organically to the form. There seems, we have noted, to be no logical need to make a special category of emotions, and this is true as long as we are talking about the characteristics which acting shares with all other arts. When we come to the performing arts, however, and especially those in which the representation of specific fictive emotions is called for (acting, and sometimes singing and dance), emotive materials have special complicating features which make it a hub of controversy and make further consideration imperative.

The first complicating feature of acting is its immediacy. Langer has spent several pages discussing the "objective feelings" which seem to "inhere in" art works.\(^\text{17}\) Rembrandt can paint a landscape, or his brother in a golden helmet; and a certain mood, or feeling, or life of feeling seems to pervade work, landscape, and brother. But in acting the work is not separable from the artist; the person onstage is the work. This is why the audience wants to

\(^\text{17}\)Feeling and Form, pp. 19-22.
be convinced that the actor "really feels": If the audience can see that the person onstage does not feel, then feelings do not seem to inhere in the work.

Intangibility is the second complicating feature of feeling in acting. There is some question whether the actor can truthfully convey the inner life solely by detailing its outer effects, or whether such outer detailing will appear manifestly faked unless he genuinely experiences the emotions he renders. The outer materials have a clearly perceptible objective reality; they can be concretely and definitely rendered. The inner materials, however, are more elusive; they are generally said to be expressed, which has a connotation of genuine inner experience, or portrayed, which suggests pure mimicry of outer effects. Thus it is hard to specify what constitutes an adequate rendering of feelings and even, in any given instance, to say whether they have been rendered or not. In acting, the moment of unveiling, so to speak, is a crucial part of the creative process; the ultimate act of creation is performed in full view of the audience.

Relevance

This may perhaps not matter to the audience, for genuine feeling or its absence may not be easily detectable. As William Archer said in *Masks or Faces?*: "If an actor can convincingly represent emotion, the critic, as a critic, need not inquire whether he experiences or mechanically simulates it." (Italics mine.) But it is important to the actor, especially to the actor in training.
Archer goes on: "Sensibility can be cultivated or it can be crushed, like any other gift of nature. It is quite conceivable that a young actor may help or hinder the due development of his powers by starting out with a right or a wrong theory as to the artistic value of real emotion."\(^{18}\)

Thus, although we may know what emotive elements are, we do not know how to render them. This must be answered if we are to understand the process of creating the symbol which is the performed role.

**How To Render Emotive Materials**

The question of the necessity and feasibility of genuine emotions has not been fully covered by Langer, so it will be necessary to examine another possibility which seems consistent with her general concept of art as expressive form, with the recorded history of great acting, and with the writer's experience.

Several hypothetical methods may be advanced for the rendering of emotive materials, from genuine experience and catharsis of the actor's personal emotional symptoms to pure mimicry of the imagined outer effects of emotion on the character. Let us consider the extremes first, and then the area in between.

**Personal emotions**

Langer's position on the artistic value of personal emotions, that is, the emotions of the artist, is clear. In

Problems of Art she gives the example of a baby screaming in a concert hall. The baby would be expressing itself perfectly, but this would probably induce the audience to leave the hall. "We don't want self-expression."19 Personal expression may be intermittently exciting, but there are drawbacks, as explained in the chapter on musical performance: "If, however, the player lets his own need for some emotional catharsis make the music simply his outlet, he is likely to play passionately, with exciting dynamics, but the work will lack intensity because its expressive forms are inarticulate and blurred." His own emotions lack the "distinct and elaborate form" of the piece, "so he rattles off whole passages simply because they are written . . . ".20

Langer does not mention the actor who deliberately stimulates his personal emotions, but we may reason that even if the feelings he stirs are appropriate to the character and the situation, they will still not be congruent with the intricacies of the commanding form of the script.

Mimicry

It is also evident that Langer does not favor pure mimicry of the external effects of emotion. Noting that speech in the drama, as in life, is a special sort of act, issuing from an emotional,

19 Problems of Art, p. 25.

20 Feeling and Form, pp. 145-146. It may be noted that some extreme "emotionalist" actors, who insist upon doing exactly as the feeling of the moment dictates, refuse to perform the directed movements and even at times to say the written words, all in fear of "rattling off whole passages simply because they are written."
mental, and bodily awareness, she states: "... the actor has to create the illusion of an inward activity ... if his words are to make a dramatic and not a rhetorical effect."\textsuperscript{21} (Italics mine.) It must be remembered that "illusion" in Langer's terms means not something unreal but something created. A dramatic illusion is an apparition created out of certain elements presented to the senses of sight, hearing, and imagination. The way to make this illusion must be to create both the outer elements, for appreciation by the eyes and ears, and also the character's imaginal inward activity itself, for appreciation by the imagination. If the actor creates only the latter and omits the former, he is manifestly omitting part of the form. If he creates only the former and omits the latter, he may fool some of the people some of the time, but he is likewise omitting part of the form. If he is very skillful, this may be accepted with enthusiasm, but it is still a substitute.

**Emotions conceived and enacted**

Langer recognizes an area of confusion between pure mimicry and actual experience: "An emotion, mood, or disposition actually felt is as subjective as any thought about it; so the conception of a feeling, and the contemplation of it as a part of the larger inward activity that characterizes human life, is not automatically distinguished from the actual occurrence called 'having' that feeling".\textsuperscript{22} Her view of the actor's expression of emotions is

\textsuperscript{21}Feeling and Form, pp. 315-316.

\textsuperscript{22}Mind, I, p. 89.
that, instead of undergoing and venting them, he "conceives and enacts them"; and a clue to her meaning of "enact" may be found in the chapter on dance: "the conception of a feeling disposes the dancer's body to symbolize it."23 This sort of thing, modified to include the voice, seems to be what some important actors do: Imagine jealous rage, and the eyeballs roll, the teeth gnash, the body heaves, the voice roars. This sort of acting has always been of doubtful value, even in the most skillful actors. Probably the main reason is that "conceiving" emotions directly engages the actor's imagination in an actual inward activity diametrically opposed to the virtual inward activity of the character. Othello is not trying to feel jealous rage, he is trying not to feel it; he is an unwilling prey to it and struggles against it.

Conceiving and enacting emotions might work in another, more stylized theatrical tradition (Langer mentions the Oriental theatre, where everything may be enacted—events, objects, and emotions), or in a theatre where emotions are served up in chunks of some size. But, as Langer has observed, "The ways we are moved are as various as the lights in a forest; and they may intersect, sometimes without cancelling each other, take shape and dissolve, conflict, explode into passion, or be transfigured."24 To conceive

23Feeling and Form, p. 181. Delsarté said that the actor must not move a muscle or speak a word until his overflowing feeling forced him to do so, but he left no hint as to how to attain this feeling. Langer's "conceiving and enacting" probably fills in this gap in Delsarté. Note, however, that Delsarté's whole system resulted in empty codification and that his name is now synonymous with the stiff, stilted "attitudes" of ham acting.

24Problems of Art, p. 22.
and enact such complexity in cold blood would be a tall order. Yet it is precisely this sort of realistic rhythm of subtly shifting emotion that the good modern writers portray—and the good playwrights of the past, too, as seen through the lens of our present understanding.

Throughout the history of Western acting, nearly all great actors have claimed to experience the genuine emotions of the character, and nearly all their chief critics have claimed to perceive it. The exceptions have been very few, and as Langer noted of a similar condition pertaining in the dance, "Surely no one would have the temerity to say that all the experts on a subject were wrong!"25

Another possibility

There is another possibility, still in the area between pure mimicry and personal expression, which the writer believes to be implicit in Langer's philosophy. This can be established by reasoning analogically from the less complicated procedure of painting. The painter has an intuitive idea of the nature of feeling. He conceives this idea in an imagined visual form; he conceives its articulated elements. He embodies his idea, with its elements, in an object by placing materials—pigments, on a ground—canvas. The colors in his paint-box are materials. On canvas, if he is successful, participation in the emerging form transforms them into artistic elements.

25._Feeling and Form_, p. 177.
The actor, too, must conceive and enact a form and its elements by using materials. The form of the character, which is given in the manuscript, is made up of the interrelationships of many elements—speeches, movements, activities, feelings. But these separate sounds, movements, activities, and feelings which appear as elements in the script are materials to the actor. He cannot enact them by conceiving them; there is no art in which the materials are conceived. In manuscript a speech is an element when it is written, but in the theatre a speech is not an element until it is spoken. The actor who mumbles "T'be uh notta be," not realizing the sound of it, omits part of the form, no matter how well we may know what should be there. The words are given his voice, the movements are given his body, and the emotive materials—the hopes, fears, motivations, desires—are given his feelings. A feeling, an emotion, an anything—that-can-be-felt is a pigment (as are speeches and movements) but without the easy accessibility of the pigment. The feelings are inside him, but a more sophisticated technique than squeezing is required to elicit them. It is the process of getting the paint out of the tube and onto the canvas that seems so

They are at least present as imaginable possibilities. In the chapter on musical performance Langer speaks of the range of an artist's emotional possibilities, which may be increased through artistic appreciation and even, as she shows elsewhere, through creation.

She also recognizes an indirect relation of personal emotions to artistic creation: "... to say that he [the artist] does not render his own emotions would be simply silly. All knowledge goes back to experience; we cannot know anything that bears no relation to our experience. Only, that relation may be more complex than the theory of direct personal expression assumes." (Feeling and Form, p. 390.)
complicated when we try to think what the actor does.

**Virtual Emotions.**

It has been observed that in a successful art work the materials seem to disappear in the illusion, and thus it is with the actor onstage. If he is successful, he seems to disappear; and the audience perceives a virtual being who executes virtual actions, thinks virtual thoughts, and, it seems logical to postulate, experiences *virtual emotions*. This is different from actually undergoing and venting actual bona fide feelings; the experiencing, like everything in the form, is virtual. Virtual elements have certain characteristics: They are imaginal, illusory, but not unreal; they are created; they exist only for perception. The character's actions, thoughts, and emotions—if they are created for us—really exist; but they exist only for perception.

A slightly different way of putting the proposition suggests a possible intermediate step in the process: The basic abstraction of the drama—the act—is embodied in sounds and movements, which are actual materials, and also in tensions and resolutions, which likewise may be actual materials. To these tensions and resolutions we give the names of common emotions; a real tension becomes virtual joy or fear.

*Langer's* designation of a feeling as anything that can be felt, from the simplest physical sensation to the most complex intellectual and emotional tension, may well be recalled to mind here. "Feeling" is a broad term which includes emotion and every other kind
of awareness; it implies the whole inward activity, which has been
called "a pattern of organically interdependent and interdetermined
tensions and resolutions." 27 Considered in this way, it seems
natural that the actor might feel virtual emotions, if he can think
virtual thoughts, make virtual decisions, and execute virtual actions
for virtual ends.

The factors which make these emotive elements artistically
expressive, however, are the same as the two factors which make all
other elements expressive: their "sensory" or perceptible qualities
and the structure of their interrelationships. They are not the
import, but along with the other elements they make up the total form
which embodies the import. They are satisfying to the audience
because they complete the form.

**Difference between virtual and personal emotions**

Since expressiveness derives entirely from artistic form and
is created entirely through artistic techniques, stirring virtual
emotions is an artistic technique. In the writer's opinion, it is
a technique which can be taught and learned. If the feelings are
inside the actor, merely requiring to be elicited in some way, it
may seem that what is being suggested here is the deliberate stimu-
lation of personal emotions, which was discussed and dismissed earlier
in this study. As raw materials--"pigments"--existing in the actor's
consciousness, two feelings—say, of jealousy—may be identical or

27*Philosophical Sketches*, p. 80.
may differ in nuances of quality. The significant difference, however, can most easily be seen with reference to the different imaginative techniques by which each is elicited.

Virtual emotions arise out of the actor's imaginative acceptance (his conception) of a fictive circumstance. This acceptance is made possible by the artistic illusion, which is created out of all the interrelated elements of the form. The actor is a contemplator of the form--the created reality--as well as an element in it. His imagination is engaged in the virtual world of the play, and the feelings in their very inception are virtual and artistic, appropriate to the specific situation, belonging to a fictive person, elements in an illusion. Personal emotions, on the contrary, arise out of his imaginative acceptance (or conception) of a circumstance which is entirely outside the form; they are fundamentally anchored in an extraneous circumstance. The actor may subsequently attempt to weave them into the form, but his imagination is engaged in a conceived or remembered actuality outside the play.

*Difference between virtual emotions and emotions "conceived and enacted."

The difference between virtual experience of virtual emotions and Langer's "conceiving and enacting" is that in the latter

28 This is an incorrect use of "emotional memory." It is notable that those who seek personal expression are seldom adept at characterization. The actor might, however, turn to his own experience while studying and building the character, for the purpose of better understanding and articulating his own knowledge of feeling, which will be rendered as the import of the work.
the imagination fastens on the emotion and tries to create it directly, while in the former it fastens on the virtual circumstances surrounding and causing the emotion. Langer objects, and quite rightly, to the idea that the actor must delude himself into thinking he is the person he represents; but she can hardly object to his paying attention to the created reality and acceding to its independent existence, in short, to his perceiving the form. The writer believes that it is much easier for the actor to "conceive" or imaginatively grasp a fabric of events which is going on around him than to conceive hypothetical emotions one by one, and also that the result of the former will be much less generalized. The claim is not that he actually undergoes and actually vents actual emotions, but that he virtually undergoes and virtually vents virtual emotions. Everything in the framework of the created reality is virtual—the verb "to experience" as well as its object "emotions."

Virtual Emotions Corroborated

Langer on dance

This concept of emotional expression seems to be supported in the passage on dance. "The emotion in which such gesture [the virtual spontaneous movement of the dance] begins is virtual, . . . Virtual gesture may create the semblance of self-expression without anchoring it in the actual personality, which, as the source only of the actual (non-spontaneous) gestures, disappears as they do in the dance. In its place is the created personality, a dance element which figures simply as a psychical, human or superhuman Being.
It is this that is expressing itself.\textsuperscript{29} Note that in the drama, even more than in the dance, it is precisely the disappearance of the actor's actual personality that is called for, and the appearance of a created personality that we have postulated.

Given a very strong imitative tendency built into the drama, given the power of artistic illusion to disengage the mind from belief and disbelief, and given the fact that the virtual events taking place around the actor have a material as well as virtual reality, the arousing of virtual feeling seems a very likely supposition, especially since, as Langer admits, to artists "the created world is more immediately real and important than the factual world."\textsuperscript{30}

Great actors

The idea of virtual emotions is supported in the recorded history of acting. Most great actors are credited with the faculty and practice of "really feeling"—but in a way somehow "different" from that of ordinary life—the feelings of the characters they play, and of in some fashion "becoming" those characters. Their comments sound remarkably like descriptions of virtual beings with virtual emotions, or created personalities expressing themselves.

Leaving aside for the moment the actor who says he does not "feel"\textsuperscript{31}

\textsuperscript{29}Feeling and Form, pp. 180-181. (My italics.)

\textsuperscript{30}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{31}In practice, very skillful imitation without some degree of identification is extremely rare. This means not only that skillful imitators are rare, but also, and especially, that truthful imitating has a strong tendency to engage the imagination and leads to identification. It is very difficult to follow Constant Coquelin's
and considering the one who says he does, it seems likely that he is feeling virtual emotions. He is feeling emotions analogous to those of everyday life and named by the same names—grief, joy, pity, terror—but emotions uncoupled from the world of practical anxiety: virtual grief, virtual joy, virtual pity and terror. When we see him crying tears, the tears are actual—they have a concrete, physical existence—but the crying is virtual, ordered, controlled, important only for its place in the form. The actor has made an artistic form out of materials—tonal, kinetic, visual, and also experiential—which become expressive elements in the form. The feelings of the character are materials and become elements in the work. The feeling that constitutes the import of the work—the actor's knowledge of the life of feeling—is conveyed entirely by the artistic form and is created entirely through artistic techniques.

Stanislavsky

The notion of virtual emotions receives further support from the culminating discoveries of Stanislavsky. Stanislavsky insisted that the actor experience the emotions of the character in order to bring him to life on the stage, but contrary to popular misconception he did not favor personal emotions (and said so increasingly)

dictum that the actor must "move, act, gesticulate, listen, think from the very soul" of the character and yet "must not experience a shadow of the sentiments he is expressing." (The Art of the Actor, trans. Elsie Fogerty [London: George Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 1954], pp. 27, 58.) The inseparability of physical and mental processes, which can account for the tendency of imitation to lead to identification, is becoming an increasingly important theme in Langer's works, where feeling is described as a phase of a physiological process, and the paradox of physical and psychical disappears.
strongly). Virtual emotion—a whole virtual inner life, a continuous, personal life of feeling—is exactly what his system is designed to create. In many other "inner" techniques the actor concentrates on himself; but in the Stanislavsky technique the actor experiences in himself the inner life of the character through study of that character in relation to the total artistic circumstance. A virtual being, a "created personality," is probably what Stanislavsky meant by his puzzling statement that the being onstage is "you [the actor], as the character."

The most important facets of the mature Stanislavsky system correlate remarkably with Langer's concepts. The inseparability of physical, mental, and emotional factors is a theme which grows in importance until it is of major significance in both writers. In the Stanislavsky system the emotions result from the actor's fulfillment of the proper psychophysical actions, a term which corresponds closely with a unified complex of Langer's acts. Stanislavsky's "magic IF" is a sort of actor's working version of Langer's illusion; it allows the actor to accept and function in the virtual world as if it were actual. Stanislavsky's use of the "given circumstances" means simply engaging the actor's imagination in all aspects of the created reality—including, as Stanislavsky finally realized, the abstract elements of his role.

Finally, Stanislavsky used the concept of form, insisting that every detail of the actor's performance be guided and controlled by the superobjective of his character, which in turn was determined by the superobjective of the play. Thus the character, and his
emotions, are a part of the playwright's knowledge of the life of feeling; the actor must strive to understand them and—using his personal imagination and memory—relate them to his knowledge of the life of feeling in order to project the whole form and its content, its "idea," to the audience.

Virtual Emotions and the Actor's Consciousness

The anti-emotionalists and some extreme emotionalists have claimed that it is impossible for the actor to concentrate on both internals and externals, and that therefore either the inner or the outer elements must be as nearly as possible eliminated or left to happenstance. Yet nearly all of the great actors have declared that they experience no difficulty maintaining a "double consciousness," with one part of their awareness involved in the character, his situation, and his emotions, and another part watching the performance to keep control of it.32

The writer suggests that the state of double consciousness affirmed by these actors is not two separate—but-equal awarenesses in one mind, but one awareness, with two facets which are fundamentally integral. As the artistic illusion creates a virtual world, it is entirely proper that the creator's consciousness be occupied with all aspects of this world. This world is a world of artistic form.

32The question is not unique to acting. The paradox of feeling and technique is a problem in every art. Every artist is both creator and audience simultaneously, always watching as he creates, and controlling as he watches. The actor is especially tied by the coincidence of creator and creation in one object.
The form is made of abstract, representational, and emotive elements, interdependent and interdetermined. If the actor stirs and experiences virtual and not personal emotions, it is not in any way surprising or irregular but entirely natural that his one consciousness be occupied by the interrelated aspects. Emotional, representational, and abstract elements are interrelated in the form; and the feeling is in the form. The work of art is one symbol. The virtual world is single, the form is single, the creating consciousness is single.
VI. SYMBOLIC ANALYSIS

It has been found that the product of acting is an art work. This art work is an expressive form whose primary illusion is a virtual life. All of its materials—abstract, representational, and emotive—are interrelated organically. The actor, in order to make an art work of his role, must understand its internal structure; and since his role is not independent, he must also understand its relation to the larger symbol, i.e. the produced play, of which it is accurately termed a "part." The genius may attain this understanding through intuition, but the somewhat less gifted actor will do well to help his intuition by approaching his role systematically and analyzing its interrelationships. The process of symbolic analysis, a practical application of Langer's concepts, can be a powerful aid to his intuition in helping him to understand the symbol which is his role.

Definition of symbolic analysis

Symbolic analysis is a procedural tool for approaching a symbolic structure (an art work) intellectually and therefore discursively. Analyzing a symbol means considering it in terms of its primary and secondary illusions, its basic abstractions, and its materials and elements, to see how each contributes to the expressiveness. The procedure is always applied in the presence of the work. In analyzing a piece of music, for example, we would
listen repeatedly to the music and probably at the same time refer to the score. However, the process is discursive and therefore must always be incomplete, for by definition artistic symbols can never be fully contained in the discursive mode.

Symbolic analysis and the creator

The creator of a work-in-progress can use this tool in conjunction with his intuition to examine his own partially-created symbol. Analysis can help him to see how successful he has been in formulating his central image, and where he can be more successful. By spotlighting an area he may understand how to strengthen it. He can detect "dead spots" and perhaps create the vital articulations which will bring them to life. Thus symbolic analysis is a powerful tool available for use in artistic creation.

It is perhaps of particular benefit to the performer, who is at once the contemplator of an existing form, which is given in the script, and the creator of a potential symbol.

The actors' questions listed on page three of this study, in the light of symbolic analysis, either evaporate or are couched in very different terms. Those questions were:

Shall I try to speak and move naturally (relative to myself or to the character?), or artistically and beautifully? Shall I search for naturalistic business or make a few symbolical gestures? Shall I work on a subtle, natural scale or a vivid, theatrical scale? Shall I try to be the character and lose consciousness of everything except his situation? Shall I try to feel emotions? Shall I do exactly as the feeling of the moment dictates, or shall I try to plan effects?

If I decide to combine abstract, representational, and emotional elements, how shall I go about it? What are the
right proportions? Will the result be a real integration or just an artistic hash?

The questions which the actor now asks himself, phrased in Langer's terms, might run something like this:

What does this character symbolize, and what are the factors in the role which contribute to its symbolic expressiveness? What is the structure of the virtual acts, and how does this structure express the idea of feeling portrayed? What is the pattern of tensions and resolutions created by the virtual feelings and emotions? How do the sounds and rhythms of the lines coincide with the structure—do they coincide or contrast? What visual elements will make the naturalistic acts clear and at the same time create abstract patterns which will help to create the artistic illusion?

The actor still has choices to make, even more, perhaps, than he realized before, but he now has the symbol itself as a basis on which to make them.

An Example of Symbolic Analysis

To demonstrate the practical use of symbolic analysis, the procedure will be applied to one specific role as it might actually be used by an actor. The writer has had occasion recently to employ this method in building and performing the role of Portia in Julius Caesar. This role is brief enough to be treated in some detail in a few pages, and yet it contains varied material to illustrate the process. In addition, it is probably familiar to the reader, or at least is easily accessible in the script. Several points must be emphasized, however:

First, orderliness has been imposed upon the analysis. The process itself is inherently orderly, in that it gives the actor several definite and specific points of attack. When building a
character, however, the actor is not likely to select one term and track it single-mindedly throughout the role, as the writer has done. In practice, he tends to jump back and forth between aspects, or between scenes or speeches. He may work on several aspects at once, finding interrelationships between them. It is in the area of interrelationships that many of his most important discoveries are likely to occur, modifying insights in the light of other insights. Thus the following pages represent a considerable simplification.

Secondly, the points mentioned in this analysis are only examples of the way in which artistic choices can be made. Art symbols are endlessly complex and therefore defy total analysis. Every aspect is present in every part, and all details are thoroughly interdependent and interdetermined. It would take a model in several dimensions to diagram all the interrelationships, and then the qualities could only be approximated. All of this is merely a feature of trying to comprehend discursively the forms of feeling, which are not amenable to discursive projection.

Thirdly, as regards this particular sample: It has been cast in the first person singular and the present tense in order to keep the personal nature of the analysis clear and to make as plain as possible the actual thought processes of analysis. However, the virtual individual (Portia) gradually emerged, and her thoughts inevitably became part of the analysis. The writer functioned sometimes an analyzer of Portia, sometimes as an identifier with Portia, and sometimes as something in between, the switch of personalities often occurring in mid-sentence. In addition, during
the writing process the writer had occasionally to function as commentator on the artistic process or the analytical procedure. An effort has been made to guide the reader through these changes of character by placing to the left the more "objective" sections and indenting and single-spacing those sections where the writer tended to identify with Portia and to "quote" her imagined thoughts. In these latter sections "I" usually means "I-as-Portia." The comments on process and procedure have been kept to a minimum; they have been identified as such and have been placed in parentheses.

Finally, it must be emphasized that the following is merely an illustration of a procedure. No claim is made that these specific results are a definitive analysis or interpretation of this role.

The Play: Portia's Context

As I read the play, I get the feeling that all the characters (except Cassius and Antony) are divided within themselves. They are doing things they are not sure about. They try to do good by doing evil. Once they achieve their aim, they cannot hold onto it, and there is havoc. This feeling of division and of evil seems to be in the atmosphere around me; the gods are involved in it, as many portents show. (Supernatural forces are emphasized in this production.) The play gives me a feeling of division, of swimming upstream, of commitment to incompatible ends.

I do not wish to write an "interpretation" of the play at this time, but merely to indicate Portia's relation to it.
The action

The first half of the action of the play is built in long insistently rising sections. People strain after the wrong thing, the thing which will accomplish their destruction. The conspirators stir each other and themselves to murder; Brutus insists on giving place to Antony; Antony raises the crowd and the action of the play to the pitch necessary for the havoc expressed in the civil war of the second half, where energy and efforts dissipate and scatter, leading to decline and death. The first rhythm, comprising the whole first half, is one span of continuously tightening tension with only slight lapses to create a fresh momentum. The second is more segmented and erratic.

Portia exhibits in miniature this same insistent action leading to havoc. Her first scene (II, i, 233-309) is one continuous rising action as she works to gain Brutus' confidence; her second scene (II, iv) is chopped and broken rhythmically as she is caught in her own civil war, caused by the achievement of her aim.

Portia: The Symbol

As I, the actress, read the play several times, especially feeling out Portia's two scenes, an image begins to come to me, an actual vision. I see a woman being split right down the middle by a wedge driven through her forehead by a sledgehammer. I begin to feel this split in myself. I am not hallucinating, I do not feel personally split, but I know what this feeling feels like. I begin to identify with Portia. I imaginatively grasp the feeling of the wedge in my forehead. At first it is light, almost imperceptible; it seems to be made of very light wood; it feels like a slight headache, or a slight inability to focus the eyes. Then suddenly I-as-Portia am out on the streets of Rome trying to hold the two halves of my skull together. I never saw or heard or even felt the blows; I never knew what hit me.
Acts, inner and outer

Portia's inward activity has begun before she enters. She has already sensed a split between the way things are and the way they ought to be; she is perplexed and puzzled by the change in Brutus. She feels concern for him, and for herself, too: Brutus, her foundation, is separated from his normal self (she cannot guess how far). She feels dislocated from her rightful place in Brutus, and she fears the men who have just visited. Her first aim is to make Brutus confide in her; this will at least restore her unity with him.

(Comment on acting process: I do not have to worry about rendering these or subsequent emotive materials. I imaginatively grasp Portia's situation; I conceive and enact it. I create as much as I can of the structure of inner and outer activity—the thoughts, the intentions, the overt behavior, and the abstract elements—and let the virtual emotions arise.)

I know what it feels like to find things going wrong in a way that I don't understand—to feel puzzled, dislocated, concerned, even frightened. Basically my life is wonderful, everything is under control; but there is just that little block of wood in my forehead, and I can't quite get rid of it. I feel the feeling of something between the eyes, and every now and then it receives a little blow that drives it in a little deeper.

Speaking in terms of the dialectic of freedom and necessity, Portia's options are the same at the beginning and throughout the first scene: She has the choice of whether or not to interfere in Brutus' concern; and since he is her concern, she chooses at every turn to do so. Her alternatives are merely in the ways to go about attaining her end. From the indirection of her first attempts, I
infer a great reluctance to undertake this course at all. This is a
gentle Portia, fair, with a sense of dignity.

(Comment on analytical procedure: In analysis her reluctance
is inferred from the indirection observed in the script; but in
melding myself with the character I turn this around: I imagine
myself as Portia in her situation.)

I-as-Portia feel split between my respect for Brutus, which
makes me feel reluctant to interfere, and my need for unity
with him; so I approach him indirectly. I try to keep the
position of deference which I feel is due him, but gradually
I lose this option. The more he refuses to confide in me, the
more I know the problem is serious and I must know about it.

First, in as loving a way as possible, I demonstrate that I
know something is wrong and request that he tell me what it is.
His excuse is ill health; he tries to send me to bed like a
child. This is a little blow. I show him his excuse is
absurd (but gently, not sarcastically); I beg for his confi­
dence and admit my fear of the conspirators. He puts me off
with fine words, twice: I feel the feeling of something be­
tween the eyes that keeps receiving blows. I feel that his
words—"good Portia," "gentle Portia," "true and honorable
wife"—are separating and patronizing; they demean me and
the marriage relationship. I will not be pacified; I question
the whole relationship (perhaps exaggerating a little for
effect). Finally I must come right out and declare my absolute
right and my ability to share in his troubles.

Portia could stop her action at any moment, but Brutus'
recalcitrance increases her determination. Thus the whole scene com­
prises one rising action, the articulations blending organically, the
finishing of one rhythm preparing the way for the next.

In contrast to her first scene, her second, with Lucius and
the soothsayer, may be regarded as a desperate search for options and
alternatives where there are none. The image of Portia's split grows
very strong here, even hideous. She describes herself as having "a
man's mind but a woman's might." Her situation in this scene is so
ambivalent and her actions so incomplete that her intentions must be guessed. The following are my choices, based on intuition and analysis:

I—as-Portia have given my word. I must keep quiet about the plot, yet I need desperately to stop it. I need to hear of Brutus' success, I cannot wish him failure; yet I fear his success more than his failure. I try to find something to do. I try to send Lucius to the capitol, yet I cannot state my purpose—which would be to find some way to prevent the assassination, if only I dared. I can only find false or partial errands: to observe Brutus, to observe Caesar and the others, and finally, in a costly effort, to "say I am merry," which is decidedly untrue. I would like to send the soothsayer to warn Caesar; yet when I see that he will try to do this anyway, I fear his knowledge; and of course I cannot reveal my own. I can only talk to myself, giving orders from my "man's mind" to my "woman's might."

I can make up my mind to cooperate in this murder, but I can hardly physically keep to the course I have set. I must keep trying to stuff my brains back in, trying not to vomit up the evil I have swallowed. I love Brutus, I am anxious for him; but in order to save him I would have to betray him. I know this is not the real Brutus, but to save his life I would have to destroy him as a man by substituting my judgment for his. It is an impossible choice, but one which I must make.

**Verbal Materials**

(Comment on analytical procedure: We do have the art work in a concrete verbal form for reference; this will be a help in analyzing the verbal materials. They cannot, of course, be fully grasped in a discursive form; but they can be talked about in more detail than, say, the visual materials. The attempt to deal with them can be more concrete.)

**Verbal images**

All of the acts described are poetic acts, built of verbal images, yet Portia makes little use of such poetic devices as
metaphor. ("The suburbs of your good pleasure" is a notable exception, preparing the ground for the shocking "Portia is Brutus' harlot, not his wife." [285-287]) Instead, she builds up large images. Perhaps her chief method is what we might call the dramatization of a negative: Out of the details of what is happening she creates a complete picture of what is not but should be happening. Thus "ungentle" looks are more effective than nasty looks, because "ungentle" contains a built-in opposite: it evokes the Brutus that used to be. In this way, piling detail upon detail, she builds up extended images which show the contrast between their normal state and the present distortion—between gentleness and anger, health and sickness, honor and evil, her rightful place and the suburbs, the wife and the harlot.

(Comment on acting process: I say "Portia builds images" rather than "Shakespeare builds images." These words are all that the poet gives us of Portia; they are the means through which he shows her to us. He builds images for her to use; and if I am aware of them and use them for her purpose, she builds them.)

Brutus is usually gentle and loving, he confides in me as his other half. Now I hardly recognize him: he is troubled, he is angry with me, he abuses his health, he treats me dishonorably—like a harlot. I want Brutus to see that I am not being unfair or silly. I have detailed evidence to prove that things are abnormal.

In the second scene Portia builds no images. She gives orders and rescinds them; she hears noises, asks questions. She does not know what to do, but she feels a terrible need to do something. Her lines are half-actions; the poet creates the image of a Portia
struggling with ambivalence.

Abstract and representational aspects of speech, interwoven

The contrast between the scenes is expressed and carried out in the rhythms of the lines. A major rhythm is set up in the first scene, a formal device which allows the audience to accept Brutus' standing still while Portia speaks twenty lines (which might be realistically unlikely). There is no need for an elaborate justification, or for engineered interruptions by Brutus (though this might be an alternative). In this scene Portia is competent and controlled, disturbed, but sure of her aim. She speaks some twenty lines on the signs of trouble, seven on health, six on her rightful place, five on the visit of the conspirators, another nine on the marriage relationship, and finally twelve on her strength. Her sentences are three and four lines long; she is articulate. The speeches are written with a flow, and it seems clearly appropriate to maintain this flow, with no stammering and searching for words. Portia speaks in iambic pentameter. I will not speak in strict meter, but I will maintain an awareness of it and will not try to make it arhythmic. A sense of music will help; I will not speak ad lib—without any restriction—but in tempo rubato—stealing in one phrase and paying back in another.

I—as Portia am very sure of myself in this encounter; I know I can help if only Brutus will confide in me, so I know I am right to try to persuade him. I set up the encounter and I control it, so I can take time to reason, argue, plead, persuade, challenge. I can control my speech and myself; I can help to restore order through my flexible strength and control.
In the second scene the rhythms are erratic and broken; she cannot keep long to the same subject. Most of her speeches are only a line or two in length. She gives orders and takes them back. In her last eight-line speech she changes direction no less than six times.

I don't know what to do and I don't know what to say. I am afraid of doing and saying the wrong things, something that will harm Brutus. I can just barely control myself, and the speech rhythms will just barely not escape (they will be under the actress's control, if not Portia's).

**Sensory qualities of words**

I find certain sounds which can be used to contribute to the artistic expressiveness of Portia's actions:

"Musing and sighing, with your arms across." (240) Long vowels and sung consonants.

These sounds create my image of the sad, troubled Brutus. Using them in a certain way may help me to express my sympathy, or to maintain just a little levity.

"Looks," "scratched," "stamped," "foot." (242-244) A series of little crisp consonant sounds with sibilants, little percussive effects.

These sounds create the tense rhythm of the now impatient and yet not angry Brutus. They help me to show Brutus to himself.

"Fearing to strengthen that impatience/Which seemed too much enkindled." (248-249) Legato effect created by a series of sustainable consonants.

These lines occur in conjunction with a placating action; they help me to soothe and calm Brutus as I make excuses for him.

"Hoping it was but an effect of humor." (250) Lighter sound.

I use this lightness to lift the blame from Brutus.
"Which sometime hath his hour with every man." (251) More soothing, singable consonants in the key words.

This allows more excusing and placating.

"Is Brutus sick?" (261-263) Strong, mocking consonants and sibilants, beginning the image of sickness. Repetition introduces two long rhetorical, almost sarcastic questions.

These questions build the image of sickness to grand proportions and emphasize the preposterousness of his explanation.


Series of strategically placed sibilants.

These sounds create the image of ill health and express the disdain which I feel for his alibi.

"Some six or seven, who did hide their faces/Even from darkness." (277-278) More sibilants.

These sounds echo the foregoing sibilants and show the sickness I detect in the conspirators.

"To keep with you at meals, comfort your bed,/And talk with you sometimes?" (284-285) Hard consonants.

Hard sounds express my contempt for the position of a harlot as compared with that of a wife.

"I grant I am a woman, but withal." (292-294) Repeated line introducing a series of strict iambic lines with declarative phrases:

"I grant," "I am," "I am," "I will not," "I have made." (292-299).

The strong meter, repetition, and declarative phrases express a controlled, determined Portia.

(Comment on analytical procedure: These are not, of course, all of the expressive sounds in this scene; they are merely some which are clear enough to be pointed out and talked about.)
In the second scene I find a strong consonant action which shows a Portia who, though confused, is not entirely out of control. She is torn by terrible forces and is exercising all her "woman's might" to keep them in check.

(Comment on analytical procedure: Since the process should by now be well illustrated, no analysis will be made of this scene.)

Visual Materials

(Comment on analytical procedure: These materials cannot be as concretely discussed as the verbal materials, because we are not even approximately in the presence of the art work.)

Movements: abstract and representational aspects

The same formal structure which keeps Brutus still while Portia talks prevents me from feeling insecure at "just standing around" or "wandering." I have no need for a naturalistic set which would make possible everyday activities. Even if the designer had created a realistic "Brutus' orchard," neither as the actress nor as Portia would I go picking apples or fiddling with leaves or dabbling my fingers in the bird-bath. I feel that visually the first scene will be carried by the intensity of Portia's desire to gain the confidence of Brutus. Though he says little, this is a duet, not a solo. The movements will be kept in control by the actress's sense of pattern, proportion, and rhythm.

My moves will be dictated by my relation to Brutus. This will tell me whether to follow him, face him, or turn my back on him. If I see him growing angry with me, or offended, I will turn away to stop myself, to find a way
to explain. I will turn back to him when I have a new momentum, when I know how to show him that I mean to help him, not to fight him. There are times when I will touch him, times when I will walk strongly away.

There is no need to mimic Brutus' musing and sighing, head-scratching and foot-stamping (unless I feel that I can afford considerable levity—which seems unlikely); these acts are conveyed in Shakespeare's sounds and rhythms.

There is one phrase—"with an angry wafture of your hand" (246)—which seems to have such a feeling of a wind blowing that it compels me to make a gesture with my arm.

I question my impulse, because it seems like indication; yet I feel that it is genuine, created by my response to the sounds—especially since I have no other such temptations. For the most part, very simple movements—looking at Brutus, looking away, touching him—seem to be all that is called for, given the richness of Shakespeare's words.

I am at home. I am basically secure and confident, though deeply troubled at present. I question or fear what is happening, but I do not doubt myself. In the second scene I am in a public place, and I fear myself, Brutus, everything.

In the second scene my movements will contrast with those in the first scene. I will use incomplete gestures, purposeless crosses, things which are normally bad stage technique; but I will use them to express the broken rhythms, the half-finished thoughts of a woman who is searching for something to do, who dares not do what she wants to do. Here the lack of a realistic set may help to place me in Portia's helpless situation. I will, however, use my control as an actress to rein myself in as Portia must. I have found that she exercises all her strength here, so my hands will not wave
distractingly; and crosses, though interrupted, will begin out of impulses which are definite and strong.

Secondary Illusions:
Virtual Time and Space

In contrast to the great world of Rome and the cosmic portents, Portia's consciousness creates in her first scene a smaller, domestic virtual space which she inhabits. It has now been invaded by the outside world.

I am at home in my personal universe. It is small, but all the space in it is mine. I must restore it to order after this invasion. I have plenty of time—time to argue, plead, persuade, challenge—time to build images; and I have just a little end to gain, from a friend.

In the second scene she has been thrust into the great world of Rome, and she cannot deal with it.

Like a baby being born, I have been thrust out of my space and into something which is too great for me to deal with. I feel like screaming, but I must not. My personal space must shrink to a point within my own mind, and even there I cannot keep order. I must achieve two completely contradictory ends if I am to avoid disaster to myself and Brutus, and I have no time at all.

Portia's efforts in both scenes might be summed up as an attempt to restore order in her world; this is another echo in diminution of the play as a whole.

Portia: A Deeper Understanding

This partial symbolic analysis of Portia brings me to a deeper understanding of her. Her split is caused by her paradoxically opposed loyalties as a wife.

I intend to be loyal, but to what? To Brutus' life, or to his decision? To his decision; I cannot take action to oppose him. In loyalty to him, I must go against my own certain knowledge of disaster. My loyalty to him,
against myself, is my highest loyalty to myself as a wife. My fulfillment is in Brutus. Yet by helping him to his fulfillment, I help him (and myself) to death. By helping him, I will kill him, and I know it. The wife must stand by and watch her husband kill himself, if that is what he has chosen to do. Yet I cannot bear to watch; the tension between the two halves of the paradox is too great, and my woman's might is not equal to the strain. The impossibility of my position makes my mind crack; I am split down the middle by a wedge, driven right through my forehead by a sledgehammer.

In a sense this is a mirror-image of the whole play: the paradoxical impossibility of nobility committed to evil, and the consequences of this commitment.

(Comment on analytical procedure and acting process: It has taken twelve pages to write a symbolic analysis of a role that Shakespeare wrote in two scenes comprised of 143 lines. This is characteristic of any attempt to comprehend a non-discursive symbol in the discursive mode. Yet such an attempt is important to my creative process. I am involved as an actress in two levels of symbolic transformation. Through symbolic analysis the given materials are transformed into organically related elements in my awareness until finally, I hope, I am transformed onstage into Portia—a virtual being in a virtual world, feeling virtual feelings brought on by her commitment to a virtual paradox—a symbol of the havoc wrought by the perversion of nobility to evil ends.)

Results of the Application of Symbolic Analysis

On the basis of personal experience with the application of symbolic analysis to a role in actual practice, the writer as actress found this approach more successful than any other previously tried.
First, there was no burden of preconception and misconception about the "proper" approach. The actress's full attention was devoted to the primary task of creating the art work, instead of being diverted to the secondary aim of trying to fulfill a limiting definition of art. The various elements of the role could be dealt with unhesitatingly, with a sure comprehension of the nature and function of each. Secondly, no energy was wasted trying to blank out everything but the naturalistic situation, and no self-criticism accompanied a "failure" to do so. All techniques, including details of timing and polish which might once have been considered tricks, were understood to be integral parts of one process. There was no self-consciousness about working from the inside out or from the outside in. Freed of all such preoccupations, devoting her attention and efforts directly to the symbol, and having a definite comprehensive procedure to follow in making artistic decisions, the actress experienced greater creativity.

The most direct benefit was the procedure itself. A stronger, more expressive symbol was created as a result of using symbolic analysis. Learning to find the vital expressiveness of the abstract materials and the formal expressiveness of the representational materials, the actress acquired a way to integrate the various techniques and to relate them to the central image in order to create as strong a symbolic structure as possible. Finally, there was the artistic satisfaction of fulfilling on a complex level the fundamental human need of symbolization: the formulation and communication of the actress's personal knowledge of feeling in a
symbol.

Since there is no reason to think that this instance was unique, it may be supposed that these or similar benefits would be experienced by any actor applying this procedure.
VII. CONCLUSIONS

Langer's concepts of art as expressive form and of drama as virtual life have led to the conclusion that abstract, realistic, and emotive elements are necessary to the complete realization of a dramatic symbol. All are inherently expressive as presented to the senses of sight, hearing, and imagination; and the structure of their interrelationships is expressive. Emotive materials are artistically expressive not by virtue of their resemblance to life but through their participation in the form; and in most Western theatre they are preferably rendered through virtual experience, as virtual emotions. They enter into the actor's consciousness as part of the form.

It is logical to assume that this idea of the unity and necessity of all the elements of the symbol, if widely understood and accepted, would go a long way toward cutting through the confusion and reconciling the conflicts in the acting profession. The apparent controversies existing between the various schools of thought could be eliminated as clearer communication revealed their similarity and made plain the value of greater cooperation.

In production, the actor will be released from limiting preconceptions and will have the tools to handle all three aspects of his art in organic interrelation. He will have a better understanding of his role in relation to the total symbol, i.e. the produced play, of which it is a part. Thus he can be better able to understand and assist the director, who is responsible for synthesizing the
production. The reverse is also true: The technique of symbolic analysis, if applied by the director, can help him in communicating with the actor. Choices can be made and internal consistency maintained by director and actors on the basis of their understanding of the nature of the symbol, as intuition and symbolic analysis work together and augment each other.

This approach to acting is not intended to supplant any existing technique or methodology. On the contrary, the acceptance of symbolic analysis as a tool could expand and strengthen the whole field of actor-training. The actor's "formal" training, now largely devoted to mere mechanics, to "developing the instrument," would be modified to help him understand the relation of the abstract elements of his role to the expressive form. His training in "inner techniques," which establishes a relation between him and the role, would be modified to include perception of the formal patterns in the realistic elements, so that these elements would derive their expressiveness from artistic factors as well as from their resemblance to life. Relations would be developed between the various methodologies of actor-training so that the actor could make the best use of each and could integrate them in performance.

Many individuals thrive on the present atmosphere of controversy, but the theatre does not. It would improve the state of theatre art as a whole if communication could be clarified and conflicts reconciled. Those who wish to improve the state of acting and of actor-training will find Langer's ideas a beginning and will go to her and to aestheticians who are working along similar lines.
for further understanding. To follow through on this is beyond the scope of this paper, but it should be done some time, by someone, unless like the gingham dog and the calico cat theatre artists are to eat each other up.
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY


APPENDIX

Adolphe Appia

It has been noted that Langer's view of expressive form is much different from traditional notions of expressiveness and of form as those terms are commonly applied to acting. One exceptional artist-theorist who did understand that form itself was expressive, even in acting, was Adolphe Appia. His views have had relatively little effect on the theory and practice of acting, but they have strongly influenced the thinking of this writer. Interpreting his statements on acting in a few paragraphs is very difficult, as they had some highly individual complications, but a few points may be mentioned.

Appia is commonly thought to have been a strict anti-realist, and as regards acting, an anti-emotionalist; and his thinking does tend strongly in that direction. At first, assuming an absolute antithesis between life and art, and lacking (like almost all theatre artists) an understanding of the perceptible qualities and the formal values of representational elements, he rejected these elements completely. Later, however, he began to see their artistic worth and admitted that the artist, by tending toward expression, might "represent" his expression as purely as he desired. "Oscillation between indication and expression" endowed the artist's vision with "an infinite and moving schematic variety," sustained attention, and
stimulated emotion by setting up contrasts. Thus this "oscillation" took on a formal value.

Like Stanislavsky, Appia objected to "the external effects of emotion" being substituted for "the emotions themselves." The emotions were to be expressed only through music; the actor was neither to study nor to portray them, since this would be too life-like. However, we may reason that if the actor, like other artists, by tending toward expression might be allowed to "represent" it, then perhaps he might be allowed to portray emotions along with the other representational elements. If the actor experienced emotions, Appia feared at first, his body might "take on a life" too closely related to actuality. However, later he wrote of the power of music—and for "music" we may almost read "art"—to "transfigure" the actor:

"... he first submits to and then accepts the modifications which are the condition of art, and in so doing discovers the secret of his own beauty." Thus Appia's rejection of representation and emotion in the actor might have been mitigated by his own realization of the phenomenon of symbolic transformation and his clear understanding of the power of illusion, which, he said, is "not to delude us regarding

---


the nature of emotions to objects in their relationship to reality, but rather to draw us so completely into the artist's vision that it seems to be our own."37

It was Appia's realization of the expressiveness of form, however, which was most meaningful to the writer. He knew that the inner life of a human being (which he said was the object of the expression, or of the special action, of a dramatic work) was directly expressed in the form. In his first major work he wrote that acting must be expressive solely because of its formal proportions, and that the actor must have an exclusively formal education. Everything in his writing shows that he meant something much deeper than mere incidental beauty of sound and movement (which, however, might be a by-product). He meant something closer to Langer's concept of form: All the interrelationships of all the qualities. Thus he was perhaps the first and possibly the only theorist to understand the true importance of the abstract elements of a role.

Appia has never been widely known for his analysis of acting, but he was one of the first proponents of the idea that a theatrical production was a single unified work of art. Its unity, he said, was derived from the script but centered in production around the actor. His reforms of lighting and scene design, for which he is chiefly known, were undertaken with the presence of the living actor as their starting point. Given a clear realization of the formal

37 Music and the Art of the Theatre, p. 33.
38 Cf. Stanislavsky's "through line of action" and Langer's "movement from option to option."
properties of representational and emotive elements, the writer believes that he would have evolved something like the view of acting which has here been developed from the concepts of Ianger.