THEATRE OF COMMUNITY:
HEALING FUNCTIONS OF THEATRE IN SOCIETY

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THEATRE OF COMMUNITY:
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ABSTRACT

This thesis addresses multiple social and psychological implications found within three types of theatre and their communities and audiences. In particular it embraces the theory that people can benefit from the group-healing effect found when one becomes part of the theatre audience or a member of a community that supports theatre.

The first subject presented is the work of Dr. J.L. Moreno and his Psychodrama, a staged form of psychotherapy, in relation to social psychology. The similarities between his process and that of Western dramaturgy are compared to show that Moreno drew upon healing rituals from Classical Greek society and adapted them as tools for healing in his society.
The second section examines the 19th-century melodrama of the United States of America in order to reveal social psychology and ideology. Melodrama expresses important social knowledge about American ideals and the theatre’s ability to solicit empathy from the audience in the form of entertainment for political and cultural changes.

The final sections are dedicated to ancient Greek theatre and how it served as a reflection of the communal psychological aspects of ancient Greek society. Aeschylus’ dramatic trilogy The Oresteia is examined to illuminate the cultural views of a society that valued the plays. Aristophanes’ Peace shows the emotional state of the Athenian society nearly a century after the fifty-year Persian War. The core of the thesis is that theatre is a societal healer of individuals, which can result in communal healing.
The faculty listed below, appointed by the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, have examined a thesis titled “Theatre of Community: Healing Functions of Theatre in Society,” presented by Jason M. Bauer, candidate for the Master of Arts degree, and certify that in their opinion it is worthy of acceptance.

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Dedicated to
Dennis and Andrew

Thanks to
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT..................................................................................................................iii

APPROVAL..................................................................................................................v

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.................................................................................................vi

Introduction................................................................................................................viii

Chapter

1. Dr. Moreno, Psychodrama and Modern Healing through Theatre in Society........................................................................1

2. Melodrama Bridging the Gap from Moreno to Antiquity ..................................................................................................................15

3. Ancient Greek Society and Reflections of Community in Theatre..........................................................................................30

4. Analyzing Agamemnon to Reveal Social Issues........................................37

5. The Libation Bearers and Double Empathy.............................................45

6. The Eumenides: Orestes, Social Justice and Community..............57

7. Aristophanes’ Peace: a Society’s Comedic Cry in Opposition to War ..................................................................................67

Conclusion..................................................................................................................75

Bibliography.............................................................................................................77

Vita.............................................................................................................................87
Introduction

The disciplines of Theatre and Social Psychology are intrinsically connected. Social Psychology is the study of human emotional interaction, while Theatre is a gathering of people to display the interaction of human emotions. Theatre’s display of emotional interaction is sent out to an audience as a form of mass communication. Theatre creates a platform for the transfer of this ethical and emotional information to a widespread group of individuals; the audience. Modern Social Psychology shows that the communication of emotional information among people leads to an overall healthier mental state. “Individuals who experience strong social relationships have better overall health” (Bruhn 10). Thus, Theatre creates healthier mental states and expresses the health of a society.

I have experienced, through every atom of my physical self, the immense force that reverberates through mass communication. I have felt the joy of emotions that call from deep within my soul. I have looked into the farthest reaches of my mind, and found joys and pains that words fail to describe. A majority of these intense emotions can
be attributed to connections with other individuals. Family, friends, neighbors, city, state, nation, and the entire world, are all forms of communities. And while we may not be personally connected to one another, all of humanity is a community whether they choose it or not. Most importantly through my experience, I have discovered that Theatre is a powerful community.

I remember being very impressed by the entire experience of studying abroad in Greece with my mentor marsha morgan (she preferred that her name not be capitalized). With her guidance and radiant presence the trip would was a life-changing event. I had the amazing opportunity to study theatre where Western Theatre took root and flourished. This was a life changing experience for me. Reciting dialogue at the theatre of the sanctuary of Apollo at Delphi was transcendent. As I stood on that ancient stage, I could see the olive groves beyond the distant sloping hills and sharp cliffs. These fruiting trees created an audience from the many shades of green. The vibrant blue and aquamarine colors of the sea were in harmony with the imaginary crowd. I felt as though I had been transported into another world. Two days prior I had
climbed Mt. Olympus, the seat of the gods. Five days
before Delphi I had fallen in love with the town of
Navplio.

A resident of Navplio had told me that the quaint town
was called “the city of love”. It was from this “city of
love” that I boarded a tour bus and made the trek eastward
towards Epidaurus. On the bus our tour guide asked if
anyone in the group was a singer. My peers and professors
all offered me up as a sacrifice and my mind began to
churn. I thought to myself, “Come on now, you have the
perfect song! It just needs to meet the occasion”. I knew
immediately that contemporary American Alternative was not
going to cut it. I would be standing on the (literal)
center stone at Epidaurus. I needed something beautiful.
Guiseppe Torelli’s “Tu Lo Sai” burst into my mind from my
classical vocal training in high school. I recalled:

Tu lo sai, Quanto t’amai
Tu lo sai, lo sai crudel
Io non bramo altra merce
Ma ricordati di me

You know how much I loved you
You know how cruel it is
I am not longing for other mercy
but please remember me
I ran the Italian tune through my head and imagined how I would sound at the center stone. When the bus came to a halt, I completely forgot the vocal task before me and ventured around the sanctuary of Asclepius. Asclepius was known as a son of Apollo and a god of healing by the ancient Greeks. I walked uphill and beyond a row of trees to behold the theatre at Epidaurus. After I caught my breath, I immediately turned my vision toward the center stone, and then looked directly at the tour guide. I knew that my time had come to stand in the center of the world!

At this point, early in the morning, my tour group was the only group that I had noticed. My peers and professors climbed into the stone seating and cheered me on as I took my place. I was amazed to stand in, what some consider, the most acoustically powerful-sounding theatre location that the world has to offer. What I hadn’t noticed was that as I walked to the center stone and gathered myself to perform, at least two more, much larger groups had entered the theatre. I breathed in twice, as deeply as my diaphragm would allow. I wanted to be certain that I was ready to perform as I have never performed before. I then
began singing the finest version of Italian I had conjured to date. My entire body became a center of pure, filtered muscular tension followed by complete release. I could hear my voice bouncing off of every centimeter of that ancient stone theater. It sounded incredible and as I heard the sound reverberate and return to me, I felt a sense of worth, love, and peace. As I finished the song, and came back to earth, I heard a cacophony of sound arise from all sides. The applause was a force of pure positive energy that held me enraptured for a fleeting moment. The expression of wonderment on my guide’s face was beyond description. I rushed into the seats and began to run around the theater like a child. I couldn’t take enough photos to capture the experience. At that very place and time I knew what it was to live completely within a moment.

I made a poetry journal for my trip to Greece, and here is the Epidaurus experience I call “Mass Comm”:

Standing in the center of the world  
In my heart in my mind it’s time to shine  
And now that light is greener than lime

In a rush the hush was too much  
But not enough, yet enough to fill me up  
So I turned to the crowd as if to say  
Have a grateful day
So I made some new friends
By way of mass communication
Still all their faces I can’t see
I’m getting closer to me

Standing in the center of the world
In my mind in my heart it’s time to start
To heal that confidence that fell apart
With the adhesion of my art

In a rush the hush was too much
But not enough, yet enough to fill me up
So I turned to the crowd as if to say
Have a grateful day

The emotions I experienced were pure bliss. And that sent me on the journey to learn more about ancient society, ancient theatre, and the audience response.

An interesting part of my Epidaurus experience is that I noticed a difference in crowd response between the next performer and myself. The applause and reception that I received was very exuberant and powerful. While more tour groups steadily entered the theatre, the next, and only other person to attempt to sing, began his performance and only received half of the response I had received. Why? I could have been a hard act to follow. The tourists might not have expected a young, shaggy looking American in a tattered tie-dyed Grateful Dead t-shirt to perform an Italian aria. I could have been a mere spectacle to them.
Maybe I was simply a better singer, or perhaps I had more emotions to share. Was the sound that reverberated back to the center stone better than that sent out to audience? Regardless of the reason, my interest had been piqued and I chose to explore the psychology of groups for my answers.

In a paper for the Society for Community Research and Action 2010, Kral et al. illuminated the idea of community at length. “A community is a shared culture or body politic with a common set of values, norms, preferences, and aims; a collective history; and a set of defining beliefs and practices that each individual shares and sees ‘as good in itself’” (Kral 246). Kral et al.’s idea of community involves the sharing of values and history. The community created within theatre matches this description of community.

Aristotle, when discussing the art of rhetoric, states, “oratory deals with praise or censure, the objects of which are the noble and disgraceful, virtue and vice” (Aristotle xxxiv). I found it odd that I was referring back to Aristotle after years of toiling in social psychology. Aristotle was an undeniable intellect, educator, and theatre critic. Aristotle’s description of
oratory is similar to the description of community given by Kral et al. Aristotle believed that oratory is an expression of vice and virtue within a cultural context. Aristotle states, “consider our audience, and praise that to which they attach special importance; and also endeavor to show that one whom we praise has acted with deliberate moral purpose”(Aristotle xxxv). In Theatre, the audience is receiving information from the actors and responding directly to what they see and hear as information of social value or disvalue.

I question if we should assume that history runs along a constant line? This is perhaps why I find it so easy to connect modern psychology to ancient societies. I believe that the history of humanity is in a constant repetition, like a recording that is stuck on repeat. I believe in cyclical history. My belief would then suggest that history has a reciprocal and is reflective. I believe that theatre helps reflect history. Since theatre is, in part, the imitation of emotions it is deeply and intriguingly important to society. Not only is the theatre a representation of our current art and culture synthesizing, but it is also often a representation of past cultures.
Does it matter if theatre is representing last week or two thousand years ago? Theatre is the recreation of emotions. Therefore, it is a perfect mirror to reflect a past society’s emotions and thoughts. In order to better understand the past, people should look into the mirror of theatre. They will see many different representations of emotions illuminated through dialogue, dance, and design. These emotions are directly connected to the regions where the scripts, or performances, originate. The repetition of a performance has the capability to pass on information, not only from person to person, but also from generation to generation in a manner that captures each group’s current cultural views. Comedy, such as those portrayed in political and religious satires, is an example of theatre’s exceptional ability to point out society’s faults. Comedy can serve as a cautionary tale, an emotional release, or simply pure entertainment.

Theatre crossing over into therapy did not cross my mind until Ido Israelowich enlightened me as to the god Asclepius’s true nature. “Epidaurian inscriptions show that Asclepius’ oracular power went beyond the realm of medicine, and this quality of the deity is well attested in
Aristides’ *Sacred Tales* and in the work of Lucian” (Israelowich 153).

Asclepius was a, semi-mythical, successful healer and the son of Apollo. Asclepius had a large cult that began c. 330 BCE. Asclepius was known to have had an unrivaled voice. He forged the first connections between western theatre and healing. In modern psychology it is generally accepted that showing emotion is healing, or therapeutic. The ancient Greeks practiced the vocalizing of emotions for healing at the theatre of Epidaurus and its temple to Asclepius. This can be attested to by Israelowich’s descriptions of Aeulis Aristides’ time at the sanctuary of the god Asclepius. “Furthermore, the therapeutic qualities of lyric verse and the appearance of Lysias linked Aristides to the glorious tradition of Greek orators and suggested that the god prescribed this quality of oratory to Aristides’ medicine” (Israelowich 117).

I wanted to bring the idea closer to home, and try to find modern American forms of theatrical healing. I discovered Dr. Jacob Levy Moreno, who will be discussed in Chapter 1. In 1930s America Moreno was trying to use theatre as therapy in what he called Psychodrama. I also
discovered, while studying melodrama, that this form of theatre is concerned with sentimentality, emotional ideal, an idea that will be supported in Chapter 2. Melodrama also serves as a mirror of a 19th century American society. Reform dramas, theatrical entertainment with a goal of correcting a societal ill, were very popular with American society, and subsequently society changed along with the expressed sentiments.

Because of the vastness of the subjects proposed for this thesis: Moreno’s Psychodrama, Melodrama, Greek theatre, and social psychology, the concept of Eastern theatre is not explored. The social psychology and therapy in Eastern theatre is extensive and equally as intriguing as Western versions of theatre and social psychology.

If communities can be healed, and theatre can heal, then theatre can heal communities. The blending of theatrical and psychological practices has the potential to reflect human emotion in a manner that can be used to further societal healing, and, therefore, further human emotional intelligence.
CHAPTER 1

Dr. Moreno, Psychodrama and Modern Emotional Healing through Theatre

The premise that theatre was developed for entertainment purposes only is widespread but incorrect. While this is rarely heard from anyone educated on the subject of theatre, I have heard this idea uttered before. Theatre is so much more than just a form of entertainment. Theatre portrays a spectacular representation of a culture, and it is a mirror for entire societies.

The theatre is a direct reflection of human emotions. To paraphrase John Bruhn, in any society, people look to one another for social cues and emotional cues (Bruhn 1). Humans do this, in part, to connect, and develop cohesion with another individual or group. This is not simply because people want more friends on social networks. This connectedness with other individuals is essential to understanding oneself in society, and therefore, in life.

From our birth onward, it is our socialization experiences with others that help shape our
identity. Relationships act as points of reference in our life cycles that help us make sense of our experiences (Bruhn 1).

People need other people in order to develop an identity. Applying Bruhn’s idea to the expressiveness of theatre one can see that theatre projects the ideas and emotions from an artist’s point of view to an audience. Through experiences with this projection an audience can learn and even heal. Dr. Moreno’s Psychodrama takes advantage of the projection to change a patient’s perception. This change in perception can heal a patient.

Dr. Jacob Levy Moreno MD developed Psychodrama in the 1930s. Psychodrama is a form of psychotherapy in which a patient acts out his or her personal issues on stage as a simulation. When watching these group sessions on video, one gets the impression that they are similar to modern-day comedic improvisation, but with the intention of healing. Patients act their way through real-life situations in hopes of either learning how to cope or react differently to problems they are having in everyday life. Dr. Moreno was a pioneer in social
psychology, but one will not find him studied in a general psychology classes.

In Adam Blatner’s *Foundations of Psychodrama*, Moreno’s history is discussed. He was born in the Kingdom of Romania in 1889. He studied medicine and became a medical doctor in 1917 in Vienna. In 1925 he moved to New York State as Medical Doctor who pursued mental and emotional healing through Psychodramas. Through this simulation of past or current problems the patient-actors, or Protagonists, as Moreno called them, learned how to cope when faced with these situations in real life. By 1936 Dr. Moreno was staging psychodramas in a small theatre that was built inside of a sanitarium located in Beacon Hill, New York. Moreno was the curator at the sanitarium. In 1941 a second Psychodrama theatre was built at St. Elizabeth’s Hospital in Washington D.C. in 1941. The method of Psychodrama therapy was used worldwide to treat Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder after World War II (Blatner 12-23).

Early on in Dr. Moreno’s education, he began to develop a disdain for psychoanalysis. He saw the process as half of what needed to be done in order to heal a patient with mental instability. Moreno saw Sigmund
Freud as someone who deconstructs the human psyche (Blatner 16). What good is a deconstructed building? Through the use of Psychodrama patients are not told what is wrong with them, as would be done in psychoanalysis. Patients come to their own conclusions by voicing and acting out their thoughts, which is essentially rebuilding or rerouting their thought processes.

While the option to choose between the effectiveness of Psychodrama and Psychoanalysis seems easy enough, Psychoanalysis won in popularity. There are many things that factor into this professional preference:

1. People still didn’t trust theatre due to puritanical religious beliefs.

2. Psychodrama is expensive to facilitate. There needs to be a willing group, a meeting place, preferably a stage, and a licensed therapist.

3. Dr. Moreno was the central director, making it tough to unify the method.

4. Psychoanalysis requires one therapist, one patient, and a meeting location. (Blatner 38-39).

Despite all the issues with facilitating this form of healing theatre, Psychodrama still flourished in the
United States of America from the 1940s forward. Thanks can be given to Dr. Moreno and his wife Zerka Moreno, as well as contemporary facilitators who still continue this healing art.

It is no surprise that Dr. Moreno, a student of medicine and philosophy, came to the conclusion that acting out behavior was more effective than talking about the behaviors. The acting out of mental issues was more effective in creating coping abilities and healing the mind. During his study of philosophy and medicine in Vienna, the young Moreno would have read Hippocrates’ works. Hippocrates wrote *The Hippocratic Oath*, and *On Sacred Disease*. Both of these works would serve Dr. Moreno in developing his theory.

Hippocrates claimed that the brain is the seat of our emotions, pleasure, pain, and all that we feel. This is very astute for someone who has never seen an MRI of the brain, or any other modern scientific techniques that are used to study human brain functions. Hippocrates even warned that people should be wary of charlatans, who were known to take advantage of the less well-informed members of Greek society. While Hippocrates was a major figure in ancient Greek healing, the mythological demi-
god Asclepius had the greater following. One of the major seats of the god’s healing cult was at the sanctuary of Asclepius at Epidaurus.

Asclepius, son of Apollo, was known to have otherworldly oracular abilities. “Epidaurian inscriptions show that Asclepius’ oracular power went beyond the realm of medicine, and this quality of the deity is well attested” (Israelowich 153). The god’s sanctuary at Epidaurus included a massive theatre with acoustics that remain world-renowned. It was the perfect place for healing-theatre to take place, and it did. “Speeches were also composed and delivered at the Sacred Theatre” (Israelowich 169). Nutrition, physical fitness, oratory and music were all prescribed as methods of healing (Israelowich 133). Proximity and course of study are commonalities between Dr. Moreno and ancient Greek medicine. Dr. Moreno was aware of classical healing traditions. Dr. Moreno’s wife Zerka indicated in a video interview given by Sergio Guimaraes that Moreno wanted people to love themselves. “People need to be told or reaffirmed that they are lovable or loving” (Guimaraes Vive 2). This is very similar to Hippocrates’ ideology, to maintain a healthy lifestyle both physically and
mentally. If one loves one’s self they are capable of treating their body and mind in healthier ways.

An example of Dr. Moreno’s knowledge of ancient Greek dramatists can be found in his short dialogue *Psychodrama and The New Theatre*. In this piece Dr. Moreno uses the personas of himself and Thespis to discuss an Arthur Miller play as a means to better describe Psychodrama:

Thespis: I just came from seeing Arthur Miller’s play, “After the Fall”; it’s being played at the Lincoln Repertory Theatre of Lincoln Center.

Moreno: What did you find?

Thespis: (Laughing, half mockingly) It’s a Psychodrama. What a calamity for the theatre of Aeschylus and Sophocles, even for the theatre of Shakespeare! I feel miserable, but you should be proud of it; it’s your bastard, at least half way (Moreno First 115).

The short dialogue, while not particularly kind to Miller, gives great insight to Moreno’s work through the character of Thespis:
Miller wrote his play for therapeutic reasons...
Miller writes like the protagonist in a psychodrama session who has no time to structure episodes as they are presented and created in the here and now.

Moreno: Fragmentation, interruptions and overlapping of events is frequent in psychodrama. They are by their very nature incomplete and require techniques like self-presentation, mirror, double and role reversal to be extended and integrated (Moreno First 115).

Psychodrama as a method is very similar to Improvisation. “The cornerstone of Sociometry” as in Improvisational comedy is a “Doctrine of Spontaneity and Creativity”(Moreno 18). Sociometry to Moreno was the understanding of an individuals place in society. Breaking through anxiety leads to spontaneity that can lead to creativity, a sense of purpose, and healing.

In Improvisation, one is encouraged to voice the first thought, second thought, and so on as they come to these thoughts in an imaginary situation. This line of thinking often leads to reversals and transgressions or numerous other hilarious situations aimed at making an
audience laugh. Psychodrama, on the other hand, demands a central patient to act out a life problem. The patient works together with a group of auxiliaries to give the patient a very literal outside view of his or her inner problem.

The audience can gain from this experience as well through empathy for the real life characters, from Psychodrama, that are being presented in front of them. The audience can break away from their own fears through empathy, and spontaneity, when viewing another individual’s fear. Mark Fearnow states that people are:

Living in a perpetual state of anxiety and anomie, the result of their failures in making meaningful connections with others (Fearnow 4).

In Psychodrama Dr. Moreno used many dramaturgical, or theatre-based terms, each with a function similar to what one would encounter in the theatre. These terms as used in Psychodrama are defined as follows:

1. Protagonist: the one seeking to work out the problem.

2. Director: who is the person facilitating the session.
3. Auxiliary Protagonist: either a person trained in the situation, or other group members.

4. Audience: often up to twenty individuals not acting as the protagonist.

5. Stage: the place set aside for the action to take place. (Blatner 4-5)

These terms, but not Moreno’s definitions, are universal among theatre groups, hence the ‘drama’ in Psychodrama. As can be seen by the short descriptions, the practical values of each term are similar to their dramaturgical meanings. The techniques and processes of Psychodrama are also representative of dramaturgy.

There are many techniques involved in Psychodrama. Only three will be summarized here, as discussed by a current facilitator of Psychodrama Jean Campbell.

First is “Role Reversal”: Role Reversal is a situation in which the patient acting as the Protagonist is asked to switch roles with an Auxiliary Protagonist, group member, by the Director in order to understand another individual’s point of view. For example, in a video titled J.L. Moreno, M. D. / Therapeutic Theater, a young student has an issue with finishing his Thesis, and
the Director asks him to speak as the Thesis to an Auxiliary who is acting as the original Protagonist in the Role Reversal. This gives the original patient Protagonist a new view of his problem (Moreno Therapeutic).

The second is “Replay”: Replay is the repetition of the situation that was just acted by the Protagonist, but the Director leads the Protagonist to change actions and reactions within the given circumstance. This process can be repeated many times until the patient-actor, Protagonist, has a revelation.

The third technique is “Doubling”: Doubling consists of the Director standing near the Protagonist and speaking what the Protagonist is thinking. The Protagonist then can either say that the statement is inaccurate and why, or simply repeat the statement if it is accurate. Doubling can be very suggestive and requires a Director who is extremely attuned to the patient. The Director must listen to what the patient-actor is saying, but also allow the patient-actor as Protagonist to say, “no this is not how I feel”. The openness of not having a wrong answer aids in the
elimination of the fear of being rejected or negated (Campbell).

The three steps in the Psychodrama process are referred to as phases. Jean Campbell eloquently explains phases at a TEDx event listed as Conejo 2012. The segment is titled *Psychodrama: Voices Together*: Phase One: warm up aims to build “Social Cohesion” among the group to allow for openness of actions. Jon Bruhn also discusses social cohesion in *The Group Effect*, “Social cohesion is a function of a member’s level and type of group involvement” (Bruhn 3).

Phase Two: Action. This is the use of techniques such as role reversal, doubling, and other techniques not discussed here from Psychodrama. Some similar dramaturgical terms: asides, role reversal, and mirroring are used in Psychodrama. To exit the action, the group of auxiliary actors and Protagonists de-role by stating who they really are. It is important to remind everyone involved that the actors are not the characters they are portraying.

Phase Three: Sharing. In Sharing the Protagonists and “Audience” discuss what they have seen and share
empathetically with each other regarding similar feelings or issues that arose during the action.

The entire process is steeped in social cohesion, as discussed earlier. In the following statement about culture, Michael Kral et al. discuss the idea of a social connectedness that leads to a more ideal mental health condition.

Culture has resided in community psychology in its emphasis on context, ecology, and diversity, however we believe that the field will benefit from a more explicit focus on culture. We suggest a cultural approach that values the community’s points of view and an understanding of shared and divergent meanings, goals, and norms within a theory of empowerment (Kral 46).

In summation, theatre can be viewed as an expression of a culture’s emotional state. Theatre is a conglomerate of art forms, and they are all artistic, emotional outlets. Psychodrama is a way to empower an individual by giving that individual a point of reference as previously discussed by Bruhn. This can be extended to Theatre, which creates a symphony of emotions, a wealth of
cultural information from the past, as revealed through dramaturgy. Theatre creates an emotional bond, known as empathy, developed between the performers and the audience.

Dr. J. L. Moreno was ahead of his time. He knew that theatre contributed to a community’s health. Before mainstream Psychology understood the assets of theatrical performing as aiding in positive mental health within a community, Dr. Moreno was hard at work on perfecting the art of Psychodrama. As the world catches up with Moreno’s idea that theatre heals, the theatre’s history already reveals societal healing. In genres such as melodrama and ancient Greek theatre, one can see that theatre not only heals, but also reflects societal sentiments within that healing process. Dr. Jacob Levy Moreno is not forgotten and his legacy lives on in Psychodrama and Social Psychology.
CHAPTER 2

Melodrama Bridging the Gap from Moreno to Antiquity

Melodrama, a theatre genre expressing perceived moral correctness in the 19th and early 20th centuries, ruled the American stage for nearly one hundred years. While melodrama, today, might not be considered more than light fare, it definitely held its place as a powerhouse of emotional conception in the tumultuous years of a divided nation. Temperance, mistreatment of native-Americans, and slavery are all placed under the melodramatic microscope. While slave holding was considered a political right in the South and, at best, a necessary evil in Northern American society, literary authors sought to change that line of thinking. They needed a way to clearly define slavery as a wicked and terrible act against a segment of humanity; and that is exactly what the melodramatists did. Melodrama was an effective device that strove to clearly define good and evil. The theatre gave audiences a chance to see a different viewpoint in an environment that was safe to consider new points of view. This was important in a time when a nation was soul-searching; melodrama pointed
in a moral direction perceived as correct by its contemporaries.

From our birth onward, it is our socialization experiences with others that help shape our identity. Relationships act as points of reference in our life cycles that help us make sense of our experiences (Bruhn 1).

Melodrama was America’s effort to give the members of its society a reference point of moral correctness. Melodramatic dominance of the American stage for hundreds of years more than exemplifies the struggle for nineteenth-century theatregoers to find a moral guide. Since melodrama contained many comedic elements, an audience was able to laugh at themselves and their country’s cultural predicaments. Laughter helped aide in the maturation and healing processes of a divided nation.

Melodrama was dramatic entertainment with a moral spine leavened by comedic elements. America was dealing with a war of rebellion and having to also deal with social injustices. This made laughing through the sadness a social imperative. Laughter can bring an
audience together, as well as heal an individual, and arguably bring a society together.

Laughter helps us transcend our suffering; crying does not. Tears of sadness turn us inward; we cry and feel sorry for ourselves. Laughter, on the other hand, focuses us outward. Laughter expands our vision and gives us a new way of seeing our situation (Klein 21).

The comedy in melodrama could be seen as America expanding their view. It could also have been an awkward laugh signaling discomfort.

The joint effort, of culture and community, can be applied in different situations. An example is the idea that slavery is morally wrong. If a group comes together emotionally on this point, then they are showing a social cohesion towards a perceived moral correctness within that community. One 19th-century article states:

It is disheartening to observe what strong correctives the vices of mankind require; but in proportion as they do require such correctives, every corroborant of morality ought to be seized upon and preserved (Editor’s Cabinet 30).
Melodrama was more than just to light a way to moral rectitude; it nurtured a social and emotional change within a society.

In order for a play to be considered a melodrama, it needs to have a clear definition of good versus evil. A melodrama also needs the good to triumph over evil. Belgravia an author of The Michigan Farmer recounts his youthful experiences of what he called the “old melodrama”:

There was no casuistry about the old melodrama, no paltering with sin; vice and virtue were divided by impassable lines. Trimming was impossible; you must be one thing or the other; poetical justice was always rigidly enforced, the triumph of wickedness was unknown in the world, and how anybody could be wicked when they knew that a terrible doom would inevitably overtake them, or how anybody could think of being otherwise than immaculately virtuous when they were so well rewarded for it, was one of those problems that could be referred only to the perversity of human nature (Belgravia 3).
The defining of moral correctness is tantamount to the success of Melodrama among an American audience that was searching for a national identity and ethos.

In the dramatization of Harriet Beecher Stowe’s novel *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, George L. Aiken uses Stowe’s character’s Eva, a slave master’s innocent daughter, and Tom, an obedient and devout slave, as good characters, who developed deep empathy with their audience. And in contrast uses the character of Simon Legree, the wicked and violent slave owner who is the stereotypical evil character. These character types help to clearly define the line between good and evil. Of course there are many other characters in the play, but these three are the strongest examples. Eva is pure and angelic. Her untimely death grabs the audience by the heart. “Eva: [Pointing to the sky.] I’m going there, to the spirits bright, Tom; I’m going before long” (Richards 409). Her character exemplified abolitionist views.

Eva:[Not heeding the question.] Papa, isn’t there a way to have slaves made free? When I am dead, papa, then you will think of me, and do it for my sake? (Richards 410)
The character of Eva evokes empathy, and that empathy manifests itself again in the character of Tom.

Uncle Tom is an honest and devout Christian slave. He is also a best friend to little Eva. He understands her divinity and purity. He expresses his feelings as he waits outside Eva’s door when she is on her deathbed.

Tom: Miss Eva, she talks to me. The Lord, he sends his messenger in the soul. I must be thar, Miss Feely; for when that Thar blessed child goes into the kingdom, they’ll open the door so wide, we’ll all get a look at the glory (Richards 411).

And the audience often did “get a look at glory” during a performance. The death of Eva was a scene that could become a spectacular moment of technical theatre innovation and allure, as well as prompt a heightened empathetic response, katharsis. “This leads us to the notion of catharsis in theatre, which has often been defined as signifying the power of theatre to change the minds and hearts of the audience” (Meisiek 800).

The slave owner Simon Legree, on the other hand, is sinful and represents evil.
Legree: There is a dread, unhallowed necromancy of evil, that turns things sweetest and holiest to phantoms of horror and affright... wrought in my demoniac heart of sin (Richards 437-8).

Even in Legree’s own words he is evil. The audience develops a disdain for his Satan-like ways. The more the audience loathes Legree, the more effective the empathy from the audience towards the character of Uncle Tom. The more empathy that is built up in the audience towards Tom, the more slavery is shown for the evil that it is. Tom’s death brings the moral back around in the end.

Tom: Don’t call me poor fellow. I have been poor fellow; but that’s all past and gone now. I’m right in the door, going into glory! Oh, Mas’r George! Heaven has come! I’ve got the victory! the Lord has given it to me! Glory be to His name! [Dies.]

(Richards 443).

Tom gave up his life by refusing to whip another slave. In doing so, he fulfills the virtuous role needed by the audience to connect, internally, with the idea of abolition on an emotional level.
This piece of literature became the most popular play in America during the latter half of the nineteenth-century and into the twentieth-century. Lancaster illuminates for us the importance of this play in *The American Drama--its Successes and Failures* (1877):

But the great event of the season of 1852-53 was the production of “Uncle Tom’s Cabin,” at Purdy’s National Theatre. This version of Mrs. Stowe’s celebrated novel was Aiken’s, although another version by C. W. Tayleure was then extant. To say that the play was success would be but to give a faint idea of it. It was acted two hundred successive nights, and afternoon performances were often demanded in addition… Few dramatic works ever gained such a hold upon popular sympathies, although in artistic merits “Uncle Tom’s Cabin” was woefully lacking (Lancaster 2).

American audiences could not get enough of this slavery-reform melodrama. Even though Lancaster noted it to be “woefully lacking” from an artistic view, it was still poignant.
American audiences were displaying social cohesion against the perceived social travesty of slavery. In June 1888 Horace Townsend concurred on the plays popularity, “September another version, by G.L. Aiken, was produced at Troy, and was seen at the National Theatre, July 18th, 1853, where it ran for more than three hundred representations” (Townsend 6). This is another testament to the social importance of this play.

Nineteenth-century America showed Social Cohesion with Christian values as well. Tom is a devout Christian who, in the end, is set against Simon Legree. Legree is established as the devil himself. Eva is also very devout in her Christianity. The Christian religion is the principal bond between Tom and Eva. When Eva dies the heavens open up, and then little Eva is received by a company of angels.

So where is the comedy in this drama? The comedic character’s name was Topsy, and she was a smash hit. The comedy of the Topsy character gave the audience of the nineteenth-century a chance to breathe. While, in the mind of a modern audience, Topsy seems like a stereotype in the story, her song and dance numbers were wildly popular on the American stage of the nineteenth-century.
In the depths of the serious situations, this comic relief was, apparently, sorely needed. As the audience laughs with each other they open themselves up to the greater meaning of the play.

By allowing a collective emotion to take hold of them, the audience could go towards healing the wrongs they had, directly or indirectly, taken against the slaves of the nineteenth-century. When confronted with social injustice it goes down a little more easily if you have something funny to take your mind off of the pain it brings.

Consider comedy as a form of “slight of hand” that aids in redirecting the mind to give a better perspective. Allen Klein elaborates on this concept in the Healing Power of Humor:

Humor helps us cope with difficulties in several ways. For one, it instantly draws our attention away from our upset... By focusing our energy elsewhere, humor can diffuse our stressful events (Klein 8).

Laughter was also important to earlier works that addressed social injustice.
In The Indian Princess, by James Nelson Barker, the character of Pocahontas is described as an "angel":

"Smith: O woman! angel sex! where’r thou art, still art thou heavenly"(Richards 134).

"Rolfe:… what angel softness!"(Richards 137).

"Smith:… my guardian angel"(Richards 139).

"Rolfe:… Angel of purity"(Richards 140).

This suggests that the play carries a similar religious moral undertone as Uncle Tom’s Cabin. However, it was the puns and melodies that kept this play moving. Another good example is the song “Percy”, with the final line being, “Is Geraldine, as false as she is fair”(Richards 135)!

The Indian Princess could be considered pre-melodrama. The play featured musical numbers, clear good and evil roles, and a happy ending. However, it also has a lot of elements of Romanticism. For our purposes we will view the play as melodrama.

In Historical American Plays, A. E. Lancaster makes the following statement in addressing the building of national history and culture, another essential facet in moving towards social emotional maturity:
In 1807 James N. Barker gave to the world a melodrama... entitled “The Indian Princess.” Melodrama or not, it was penned in blank verse, and its theme was Pocahontas, who appears to have been taken more seriously in those days since Mr. John Broughham introduced her into burlesque (Lancaster 2).

Pocahontas was important to American audiences. The play represents her as a symbol of a race that has been subject to injustice. The representation then becomes deified through drama, just like Uncle Tom and Eva.

Tice Miller observes, “the theme of the “noble savage”—that primitive people are superior morally to those who are civilized” (Miller 37). The “noble savage” of 1807, was a stepping-stone to the slave-reform drama that occurred less than fifty years later with Uncle Tom’s Cabin. Indeed The National Register saw this progression in 1819, before Uncle Tom’s Cabin was conceived, “If the progress of dramatic representations be any proof of the improvement in the minds and manners of the people of a country, I may be justly concluded that the United States are rapidly advancing to a high
degree of refinement” (The Drama 1). Melodrama might not be considered by some to be a refined dramatic form, but it was most certainly a vehicle for emotional refinement and cultural transformation in American culture.

The forward march from presentations of the “noble savage” to the slavery issue was a testament that America was moving in a morally correct direction. Another nineteenth-century writer from The National Register wrote in 1817 that:

It was an ingenious and useful invention of mankind, to cause the errors and beauties of their passions, their vices and their virtues, to be portrayed to their minds without malignity, so that they might be induced to detest the one and to applaud the other (Editor’s Cabinet 30).

In fact, it was more than “useful”; it was an immensely emotional and political imperative for America’s social growth. The events of the next eighty-three years leading up to 1900, most importantly the American Civil War and the abolition of slavery were proof-positive of social cohesion and maturity. Social Cohesion, and all
the advances that social growth allows, came to fruition with the aid of Melodrama.

Tice Miller contends that, in reference to theatre in 1825:

These plays dramatized the defining events of this new republic. Most were crude efforts made for entertaining a mass audience. But their existence meant that writers recognized the importance of the theatre as a forum for celebrating and exploring the recent history of the nation (Miller 45).

Negative criticisms of the Melodramatic genre are wrong. Not only were melodramas redefining American drama, but they were also reshaping American social ideology. The fact that theaters in 1825 were reaching out to large crowds using melodrama, with a clear virtue for winning the day, shows that American Social Cohesion was a positive and evolving force.

In some cases American melodrama may not be viewed as a perfect form of literature. However, that does not mean that they lack merit from a historic social psychological perspective. They served as the voice of a growing nation. In retrospect, this literary genre in
American culture should be viewed as heralding the emerging voice of reason in a society that was fraught with injustice. Melodrama facilitated American Social Cohesion during the 19th-century. That cohesion brought about the societal change needed to move towards incorporating ideals of equality and overall societal maturity.
CHAPTER 3

Ancient Greek Society and Reflections of Community in Theatre

Taking the idea of Social Cohesion and community into an ancient context, we can begin to unravel fibers of human psychology. We can compare community at the time of the ancient Greek society to that in our current society. Ancient Greek Literature expresses the views of Western culture near its inception, or at least since its recorded history. At the same time it expresses a matured view of community.

In Rhetorics Aristotle, c. 350 BCE, expresses the idea that speech, in his time, is not beautiful. He referred to it as rough to the ear. So when one masters the power of the voice, one has beautified speech, and thus attained a more precise oratory, or communication. The expression of thought and communication from one individual to another is so important that the ancient Greek society began to wage competitions, sponsored by the state, to raise the stature of the orator within their society. The best speakers and writers were raised to what would now be called a “rock star” status.
Again language, as we know it, was still in its infancy for the Ancient Greeks. Indeed the Pythagoreans were ahead of their time in mathematical knowledge, as well as communicative skills, because they understood what the numerical frequency difference was in the human voice. Acting is a communicating skill. Aristotle states:

And since learning and admiring are pleasant; for instance, a work of imitation, such as painting, sculpture, poetry, and all that is well imitated, even if the object of imitation is not pleasant; for it is not this that causes pleasure or the reverse, but the inference that the imitation and the object imitated are identical, so that the result is that we learn something (Dacier 125).

Communicating is relaying information from one individual to the next for social, educational and emotional connections often with emotional content. The ancient Greek chorus, a group of allegorical narrators, exemplifies the idea of a communal transmission of thoughts.
The act of coming together to discuss like-ideas, and being able to peaceably express discontent against opposing ideas, exemplifies communication skills. That is the trick in communication; opposing ideas are hard for the opposed to accept. Therefore the use of inflection was much easier than relaying metaphor, as Aristotle asserts in *Rhetorics*, “For all use metaphors in conversation” (Dacier 353). If you have no tonal inflection you might talk with more descriptive words and metaphors. Similarly the epic poet Homer in book eleven of the *Iliad* uses extensive metaphor:

Despite the glorious deeds of Agamemnon, the Trojans press hard on the Achaians, and the beginning of evil comes on Patroklos. “Now Dawn arose from her couch beside proud Tithonos, to bring light to the immortals and to mortal men. But Zeus sent forth fierce Discord unto the fleet ships of the Achaians, and in her hands she held the signal of war. And she stood upon the huge black ship of Odysseus, that was in the midst, to make her voice heard on either side, both to the huts of Aias, son of Telamon, and to the huts of Achilles, for these twain, trusting in their valour and the might of their hands, had drawn up their trim ships at the two ends of the line. There stood the goddess and cried shrilly in a great voice and terrible, and mighty strength she set in the
heart of each of the Achaians, to war and fight unceasingly. And straightway to them war grew sweeter than to depart in the hollow ships to their dear native land. Then each man gave in charge his horses to his charioteer, to hold them in by the foss, well and orderly, and themselves as heavy men at arms were hasting about, being harnessed in their gear, and unquenchable the cry arose into the Dawn. And long before the charioteers were they arrayed at the foss, but after them a little way came up the drivers. And among them the son of Kronos aroused an evil din, and from above rained down dew danked with blood out of the upper air, for that he was about to send many strong men down to Hades. But the Trojans on the other side, on the high ground of the plain, gathered them around great Hector, and noble Polydamus, and Aineias that as a god was honoured by the people of the Trojans, and the three sons of Antenor, Polybos, and noble Agenor, and young Akamas like unto the immortals. And Hector in the foremost rank bare the circle of his shield. And as from amid the clouds appeareth glittering a baneful star, and then again sinketh within the shadowy clouds, even so Hector would now appear among the foremost ranks, and again would be giving command in the rear, and all in bronze he shone, like the lightning of aegis-bearing father Zeus” (Homer).
Simply put Hector was portrayed in good favor. Cutting down the metaphors of Homer gets down to the story. To then type it into a computer is a step forward in communication. While one can sum up these actions in a paragraph, it is possible that the ancient Greeks needed the metaphors connected to their theology in order to understand what each person was saying. At this early stage in human civilization, there is the possibility that the society at large was mono-toned. Aristotle’s explanation of speech as rough on the ears could support this concept. The idea would even further the importance of the orator and songs in ancient Greek society.

We learn from Hippocrates in his Sacred Disease that charlatans took advantage of people who were mentally ill. He prescribed that people should be educated, balanced, and healthy. This prescription would also combat public health issues in sanitation that were discovered through the many plagues that ravaged ancient Greece. In Early Greek Science Lloyd says,

The point is often made that however important technological developments were for the evolution of civilization, they imply no science, but only guesswork and luck. But while they involve no
conscious theorizing, they demonstrate a highly
developed ability to observe and learn from
experience (Lloyd 3).

Ancient Greeks learned from experience, and they learned
enough to spread the knowledge through the masses by
putting on spectacles, processions, and oratory and
theatre competitions.

These widely popular events coexisted with religious
rituals and rites. The festivals brought individuals
together and became a mixing place for individuals.
These types of events served to promote human connection
and societal healthiness.

A common story in 21st century American culture is
the “love story”. Many love stories can be found in
Greek mythology and later ancient Greek theatre. This is
a procreation-based archetype. The mystery religions of
Antiquity are said to be the revealing of a holy
marriage. The scene that is portrayed in the holy
marriage is theatrical in nature and is the bringing
together of god in the form of the priest of Dionysus and
a woman. Humans, as a species, need to procreate in
order to survive, and therefore community is inevitable.
People have to mix and meet new people to help our human gene pool expand.

Communication is imperative to human societal survival. This is one reason why theatre competitions were so important to Greek society. In the ancient comedies such as Aristophanes’ *Peace*, you find many societal issues raised:

Hermes. And look there, see how the reconciled cities greet and blend in peaceful intercourse, and laugh for joy (Rogers 202).

The Persian War lasted fifty years. There is no wonder why Aristophanes was popular in these later competitions. The winners of the competitions held during the time of the Persian War were the tragedians, as they were not so far removed from the grief and pain of war. Empathetic response was the expected societal individual response as explained in Aristotle’s *The Poetics*. Through *katharsis*, the purging of the soul through empathy with the protagonist, we become more closely connected to those around us. At the time when Tragedy was the most popular the audience would have been relatives, neighbors, fellow soldiers, and a part of a war-stressed community.
CHAPTER 4

Analyzing Agamemnon to Reveal Social Issues

Community can be found in all Tragedy. Sophocles wrote about civil disobedience, patricide, and incest, among other topics. Aeschylus addresses war, revenge, infanticide, matricide, and justice throughout the course of his trilogy The Oresteia. I chose to dissect the plays of Aeschylus because he lived through the Persian War. War creates a massive impact within the world of emotions. Aeschylus was a soldier in more than one battle of the Persian War, so his insights on pain and suffering, as well as those of joy and victory are invaluable.

In Aeschylus’ first piece, Agamemnon, the chorus often brings the public to mind:

Chorus:

There’s an ancient saying, old as man himself: men’s prosperity never will die childless, once full-grown it breeds. Spring from the great good fortune in the race comes bloom on bloom of pain—insatiable wealth! But not I, I alone say this. Only the reckless act can breed impiety, multiplying
crime on crime, while the house kept straight and just is blessed with radiant children (Aeschylus 131).

Ancient Greek Tragedy often reads like a public service announcement, with much better use of metaphor, of course. Again from Agamemnon:

Chorus:

When a man fails they share his grief, but the pain can never cut them to the quick. When a man succeeds they share his glory, torturing their faces into smiles (Aeschylus 132).

These statements from the Chorus speak volumes to the audience in saying that a community is strong whether win or lose. We share, as individuals, what the whole feels. Is not war, of itself, an act of community? More than just an individual feels victory and defeat. As stated by the Chorus of Agamemnon it is the army of the Trojan War that is shown as a connected group. Agamemnon’s army is brought together by murder and death. The emotion displayed in the juxtaposition of “tortured” and “smiles” evokes the pain in the joy of a bloody victory.
The same can be said about the connection of the people who are governed by the aristocracy in ancient theatre, and society. The ancient Greek Chorus was a group: a group of senators, townspeople, or even a group of frogs. In the case of Aeschylus’ *Agamemnon*, the Chorus is composed of the old men of Argos. It is a collective representation of a whole or mass. The chorus is a narrator that leads the audience along. They illuminated the scenes that were represented on and off the stage. This extra nudge for the audience, by the chorus to follow along with the course of action within one of these ancient plays is another sign that the audience might have had trouble understanding the words and actions in front of them.

“Chorus: Mad with ambition shrilling pride!—some Fury crazed with the carnage rages through your brain” (Aeschylus 163). These lines are used to describe the brutal actions of Clytaemnестra. In that statement from the ancient Greek Chorus of Aeschylus’ play, you can see many modern psychological terms: Crazed, rage, pride, and brain. This is not just the work of the translator. All of these modern mental health terms are found in a single line. The use of these terms show that the
Tragedians knew very well about the mind, emotion, and even mental disorder. The Tragedies are a literary testament, sometimes literally carved in stone, that ancient minds understood emotions, and to some extent the working of the mind.

The next character to analyze from Agamemnon is Cassandra. This character speaks directly to the issue of Sacred Disease and mental disorders. Aeschylus wrote the Cassandra character, with a “Sacred Disease”, before the great physician philosopher Hippocrates does so nearly a century later: “Cassandara: Apollo Apollo my destroyer—you destroy me once, destroy me twice—” (Aeschylus 145). She is talking about her gift of prophecy that was bestowed upon her by Apollo. The gift came with a curse from the spurned god; that no one will ever believe what Cassandra says. “Apollo the Prophet introduced me to his gift” (Aeschylus 150). Apollo will be very prominent to the overall motion of Aeschylus’ Tragic cycle.

Sacred Disease, according to Hippocrates’ On Sacred Disease, is a disease that cannot be explained, because the cause is not physically obvious. So the priests and charlatans attribute the disease to a god, such as
Apollo. Hippocrates, however, refers to Sacred Disease as a disease of the brain.

The brain exercises the greatest power in the man. This is the interpreter to us of those things which emanate from the air, when the brain happens to be in a sound state (Hippocrates).

Cassandra, who just witnessed the destruction of everything she knew, was taken into a foreign culture:

Cassandra:

Oh the grief, the grief of the city ripped to oblivion. Oh the victims, the flocks my father burned at the wall rich herds in flame... no cure for the doom that took the city after all, and I her last ember, I go down with her (Aeschylus 149).

In this passage, Aeschylus has written in the emotions of grief that Cassandra would have felt. She was part of the bounty won by Agamemnon’s army. She arrives, recently stripped of freedom, awash of grief, to a foreign country. She knows of her impending doom and suffers fits of madness. Hippocrates spoke of the power of the brain when it is not in a sound mental state.
“And by the same organ we become mad and delirious,
and fears and terrors assail us (Hippocrates)

Cassandra is a character who is heavily relied upon to
prompt empathy in this tragedy. This is, in part,
because of the social issue of Sacred Disease and partly
because of her terrible, dehumanizing experience. It is
even possible that her experience, supposing that she was
a real figure in history, could have been used to support
empathy towards those who suffer from the sacred disease.

The Greek dramatists used characters they deemed
historical, and also used gods in their dramas. The
ancient Greek people frequently were given a Protagonist
from a known royal house. Gods and demi-gods were used
as overseers and seemed disconnected from the portrayed
humanity on stage. It would seem that the ancient Greeks
connected to real people on a deeper emotional level than
they did with the god or fictional characters.

Regardless of whether her affliction or her
experience was the more important of the two issues,
Cassandra gains the empathy of the audience when she and
Agamemnon are slain by Clytaemnestra. She is the next
character we will present, and apply current psychological ideas to how she is portrayed.

“Clytaemnestra: I brooded on this trial, this ancient blood feud year by year” (Aeschylus 161). This is quite possibly one of the earliest representations of history that shows premeditated murder and semi-sociopathic behaviors. Clytaemnestra planned Agamemnon’s death out of vengeance for the death of Iphigenia.

Agamemnon was also bringing home another woman, Cassandra, as a mistress, and Clytaemnestra expresses that this action dishonors her. She states, “Just let no lust, no mad desire seize the armies to ravish what they must not touch—overwhelmed by all they’ve won” (Aeschylus 116)! Her character is given two painful problems to deal with, but she had already formed a sexual and political union with Aegisthus, Agamemnon’s cousin, before she even knew the outcome of the war. Aeschylus’ character of Clytaemnestra is a wealth of emotions; vengeance, jealousy, and lament, and overwhelming grief vex this character.

After a show of extreme hubris by Clytaemnestra, the chorus warns, “Mad with ambition shrilling pride!—some Fury crazed with the carnage rages through your
brain” (Aeschylus 163). This is again, while repetitious, a very important example of the chorus acting as a voice of reason. The chorus also shows the ancient Greek grasp on “crazed”, “rage”, and “brain”. The Chorus’s voice of reason was hopefully in the minds of the audience, but since the use of the Chorus is heavy throughout this genre of literature, one can hypothesize that the masses needed the clarifications of the Chorus to understand the story and its morals. Aeschylus’ use of the Clytaemnestra character is merely introduced in Agamemnon. Her duality of empathy and hatred are expressed more fully in the second play in the trilogy, The Libation Bearers.
The next examinations will be over the second play in Aeschylus’ cycle, *The Libation Bearers*. Social psychology, community, social cohesion, and the healing powers of empathy are put to the test in the actions and emotions that rage between Orestes and Clytaemnestra. First, we will look to the two somewhat lesser characters for social-psychological cues from this ancient Greek society, based on the surviving literature.

Electra, in this version of the tale, is very subdued. In other versions of this play by Euripides and Sophocles she becomes instrumental in the decision to murder Clytaemnestra, while Orestes becomes more of an instrument. For our purposes here, we will view her strictly from Aeschylus’ character. Electra’s most emotional moment in *The Libation Bearers* is when she is reunited with Orestes. The reunion of family is an action with very powerful ties to empathy. This reunion of brother and sister is essential in building empathy for the Orestes character.
One of the most important moments that Electra gives for the purposes of community is her statement, “Help me decide, my friends. Join me here. We nurse a common hate in the house. Don’t hide your feelings” (Aeschylus 181). She is reaching out to her peers and the audience. She is enticing the onlookers to fall into the emotions that are about to transpire. She wants the viewers to ask themselves to make the same choice that she is making. To join her in what she is being forced to feel. The audience is basically being put on the spot to make a choice in the empathy battle that is about to take place between Orestes and Clytaemnестra.

The Chorus in The Libation Bearers continues to deliver public service messages and express the moral values of the story. “Chorus: And the blood that Mother Earth consumes clots hard, it won’t seep through, it breeds revenge and frenzy goes though the guilty, seething like infection, swarming through the brain” (Aeschylus 179). Not only does this statement express that it is wrong to spill the blood of another human, but acknowledges guilt as an emotion. Guilt is spoken of as an affliction in the brain. It is an
infection, and this line shows that Aeschylus had a real grasp on the emotion of guilt. There is little doubt that this emotional insight is from his time serving with the military.

This is not the last time that Aeschylus speaks of guilt. Aeschylus is very good with his foreshadowing. Guilt is an emotion that will hang in the air for the duration of this play, and then continues to be prevalent throughout the next play in the cycle. Guilt is an emotion that is apparent in all three of his plays. Again, this could be the Tragedian affixing perceived or personal emotions to his characters and story.

The character of Clytaemnestra is again one of the most potent creations in this play. She shows sorrow over the loss of Orestes, although, unbeknownst to her he wasn’t really dead.

Clytaemnestra: I, I—your words, you storm us, raze us to the roots, you curse of the house so hard to wrestle down! How you range—targets at peace, miles away, and a shaft from your lookout brings them down. You strip me bare of all I love, destroy me, now—Orestes (Aeschylus 207).
This is a far cry from the woman who bedded with her husband’s cousin, and then plotted and murdered Agamemnon and Cassandra in cold blood. The change in emotion is because Orestes is her son, not her husband. Her emotional response to the declaration that her son was dead is a very precise decision of the author that helps to build an empathy with a murderous character. It is the same device that is used with the issue of Iphigenia’s sacrifice in Agamemnon. The device of allowing Clytaemnestra to gain empathy comes to use when she pleas with Orestes for her life.

The emotional disparity that is achieved by the climatic scene between Orestes and Clytaemnestra is the deepest emotional moment of the trilogy. This is the scene that really pulls from the empathies that humans feel towards any mother, any son, any sister, and any father. This scene is very capable of creating Aristotle’s state of katharsis.

This scene has two sections. In this scene Orestes is threatening his mother with death after revealing the murder of Aegisthus. This first section is the baring of the breasts by Clytaemnestra:
Wait, my son—no respect for this, my child? The breast you held drowsing away the hours, soft gums tugging the milk that made you grow” (Aeschylus 216)?

Orestes:
What will I do, Pylades?—I dread to kill my mother!

Pylades:

What of the future? What of the Prophet God Apollo, the Delphic voice, the faith and oaths we swear? Make all mankind your enemy, not the gods (Aeschylus 217)

In this first section Orestes asks for advice from his best friend Pylades. This is the only time that his best friend, who is said to be by his side the entire play, has a line. At the most important point of this poignant scene, the most important scene of the play, Orestes asks for help from a friend. His emotion, rage, pain, and vengeance all pause long enough to say, “Well what do you think, friend”? This is intriguing beyond expression. “I dread to kill my mother”, and the reply from a friend makes the tipping decision. The spectator view of Pylades, who was an audience to the whole string of
events, gives the insight needed to tip the scales. He says that Apollo decreed this punishment, and it must be done.

Aside from the use of an objective view to justify this hard decision, Aeschylus uses a sort of double empathy for Orestes and Clytaemnestra. The juxtaposing of empathetic reasoning helps to build the second part of this scene to a *katharsis*, that ends in the death of the queen:

Clytaemnestra:

I gave you life. Let me grow old with you.

Orestes:

What—kill my father, then you’d live with me?

Clytaemnestra:

Destiny had a hand in that, my child.

Orestes:

This too: destiny is handing you your death.

Clytaemnestra:

You have no fear of a mother’s curse, my son?

Orestes:

Mother? You flung me to a life of pain.

Clytaemnestra:
Never flung you, placed you in a comrade’s house.

Orestes:

-- Disgraced me, sold me, a freeborn father’s son.

Clytaemnestra:

Oh? Then name the price I took for you.

Orestes:

I am ashamed to mention it in public.

Clytaemnestra:

Please, and tell your father’s failings, too.

Orestes:

Never judge him—he suffered, you sat here at home.

Clytaemnestra:

It hurts women, being kept at home, my son.

Orestes:

Perhaps... but the man slaves to keep them safe at home.

Clytaemnestra:

-- I see murder in your eyes, my child--mother’s murder!

Orestes:
You are the murderer, not I — and you will kill yourself.

Clytaemnestra:

Watch out — the hounds of a mother’s curse will hunt you down.

Orestes:

But how to escape a father’s if I fail

(Aeschylus 218)?

Clytaemnestra:

I must be spilling live tears on a tomb of stone.

Orestes:

Yes, my father’s destiny — it decrees your death.

Clytaemnestra:

Ai — you are the snake I bore — I gave you life!

Orestes:

Yes! That was the great seer, that terror in your dreams. You killed and it was outrage — suffer now outrage (Aeschylus 219).
Clytaemnestra had empathy until she finally snaps at the end, and calls Orestes a snake. At that moment Orestes knows what he has to do. She makes a very powerful statement of “I gave you life”. Everyone who has a parent shuns the idea of what is to transpire. The audience knows the fate of Clytaemnestra and feels her pain, as well as the pain that Orestes experiences committing matricide.

The Chorus reports that the curse has been lifted from the house. The Chorus also repeats lines. This indicates a hook line of sorts. The Chorus sings,

Look, the light is breaking! The huge chain that curbed the halls gives way. Rise up, proud house, long, too long your walls lay fallen, strewn along the earth (Aeschylus 220).

This statement gives the audience a brief sense of rest and comfort with their emotional responses. Then Aeschylus drops a bomb on the crowd with this statement by Orestes:

Look once more on this, you who gather here to attend our crime—the master-plot that bound my wretched father, shackled his ankle, manacled his
hands. Spread it out stand in a ring around it, a grand shroud for a man. Here, unfurl it so the Father—no not, mine but the One who watches overall, the Sun can behold my mother’s godless work. So he may come, my witness when the day of judgment comes, that I pursued this bloody death with justice, mother’s death.

Aegisthus, why mention him? The adulterer dies. An old custom, justice (Aeschylus 221). But she who plotted this horror against her husband, she carried his children, growing in her womb and she – I loved her once and now I loathe, I have to loathe—what is she (Aeschylus 222)?

With this statement Aeschylus bluntly tells the audience that by watching they have actually taken a part in the crime. This puts the audience in a state of shock. This brings back the emotion of guilt. The guilt of Orestes has now become the guilt of the entire audience. This is the point at which Aeschylus begins to really build up to his next piece from this cycle. He turns the guilt of Orestes into what could be considered a full on psychotic state:
Orestes:
No dreams, these torments, not to me, they’re clear, real—the hounds of mother’s hate.
Leader:
The blood’s still wet on your hands. It puts a kind of frenzy in you...(Aeschylus 225).

Orestes then begins to see the Furies come upon him, while the Leader of the chorus does not. “Orestes: You can’t see them I can, they drive me on”(Aeschylus 225)!

It is at this final stage of The Libation Bearers where you can really see how intense the guilt is that Orestes feels. He has gone into a hallucinatory state. The bereaved and unsound state of mind transfers into the next play. The final play of the trilogy, The Eumenides, is a play about guilt, atonement, and the acceptance of justice, no matter the costs to the one on trial. What might not be clear, until this play, is that while in a dream-state, Orestes sees the physical manifestation of guilt in the Furies and their Leader. He also talks to Athena, Hermes, and Apollo. The writing is more lyrical in The Eumenides, than in the previous two plays. This
is possibly because Aeschylus was trying to write to the audience’s state of mind.

Let’s put this in quick perspective. The first and second plays are historical, or at least mythical, but the third play is completely in another world and deals with the ideas of Justice and Community. Now, it is no longer of human matters what is just and what is unjust. The final piece of The Oresteia seems to take place in the guilt-riddled mind of the pained Orestes. This assertion would show that Aeschylus and the ancient Greek audience had a firm idea of otherworldly states of mind.
CHAPTER 6

The Eumenides: Orestes, Social Justice and Community

In the final movement of Aeschylus’ trilogy we are transported to another realm. I believe that it is a dream state manifesting from the guilt felt by Orestes for the matricide he has just committed. Even Athena enters by saying,

From another world I heard a cry for help. I was on the Scamander’s banks, just claiming Troy (Aeschylus 248).

The goddess claims that she was at the banks of Scamander, an actual river, when she heard the cry. Therefore she had to travel from Earth to another realm in order to arrive at the scene’s location.

To add to this conception that The Eumenides, is a dream state, the Ghost of Clytaemnestra says, “The sleeping brain has eyes that give us light; we can never see out destiny by day” (Aeschylus 235). Justice is the “light” that the “sleeping brain” of Orestes is about to be illuminated to. For the audience this would be the third play to be shown in a four-play day of theatre. It
is easy to make the connection that by this time of the day the audience could be weary and intoxicated. Aeschylus would know this of his audience. In knowing that the audience is going to be very open to emotion and interpretation, he would have a perfect opportunity to take his cycle to another plane of existence. This is a place where gods and mortals convene to work out the harder details of justice, and of life as a whole. Indeed, the play opens stating that Apollo needs to cleanse his own halls.

With the gods on the scene the ancient audience would have been at full attention, or as best they could be by that time of the festivities. Since the last words of Aeschylus’ tragic cycle are portrayed in this piece, it is glowing with wisdom and perception. The audience—one hopes—has been brought to a deep level of emotional connection by this point in the cycle. The empathy carried over from the previous two pieces opens the audience up for perceptive suggestions.

Apollo: Why, you’d disgrace—obliterate the bonds of Zeus and Hera queen of brides! And the queen of love you’d throw to the winds at a word, disgrace love, the source of mankind’s nearest, dearest ties.
Marriage of man and wife is Fate itself, stronger than oaths, and Justice guards its life (Aeschylus 240).

In this statement Aeschylus’ character, the god Apollo, is praising the marriage of a man and a woman, and love. He is defending the action of matricide, by saying the wife was the first to betray the husband with infidelity, and then she killed him. She causes the deep shame and curses that fall upon her. For the audience this would serve as a cautionary tale; for anyone who thinks that a discontented marriage should end with infidelity and murder, will be judged accordingly by the gods.

It is Athena and her messages of a balanced justice and the shedding of hate for joy, that are the most important ideas conveyed to the audience in this piece. “Athena: Two sides are here, and only one is heard” (Aeschylus 250)! From the beginning of her role in this play Athena is presenting the balanced approach to justice. A very simple idea that the crowd could understand, there are two sides to a story. In her wisdom Athena understands that her judgment would be in favor of Orestes so:
Athena:

My contestants, summon your trusted witnesses and proofs, your defenders under oath to help your cause. And I will pick the finest men of Athens, return and decide the issue fairly, truly—bound to our oaths, our spirits bent on justice (Aeschylus 253).

Witnesses, proofs, and defenders are all common with our current American Judicial system. This is a testament to the broad reach of Greek influence on western society. It is amazing to take into account that this character could very well be calling for the voting populace to cast their votes, as it is their duty to justice to do so.

Athena:

So I urge you Athens. I have drawn this out to rouse you to your future. You must rise, each man must cast his lot and judge the case, reverent to his oath (Aeschylus 263).

The goddess is making the plea that we all decide before we know what the gods are going to call justice. This is
an incredible measure of a society. The audience must ask themselves how they feel about the current presented situation, before it is known what the outcome will be. If one makes the wrong mental choice as an audience member then one could be going against the views of the gods and Fate, even society. The audience involvement with this case should be empathetically deep.

The empathy for Orestes comes from noble statements such as:

Orestes: killed the one who bore me, I won’t deny it, killed her for revenge, I loved my father fiercely. And Apollo shares the guilt—he spurred me on, he warned of the pains I’d feel unless I acted, brought the guilty down. But were we just or not? Judge us now. My fate is in your hands. Stand or fall I shall accept your verdict Aeschylus 252).

He accepts his fate. It doesn’t matter what the verdict is, what matters is how he will accept his Fate. This statement tells the audience to own up to their mistakes. It tells people that accepting responsibility for a crime, even if they feel justified in the act of the crime, shows integrity. It is important to note that the
action of accepting responsibility builds an empathetic connection between the character and the spectator. The spectator wants to be as noble as Orestes, so the spectator takes on more of Orestes’ suffering. Suffering into truth, as it is said in the upcoming lines.

Our hero is proven innocent for his crimes, but only because Athena gives her lot to Orestes. This infuriates the Furies, who feel that their powers are being suppressed by the younger gods. Athena does everything in her power to reassure them and to usher change among the Furies.

Furies: There is a time when terror helps, the watchman must stand guard upon the heart. It helps, at times, to suffer into truth. Is there a man who knows no fear in the brightness of his heart, or a man’s city, both are one, that still revers rights (Aeschylus 254)?

You must guard your heart, or emotions. In a war-ravaged time, guarding the heart could mean more than emotions. It could also imply that one should guard one’s own life.

As I see The Eumenides as a dream play, and since I know that metaphors are heavily used in this literature,
I will make an educated guess that the heart does assert emotion. With that assertion, the Furies become an allegory for pain, evil, and even hatred. They are the evil that is revenge, but they can become the good. How? This is the most wonderful part of Aeschylus’ work, that the Furies become a part of the community of Athens and relinquish their evil ways.

Mind you, the Furies are angry at what they consider a loss of power, so Athena wisely states,

Athena: And now you’d vent your anger, hurt the land? Consider a moment. Calm yourself (Aeschylus 267).

The goddess speaks with a soft compassion. The same compassion that Orestes asked of Apollo in the beginning of *The Eumenides*, is the compassion that Athena shows to the Furies that helps transform them into Eumenides.

Athena: This is the life I offer, it is yours to take. Do great things, feel greatness, greatly honoured. Share this country cherished by the gods (Aeschylus 269).
Athena persuades the Furies with a home, a community to live in happily. Somewhere that they can feel they belong. The audience would begin to fill to the brim with national pride as Athena speaks passionately of her beautiful city as the perfect place for Fury to turn into Peace.

The hearts and minds of the Furies soften to the idea. The Furies make a great emotional change in this play, not a single character, but a group.

Leader: Your magic is working... I can feel the hate, the fury slip away. Athena: At last! And now take root in the lad and win yourself new friends (Aeschylus 271).

As hatred and fury are relinquished for statehood the Furies pledge their allegiance, “Furies: I will embrace one home with you, Athena, never fail the city” (Aeschylus 272).

The Chorus of Furies is transformed. Before they are transformed they give the normal round of Chorus-like public announcements to the audience.

Furies: And the lightning stroke that cuts men down before their prime, I curse, but the lovely girl who
finds a mate’s embrace, the joy of deep wedded life—
O grant that gift, that prize, you gods of wedlock,
grant it, goddesses of Fate (Aeschylus 273)!

Thanks to the goddess Athena the destructive force is
turned into a proprietor of wedded life. They go from
destruction to creation. They even come to the point
where they give positive emotional advice to the
audience. This proves the aim of this theatre art was to heal.

Furies: Give joy in return for joy, one common will
for love, and hate with one strong heart: such union
heals a thousand ills of man (Aeschylus 274).

Community “heals a thousand ills” is the purpose of
the entire story. It is the point of many of the stories
to come for the ancient Greek theatre culture.

The Women Of The City: All-seeing Zeus and Fate
embrace, down they come to urge our union on — Cry,
cry, in triumph, carry on the dancing on and on
(Aeschylus 277)!
Union is society coming together and forming a community. This coming together not only acts as a means of seeing where an individual stands among others, but also lends to broadening the gene pool, and aiding in overall emotional growth for society.

In the three Tragedies of Aeschylus we see the emotional journey of many different characters. Some of those characters we relate to personally, and others we relate with our fellow audience members in our loathing for the character. The entire course of The Oresteia offers a vast wealth or emotional information from an ancient society that lasted thousands of years more than our current society. We can learn from the empathy that was sought after by dramatists and the audience members who took part in the experience. Aeschylus was near twenty-five years of age when the Persian Wars began to ravage his community. He gives immense insight to his time period in ancient Greek society, as well as insight as to how other war stricken societies can learn to suffer together and become a stronger unit because of the ability to share in pleasure and pain.
CHAPTER 7

Aristophanes’ *Peace*: a Society’s Comedic Cry in
Opposition to War

After the Persian War and into the new millennia, comedy took over among the popular audience. The most notable comedic writer was Aristophanes. Since the final piece from Aeschylus’ four-play cycle is missing, I feel that Aristophanes’ *Peace* is a suitable choice to replace the lost *Proteus*. The lost comedy of Aeschylus, *Proteus*, is no doubt different from the comedy of Aristophanes. However, the shared social importance of the playwrights gives validity to Aristophanes’ work in this examination. It is no surprise that the ancient Greeks took to comedy after all the societal pains of war. The tragic bloody representations in the theater were replaced with grotesque satirical humor.

*Peace* by Aristophanes is the perfect testament that the Greek society was ready for a change of policy. The characters in this piece are, for the most part, allegorical, such as would be found in Expressionist works from our modern era. The two characters that represent the antagonists are: Chaos and War.
While Chaos and War slumber, the community must come together and raise Peace from out of the Earth.

Trygaues. Now may I sing an ode that Datis made, The ode he sang in ecstasy at noon, eh, sirs, I’m pleased, and joyed, and comforted. Now men of Hellas, now the hour has come to throw away our troubles and our wars, And, ere another pestle rise to stop us, To pull out Peace, the joy of all mankind.

O all ye farmers, merchants, artisans,
O all ye craftsmen, aliens, sojourners,
O all ye islanders, O all ye people (Rogers 194).

Aristophanes is calling out to all the people of Greece and beyond to come together for this one purpose; the raising of Peace. It is said that all of the best tools of man are to be used. Peace must be raised quietly or else War will awaken. This is a call to all of Greek society to unite and be peaceful and prosperous. After the Persian War peace would have been very welcome to Athens and the surrounding areas.
The Chorus of this piece by Aristophanes is composed of farmers. Throughout the course of the play all the craftsmen, farmers, etc., weave a braided rope with all their combined skills and powers that will be used to raise Peace from the sand of the Earth. A community seen coming together and being peaceful was popular among the post-Persian War Greeks. Aristophanes, through his popularity, shows that his audience wanted peace. Through the mirror of the theater the society is also expressing that a broader community is stronger. The coming together of all these different groups, previously named by Trygaues, shows the desire for a larger society. Community is being portrayed more important than the individual. Again, after half a century or more of war, the people of ancient Greece were more than ready for peace.

Hermes:

And look there, see how the reconciled cities greet and blend in peaceful intercourse, and laugh for joy (Rogers 202).

The Chorus urges a community action:
Join with me the chorus. Come singing of Nuptials divine and earthly banquets, singing the joys of the blessed: This of old to Thee belong (Rogers 210).

This again recounts the divine nuptial concept, which has been discussed already as a procreation projection to the audience. More importantly for the emotional information, the Chorus asks for the audience to join in song. This is an invitation to become a part of the group, and with the group you sing of joy.

"This of old to Thee belong", Aristophanes has stated that his community has traditions of old. Even if this is a comedy, we must accept the reality that is found in humor. The Chorus shows that Aristophanes knew of traditions and that of belonging to a group. The community is linked to a feeling of belonging though traditions.

The character of Trygæus is filled with proverbs from which the audience can learn life lessons. "Trygæus. Peace loves not, friend, the sight of victims slain: Hers is a bloodless altar"(Rogers 216). Peace doesn’t like death, how simple is that? Simplicity is a sign of refinement. "Trygæus. There’s no advantage
really in having white and polished teeth unless you use them freely” (Rogers 226). While this quip seems weak, it shows the popularity of the Epidaurian Asclepius. Epidaurus is an ancient healing center with a massive theater. At the excavation site museum at Epidaurus the glass cases are filled with some tools for invasive surgery, but mostly dental tools. The statement also reveals the importance of freedom to the society. Such a small line has a vast amount of historical wealth. Trygaeus also comments on Homer,

Nay, but wisely and well spake Homer the excellent poet: Tribeless, lawless, and heartless is he that delights in bloodshed, Bloodshed of kith and kin, heart-sickening, horrible, hateful (Rogers 219).

Aristophanes is paying tribute to Homer as an excellent poet. Even if this was said or acted with large amounts of sarcasm for comedic effect, it is still an attestation to the greatness of Homer’s skills. It is also another message to the audience. This message recalls history to draw in the attention of the audience, and then it gives the audience the message that killing someone from your nation is “horrible” and to be disdained.
The way that *Peace* begins and ends is something to be mentioned. In the beginning there is a declaration similar to the concern again of Hippocrates’ *Sacred Disease*:

First Servant.

My master’s mad; a novel kind of madness, Not your old style, but quite a new invention. For all day long he gazes at the sky, His mouth wide open, thus; and rails at Zeus (Rogers 188).

This new style of crazy causes the master to scream at a god. This beginning shows that the issues of mental health were not just around, but had been around long enough to be interpreted as having changed. This statement also shows that the gods were being blamed for the crazy actions. If a human in a psychotic frenzy is told that it was Zeus that is the cause of the episode, then that human would be inclined, because of the mental instability, to yell at Zeus freely and passionately. Keep in mind that science like speech was at a young stage in its development. By the time of Aristophanes, there would have been immense changes in communication and thinking.
The ending of the play also deserves to be dissected. The Semichorus gives a nearly liturgical goodbye to the audience. “Go and dwell in peace” (Rogers 227). It is very fitting for the Chorus to convey this message. It is also very witty of Aristophanes.

Aristophanes’ Peace calls for many people to come together for the purpose of peace. The audience forms a community that will go out and spread peace into other various communities. Peace is the result of this ancient society that is desperately in need of healing after years of war and death. A connection can easily be made between those fresh from a war, and those who live with the stories of pain and suffering. At this point in Greek history, when Comedy was the theater of choice, the Greeks were trying to laugh through the pain and accept it. When the community suffers through the pain together and then gives a group laugh, the society then can give a sigh of relief.

The Greeks expanded through the Hellenistic Period, roughly one hundred years after Aristophanes and Hippocrates, and more than two hundred years after Aeschylus had all flourished. This rapid expansion has many reasons, and it also seems to have left many
theatres in its wake. I believe that theatre helped in the expansion. Theatre’s role in projecting the idea of connecting to other people for the purpose of coming together as a community and feeling deep empathy for those who suffer was theatre’s hand in the land grab. Other motives, unfortunately, might not have been as pure as the theatre’s motives. The theatre invited the audience to share an experience, to come together, and to connect emotionally.
CONCLUSION

Theatre is an art of imitation, projection, and connection. In Psychodrama Dr. Moreno worked to create a form of therapy using theatre’s ability to imitate life. In Melodrama and ancient Greek theatre, the dramatists projected information to a large audience in order to promote social awareness. Psychodrama, Melodrama, and ancient Greek theatre create emotional connections between the artists and the audience. These connections allow historical and emotional information to be shared by all of humanity.

Theatre is a community that creates communities. The audience plays a role in that community. Emotions fill the stage and the spectator and those emotions fill the empty space between stage and spectator. Theatre is a means to communicate emotions. When emotions are effectively communicated, a society becomes healthier. When society becomes healthier, the individuals living in that society become healthier.

Theatre and Social Psychology are woven from the same cloth. They both aim at self-discovery and wellness. Theatre aims to project its art, and connect
to people in an audience. Social Psychologists strive to understand why the connections take place among those people in the audience. Together Theatre and Psychology can achieve a healthy and emotionally mature community.
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Jason Bauer was born on October 14, 1982, in St. Joseph, Missouri. His parents are Melinda Fisher and the late Dennis Bauer. Jason was educated in the Missouri public school system, and graduated from West Platte High School in the spring of 2001.

In fall 2001 Jason began college at Park University in Parkville, Missouri. In the summer of 2004 Jason moved to Roseburg, Oregon. He had planned to gain statehood in Oregon and finish college at the University of Oregon. Unfortunately in May 2005 Jason’s father died, and then in October 2005 Jason’s brother Andrew died in a tragic work accident. In November 2005 Jason decided to move back to Kansas City, Missouri. He went back to Park University and graduated with a B.A. in Theatre Performance in May 2008.

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