Notes and Discussion

An Interview with Romain Weingarten

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Interviewer's Note:
"Weingarten's truth is the truth of the nightmare, a profound and living truth; the universe revealed in his work is authentic...naive and complete...it is the universe of that rare...lucid being, the poet..." so wrote one of Weingarten's most fervent admirers, Eugene Ionesco.

Weingarten's first play Akara (1948) was performed by the Jeunes Compagnies in Paris and acclaimed by the avant-garde. It revealed a totally new theatrical language based on a series of concrete images woven about in fascinating patterns on stage. Its themes, which emanated directly from the unconscious, attempted to make a mockery of man's hypocritical relationships. The Nurses (1960) and Summer (1966) were equally well received. Here too audiences were introduced to a Surrealistic climate; a realm in which Men and Women Cats invaded the stage with their anguish, violence and acridulous humor. Alice in the Luxembourg Gardens was performed with great success this winter in Paris. Weingarten's linguistic virtuosity, the sensitivity of the acting techniques used in the production, made for a delightfully absurd evening in the theatre.

There is nothing "realistic" in Weingarten's theatre. It is composed of a medley of "nonsens" and takes its viewers or readers on a trip to that strange and fascinating land where imagination becomes an ever fructifying force.

Q. What was your background?
A. My father was Polish and my mother, French. I studied philosophy at the Sorbonne...

Q. How did you choose the theatre as a career?
A. I composed only verse. Then, suddenly, I wrote my first play, Akara. I discovered the theatre through Roger Vitrac's Victor or Children Assume Power and also through Antonin Artaud. You recall that both Artaud and Vitrac were friends and had founded a theatre together. In fact, Artaud produced Victor: a play in which the adult world was satirized and considered stupid, inane, hypocritical; whereas the children's world thought to be fantastic at times, was astonishingly real and sincere. I was profoundly impressed by this work.

Then I wrote Akara.

One enters the theatre as one does religion: completely and totally. Some people have labeled my theatre "Surrealistic." Yet, my plays are frequently in direct opposition to the "literary" and "scientific" aspects of Surrealism as explicated by both André Breton, the founder of Surrealism, and Antonin Artaud, one of its chief proponents.

Q. Can you tell us something about Akara? It's a play in which your world of fantasy or "madness" comes to life. It features a Man-Cat and his guests.
A. Akara was the first post-war avant-garde play. I don't believe that this first production—because of its timing perhaps—ever had any equivalent. Akara is a type of nightmare; one which includes murder, bewitchment, a type of "delayed" evocation of the horrors which I experienced unconsciously during World War II. When Ionesco first read this play, he spoke of it so frequently that people have associated me with the "theatre of the absurd" group. But the theatre of the
abrupt dramatizes the liquidation of dead people, not the murder of the living; the non-hope, not despair.

I played the part of the Man-Cat, the lawyer, in Akara. Many of my colleagues—and I too—consider the *metier* of the dramatist to be a "global" affair; that is, that the author must take part in his production; he must make it possible to create a "finished product." The theatrical object must be his work—from beginning to end.

Q. You not only wrote and acted but you also directed your own play this winter, *Alice in the Luxembourg Gardens*. The play tells the story of Alice, a little girl, who is neither loved nor understood by her mother. She defends herself by becoming mute and enunciating a series of onomotopoeias. Her unconscious, revealed to the audiences, conjures up her mother in a variety of ruthless and monstrous creatures. Alice is finally liberated, crosses the Luxembourg Gardens only to revert once again to her former slave position. Could you tell us something about your concept of the *mise-en-scène* in general; then in terms of *Alice in the Luxembourg Gardens*.

A. Essentially, there are three types of *mises-en-scène*:

1. spacial (which refers to the images)
2. time-concept (which revolves around rhythms)
3. action (directing the actors)

These are frequently referred to as the famous classical rules: unity of time, place and action.

My theatre, however, is an imaginary theatre. Alice is imaginary. I mean by imaginary: one which deals with an *inner reality*. It follows, therefore, that what is performed on stage is the world *within*; whereas the occult (the story of the lovers in my play *The Summer*, for example) becomes the external, logical realm, the event or the psychological situation. It is very difficult to train actors to see the world in this manner: in reverse, so to speak. Paradoxically, it becomes a necessity to have them confront reality—their reality—constantly.

A scene, when analyzed by my actors, becomes a succession of elementary situations viewed in ultra rapid sequences. These sequences must not be linked together logically, that is, rationally. Moreover, they must be endowed with greater or lesser intensity; they must be capable of arousing sensations not necessarily indicated or fostered by "what is said."

To create a *mise-en-scène* or to direct a play implies a permanent *process*: the reaching of a state of extreme and the breaking up of this state.

Extremes imply a systematic exaggeration of motivations; the breaking up of these extremes indicates a no less systematic contention of such an atmosphere. These are, briefly, the mechanics of the process and the means by which a "psychic" reality may be attained; not to be confused with its opposite, "a psychological" reality.

Q. Who are your ancestors in the theatre? Who were the dramatists who most influenced you?

A. Artaud. Vitrac. I also admire Shakespeare, Kleist, Claudel. The poets of the theatre are those who fascinate me. Lewis Carroll.

Q. Is your theatre politically oriented? Philosophically? Could you explain some themes or intriguing aspects of your play *Akara*?

A. My theatre is not politically oriented. It's poetry that interests me. The thought which emerges from the poetic flights. My theatre is realistic in that it faithfully follows the explorations into the imaginary world; it therefore becomes a quest for *reality*. I do not mean the type of reality one confronts in the workaday world, but
rather that inner reality about which we spoke before.

*Akara* is the story of a murder; of black magic; written under the guise of a farce or a type of short story. The hero is a Man-Cat who is confronted by a series of monstrous people: by a society of victims and executioners, consumers and consumed. This cat is a lawyer, and though he is different morally speaking, from the rest of society, though he is an aesthete, he is, nonetheless "Alice," has a cat's personality and is a cat. But this information must be kept secret. It must not be spoken. During the course of an evening reception at his home the Man-Cat's mistress denounces him, or rather she "confesses" that he is a cat. This takes place at a "card party" a perfectly absurd game, a kind of fantasy a la Lewis Carroll. This interlude consists of a series of veiled interrogations, secret questions asked of the Man-Cat's mistress. Finally she can no longer parry the questions. She gives in and tells the truth. The cat escapes, but is caught and is killed at the end.

Another aspect to this play (also symbolic) is the role enacted by the woman. She is the *femme fatale* type; a mediatrix of death, until she herself becomes its victim.

Q. The domain of the dream is most important in your theatre. Can you explain the manner in which the dream insinuates itself in your plays?

A. Yes. My theatre emanates first from the domain of the dream: dream-images, that is, a revelation of a personal situation experienced collectively.

When I spoke of imagination before I meant by this that organ of perception which paves the way for experiencing an inner reality. The dream is a kind of *screen* or *gateway* through which a rapport between an inner and an external reality may be made known, so that *Reality* may be perceived.

It is absolutely not a question of a dialectically conceived theatre in the classical sense; that is, the imaginary or the real-dreamed or, in other words, the real-non-real.

Despite the eruption of Oriental doctrines or the revelation of psychological depths, the concept I have just outlined is difficult to understand, even more difficult to experience.

I first dream my plays, in the manner which I have just outlined. I dream them most persistently when going through the writing process; the very medium stimulates my unconscious. I identify completely with my characters, my creations. These exist in that inner area where first, as amorphous and nebulous powers, they slowly begin to act and take form and appear later on in the theatrical arena—in another domain of *Reality*.

Q. Does the absurd, as far as you are concerned, possess its own type of logic?

A. No. The Absurd, in the theatrical sense of the word, has no logic; or rather it is *logic in flight*; or the acceptance of the absurdity of logic. Its logic, however, is entirely different: it is analogical, homological and symbolistic. It possesses its own language, its own images.

The very strangeness of this language stems from the fact that it possesses its own natural, innate language which is, at the same time, foreign to the one with which we usually come into contact in the workaday world.

It's evident that these two forms which the absurd has taken: the flight from the logical (rational) and the logic of the dream *per se*, blend constantly in contemporary theatre.

Q. Your language is not only poetic; it is hypnotic. It has a way of imposing itself upon the reader, of mesmerizing him. Do you have a special writing technique? What is your method? How do you go about creating a play?
A. As soon as this strange or foreign language which I just mentioned is experienced effectively or on an emotional level—a personal level—it ceases to be absurd. In fact, once it has been triggered off certain emotions, the question "What does this or that mean?" is no longer posed. It is experienced. The emotion is the channel through which the answer is given; that is, it is the transforming agent. When writing I try to follow, as closely as possible of course, that secret curve which the emotion takes. It acts as a kind of barometer or method of punctuating "what is taking place" in silence.

Total theatre consists of an empty stage. I try to reduce everything to this state of silence, immobility, obscurity—linguistically speaking. Then if I succeed in this task—of living through the emotion or experiencing it as an entity unto itself, as a protagonist—then I am happy with what I have written. If I laugh, if I am moved, if I cry, then I have a feeling that what I have put down on paper is good.

When I write in general, my work consists in either adding to or deleting from that first spark of inspiration which constitutes really a kind of shaping of brute matter. I try to order, musically speaking, the movements on stage and the rhythms of the spoken words according to a variety of tempi: rapidly or slowly paced lines, those spoken in counterpoint, in unison, alone, etc.

It goes without saying that what I have just outlined for you is my vision of the theatre. I try, as best I can, to come as close to it as possible.

Q. What are your reactions to the theatre of Arrabal, Dubillard; to the work of such directors as Grotowski? Savary? Lavelli?

A. My career parallels Roland Dubillard's so to speak. We are the same age; we have had the same difficulties; we are both actors, dramatists, etc. I really appreciate his poetic theatre.

As for Fernando Arrabal, I do have some reservations concerning the facility of his theatre, also in the domain of the dream—and this, despite his talent as a dramatist. The directors, you mentioned ... I must say that I do not trust directors in general. I find that Grotowski, without realizing it perhaps, and without wanting to, is working toward a type of expressionism which is completely foreign to me. I think that the only great mise-en-scène I have ever seen is Peter Brook's A Midsummer Night's Dream. I would have liked to have done it.

Q. You frequently use several theatrical techniques in your plays at the same time: satire, irony, etc. Can you tell us how you use these?

A. I love to make people laugh. I use satire and irony to this end. Most so-called "normal" people appear in my plays in the form of animals, monsters or machines. The amount of laughter which results depends upon the degree of fear audiences experience . . .

Q. Do you use sound effects and lights as protagonists? As Artaud had looked upon them?

A. Yes. They should be actors in a play.

Q. What role does the decor play in Alice, for example?

A. In the Parisian production of Alice, the decor I had envisioned failed completely, but only for material reasons.

I think that decor should be a kind of apparition; it should be capable of modifying, not through mechanical means, but through a play of lights, the entire atmosphere. Decor is very nearly always a kind of death knoll for scenic endeavor; it has a static quality about it. It should be a drama in itself; project its dynamism into space, illuminate the heart of the play.
Q. What are your plans for the future?

A. To finish my play La Mandore. Note the pun!

Alice in the Luxembourg Gardens... Structurally Speaking!!

Alice in the Luxembourg Gardens by Romain Weingarten was produced at the Théâtre des Mathurins in Paris in 1971. It earned accolades from both press and public. A startling bit of theatrical entertainment, Alice in the Luxembourg Gardens possesses all the qualities (suspense, pathos, violence, wit, etc.) intrinsic to a first rate play, as well as the acerbity, fantasy and prankishness inspired by Lewis Carroll's Alice in Wonderland.

Alice in the Luxembourg Gardens is more than mere diversion. It is the dramatization of a modern myth — the relating in Weingarten’s terms of those philosophical and cosmogonous concepts deepest within him. On a personal level, Weingarten's play deals with Alice's unhappy relationship with her parents and her inability to face the outside world. On a transcendental plane, Alice in the Luxembourg Gardens enacts the eternal and universal drama of creation, that of the individual creating himself, of the adolescent breaking away from parental shackles, of the artist writing his magnum opus after destroying the tried and proven literary ways.

Divided into two acts, Alice in the Luxembourg Gardens represents two warring parts of a whole or, in psychological terms, a personality in opposition with itself. To stress the notion of duality, Weingarten actually splits each of the three protagonists into two beings: the real Mother and the dream Mother, the non-existent real Father and the existent dream Father (Dodu); the real Alice hidden under a blanket (Act I) and the dream Alice (Act II) enacting her visions. By juxtaposing the characters, their attitudes and their relationships in a series of imaginative situations, Weingarten universalizes Alice's original experience, thereby creating a myth.

Act I takes place in Alice's bedroom. It is night. Alice is in bed reading the Outline of a General Theory of the Universe. She remains silent throughout the act. Her Mother, young, pretty, elegant, enters dressed for an evening party. Before leaving, she tells her daughter to tidy up her room and to go to sleep at ten o'clock. The Mother returns seconds later. It is two in the morning. Alice is still up. Scoldings. Recriminations. The Mother exits. The room is dark. The door lights up violently. Shadows appear on the walls. The door opens. Alice's Mother re-enters. She is now wearing a blue apron. Her makeup is applied in a vulgar manner. This second Mother (Alice's vision of her real Mother) reprimands her, then runs the gamut of emotions: rage, pity, guilt, possessiveness, etc. She is pained because her daughter does not love her sufficiently; she is annoyed with herself for having been too permissive, too close to her daughter, etc. The dream Mother leaves and returns at seven in the morning. When she tries to rouse Alice, her daughter throws a blanket over her Mother and strangles her.

Act II takes place in the Luxembourg Gardens. Alice sees an egg, center stage, about the size of a man. Dodu steps out from within the egg. Alice is frightened and tries to run away but cannot budge — a sensation frequently felt by dreamers. Dodu and Alice begin to converse. Their conversation, which revolves around names, newspapers, combs, war, stocks, death, etc. seems disconnected as though each protagonist were talking to the other on different levels. Dodu and Alice begin to insult each other. Alice threatens to destroy Dodu's egg. When he screams at her Alice leaves. The garden gates close. Dodu is alone and sad. He did love her after all.

II

Let us examine Alice in the Luxembourg Gardens from a structuralist point of view. The ideational contents will first be outlined and then examined each section in turn.
Mythic elements
Father: presumed and unborn author of
Outline of a General Theory of
the Universe

Garden
Egg
Time Sequence
Linear
Non-linear (dream)
Motion
Dance vs immobility
Respiration
Action
Destructive: Alice strangles her Mother
" threatens to destroy
the Egg
" leaves, destroying
Dodu's happiness

Psychology of Characters
Split: 2 Mothers (real and dream)
  2 Fathers (real but unknown; dream and known)
  2 Alices (real but passive; dream and active)

Mythic Elements

The mythical aspects of Weingarten's
drama are first apparent in the title of the
book Alice is reading in Act I: Outline of a
General Theory of the Universe; secondly,
in the Garden decor of Act II; and, finally,
in Dodu's residence, an egg.

The "presumed yet unborn author" of the
Outline of a General Theory of the Universe
is Alice's "unknown father," declares
Weingarten in his preface. Such a state-
ment seems paradoxical at the outset
and, on the surface, it is. If a volume has
been written, then the author must have
been born. When examining Weingarten's
seemingly "irrational" statement, one is
struck by its plausibility if analyzed from
a mystical point of view. Many books are
said to be of mysterious origin — the
product of revelation or of some divine
knowledge. The Bible, the Koran, the
Bhagavad-Gita, Saints' writings such as
those of Dionysus the Areopagite, St.
Hildegarde, St. Bernard, St. Theresa are
among them. If time is considered from
a mystical point of view, man lives in an
eternal present, divested, therefore, of such
artificial notions as past, present and
future. Alice's book then could have been
written by an "unborn author" in some
fluid time. As for its mysterious contents,
certainly they fascinate her to the point of
being willing to incur her mother's wrath
by continuing to read the volume despite
orders to the contrary.

The fact that the word "universe" is
included in the volume's title indicates the
vast or mythical proportions of the subject
considered. Because the book describes
a general theory of the universe, one
may deduce that the topic considered
deals with its origin or creation. Creation
occurs, according to many cosmogonies,
as a result of cosmic sacrifice. The notion
of cosmic sacrifice implies that form and
matter can come into being only by
transforming or re-forming primordial
energy. The status quo, therefore, must be
destroyed if creation is to occur. Ex-
amples of transmutation of energy in
terms of primitive or proto-historic man,
as well as modern man, are visible in the
countless tales and visual representations
of mutilations, struggles and blood sacri-
fices implicit in all world religions. In
Babylonia, for example, the original mother
Tiamat (the dragon) was killed and from
her body was made heaven and earth.
Christ's crucifixion led to the birth of a new
religious attitude. Creation then cannot
occur without sacrifice. Life cannot come
into being without death.

Alice, unlike her antecedents Adam and
Eve, wanders into the Luxembourg Gar-
dents (her Garden of Eden) after having
committed her destructive act, and not
before. It is in the garden atmosphere, a
paradisiac locale, that she will undergo a
new experience and a surprising con-
frontation. Gardens usually symbolize
nature in its ordered, subdued and
enclosed aspects. The Luxembourg
Gardens, which feature a bench, a man-
size egg standing on a pedestal, and a
small mat in front of it, is no exception to
the rule. It is Alice's presence which
brings chaos to this serene spot, paving
the way for the creation of her new self.

The man-size egg, we learn, is the abode
of Alice's "unknown father," Dodu.
According to Egyptian legend, an egg
represents "the seed of generation, the
mystery of life." It may also be considered as a "container," a "repository" for thought and matter — a symbol of the universe. The God Ra, for example, was frequently depicted as a glorious figure in his egg. One may also recall that life emerges from the egg, that within its walls the invisible and inactive are transmuted into visible and viable entities. The egg in Weingarten's play comes to represent a world in transition — potentiality.

Weingarten informs his viewers that the "world is an egg," a microcosm. For Alice, the egg represents mystery and a land of infinite riches with both positive and negative implications. From within its shell emerge heteroclite objects: radio equipment, telephone, cooking odors, newspapers, etc. Yet Alice, try as she may, never succeeds in entering the egg. Her only rapport with the egg is via Dodu and his pseudo lucubrations which are beyond her comprehension most of the time. Because Dodu prevents her from penetrating the egg, she cannot understand or assess its real value or function. Her relationship with the egg is unproductive and highly distasteful. Her frustrations are so potent that she threatens to destroy the egg (the world she knows through Dodu). Her aggressive act, however, is never consummated. Instead, she withdraws from the garden, the implication here being that her father and what he represented in terms of her life was not so terrifying nor so strong a force as her mother. The courage or anger necessary to commit murder, therefore, was never aroused. When Alice leaves the Luxembourg Gardens, the gates close behind her. No longer the victim of a virago-like Mother and a non-existent father, Alice will confront the outer world independently, as she sees fit. No one will bar her entrance or dominate her henceforth. Alice's was a traumatic experience which all adolescents must live through if they are to create their own lives.

**Time Sequence**

Weingarten's use of a dual time concept (linear and non-linear) as a dramatic vehicle is equally fascinating in *Alice in the Luxembourg Gardens.* Linear or clock-time was created originally by rational man in order to regulate and order life's events. It is an artificial concept which implies a past, present and future and hence a categorizing of man's existence. Linear time is explicitly expressed by Weingarten in Act I (e.g. when Alice's mother says: "You shut the lights at ten o'clock. Ten on the dot . . ."); when she re-enters at exactly two in the morning). Because the Mother's following two entrances (at two and at seven in the morning) occur in a non-linear or dream time sequence, Weingarten is able to juxtapose the two concepts, thereby disorienting the viewer who may now believe the dream episode to have actually occurred. He is in a quandary.

Non-linear or dream time is comparable to the Orientals' or to the mystics' notion. Time for them is a concept devoid of meaning. It is a figment of the mind and certainly not divisible into three distinct parts. The only concrete reality for the Oriental and for the mystic is the *moment* or *actuality.* Time is not tangible. Continuity and duration do not exist. Life is not a whole but a series of agglomerations.

By so adroitly contrasting linear and non-linear time via Alice's Mother's entrances, Weingarten arouses emotional conflicts within the viewers. They empathize with Alice's angry mood and are annoyed by the constant going and coming, the continuous references made to linear time and conformity. Tired of living within the routine, rigid and circumscribed world of the adult, as exemplified by the Mother's constant harping on time, Alice dips into the *Outline of a General Theory of the Universe,* where a non-linear or dream time is represented in terms of the universe's *pleroma.* In this fantasy realm, Alice's imagination can roam free; constraints are non-existent. Her desire to escape from her constricting situation is attested to by her silence and her refusal to show herself. By hiding under the blanket, she cuts herself off from the parental domain and lives, ostensibly, within her remote timeless and spaceless area.

Weingarten goes one step further. He opposes the dual time concepts in terms of
stage directions. "What characterizes a dream," he writes, "is exactly that strong feeling of reality which emerges from it . . ." A dream which is a vehicle or instrument enabling the unconscious to express itself derives its power from its reality. The more striking and believable the dream, the greater is the impact upon the dreamer. Weingarten makes it clear in his stage directions that when non-linear time is to be expressed, no artificially conceived dream decor should be used. The sets for Act I should be simple and stark. These should include a bed, a chair and a door, no more no less. When the dream Mother enters, the walls of Alice's room should become luminous, giving off a kind of fluid effect; green lights should be focused on the door making it seem larger and more important than it would under normal circumstances. A "black shadow" should be visible around the door's frame — like a black halo resembling the draperies around funeral parlors in France. Many directors, according to Weingarten, defeat their own purposes when attempting to create very special dream sets.

Linear and non-linear time also serve to underscore Alice's split personality and her intense conflict. Because she can penetrate into two worlds (reality and dream), she acts and reacts in both domains, according to her own logic. In Act I, for example, she experiences her Mother in two distinct ways: passively (she is mute and hides) when living out her linear time existence; and actively (she murders) in a non-linear domain. In Act II, linear time is injected into the stage happenings when the Church bells of St. Sulpice ring out and when night turns into day.

Contrasts in time techniques are also expressed in terms of historical events. When Dodu reads her a newspaper dating from 1939 and which describes the war, Alice informs him that the war has long since passed. He does not believe her. In fact, he keeps quoting stock prices which have gone down and keeps repeating troubling events as though they were actually occurring. The implication in this instance is the following: though a specific event might have been experienced in terms of linear time, it encompasses non-linear time because its ramifications are eternal. The particular then becomes universal; the rigid is transformed into the fluid.

Weingarten has created a system whereby non-linear time heightens antagonisms: when characters are unable to relate to each other. Alice grows more and more disconcerted and uncomfortable when listening to Dodu who says he does not know her and yet describes one of her characteristics.

Alice. — Yes, yes, that's it. (To herself.) I must go.

Dodu. — Usually you're not in such a hurry.

Alice. — Usually?

Alice is frightened and wants to leave. Then Dodu questions.

Dodu. — Who are you?

In a timeless and non-linear realm the foregoing conversation is plausible. Because Dodu is functionless, that is, he plays no role in Alice's real (linear) life, he is non-existent for his daughter. Alice, nevertheless, feels a deep need for a father image and for this reason conjures one up, in the form of Dodu in her dream. On the other hand, since Alice's father pays no heed to her in every day existence, his recognition of his daughter is experienced on the most superficial of levels. He can, therefore, without compunction state: "Usually you're not in such a hurry." As for Alice, she does not look upon him as an individual, but only as Dodu, a flabby, roly-poly, spineless being, as his name implies.

None or little communication between Alice and Dodu is possible. They have no common denominator. Each lives in his own limited realm, chattering away in disconnected sentences. As Alice's dream is lived out, she grows increasingly aware of her situation. Awareness may at times engender activity. It does in Alice's case. She begins to react to Dodu's mechanical and affectionless ways. She calls him
"imbecile, liar, an old monkey! an old frog." She threatenst to destroy his egg. The more aggressive Alice becomes the more terrified is Dodu. Indeed, he turns ashen; begs her forgiveness. "Forgive me, forgive me..." he states. Alice's cruelty toward her "old" father arouses his tears. He sobs, creating a highly poignant situation.

Were Alice's plight to be dramatized in terms of linear or rational time sequences and her antics to occur in a well ordered universe, the banality of her situation would be striking. Emerging as it does from both conscious and unconscious realms and in a series of unrelated, droll and surprisingly incisive repartees — all enveloped in a dual time technique — Alice's pathetic world becomes shockingly real.

Motion

The manner in which motion (dance and respiration) and immobility (rigidity and death) are handled in Alice in the Luxembourg Gardens adds an outer-worldly atmosphere to the entire drama.

Weingarten looks upon his play as a dance: "the gravitating of one person in motion around another, who is immobile." To view theatre in this manner brings to mind the classical Japanese Noh drama where mobility and immobility play a primal role. The latter represents divine and cosmic forces, a state in which time is eternal; the former, a lesser entity in the cosmic hierarchy, represents man who is motivated by matter and whose values are earthbound.

Dance is the most elemental way man has of expressing feeling. It is a visual exteriorization of amorphous or spiritual notions. Considered in this manner, the dance may be looked upon as a series of sound or light waves, a "skein of vibrations" transformed into active matter, pulled and repelled by some higher magnetic force or consciousness. In Hindu cosmogony, the dance denotes the notion of becoming and the passage of time. When Shiva, for example, performed his cosmic Dance, he united space and time within the process of becoming and in so doing became the creator of the world. Motion (active matter), then, is an energetic process which may play an important role in human relationships, creating friends and enemies.

When Weingarten speaks of his play as a dance he intimates that relationships, activities and events are the product of some fortuitous energetic force. When Alice's Mother enters her daughter's room she seems to glide in, like a phantasmagoria, intent upon fitting her daughter into some kind of routine. She may be in fact the plaything of some unknown series of sound waves, compelling her to act as she does, forcing her to gravitate around her daughter. Her emotional frame of mind is transmuted into her dance-like gestures in this instance. When she is annoyed, her movements and steps are rapid; incisive; when she is moved, they are tremulous and halting. Alice musters up her energy, also in the form of a dance, in an attempt to remain under the blanket so as not to confront her Mother. The energy which piles up within her can no longer be stifled. It escapes and she loses her immobility. She moves about under the blanket, expressing her feelings through the dance or bodily movements, until she commits the ritual act of murder.

Alice's dialogue with her "unknown" father is a rhythmic or pantomimic representation of her metamorphosis, from the unhappy and unrelated child she was at the outset of the play, to her liberation at the end. Alice's emotions are frequently expressed by her foot-work; her hurried or slowly-paced steps, her leaps, her rigid stances. Dodu's gestures and demeanor are equally decisive and revealing. He twirls and twists, runs and jumps, bubbles over with energy, turns ashen with shock and fatigue. Emotions are rendered visible by bodily motions or the lack of them.

The fact that Weingarten asks actors to discover the proper "breath" for the words they pronounce and the right gestures and emotions to express their feelings, implies a distinct interest in the outer-worldly domain. The Egyptians used to speak of discovering the proper breath for reading
sacred texts. To accomplish this they required a special breathing technique, that is, an imitation of the rhythms of the universe. According to Antonin Artaud, breath indicates an assimilation of air (spiritual power) which is looked upon as a positive act since the individual is absorbing the world. Exhaling is considered as negative, as rejecting the body's waste matter, once the substance of life has turned into a poisonous entity. Because breathing is connected with the circulation of blood it also implies the process of involution and evolution. When an individual is confronted with difficulties in breathing (spasmodic, coughing, halting), some kind of blockage is indicated.

Weingarten wants his actors, then, to discover the right breath to describe the proper emotion. "Emotions, meanings are faithfully transcribed within the diagram of a breath." To succeed in this endeavor requires a turning inward — an introversion — so that the actor can experience the feeling he wants to portray. According to Antonin Artaud the discovery of the emotion in question through breathing is a creative act. An actor, he wrote, can create a being (his double, that is, the character he seeks to personify), an image or a mood, by means of breathing. By taking in breath, the actor may succeed in communing with the forces of nature, aligning the disparate parts of his own body by localizing the points where his muscles are affected by the emotion he seeks to portray: anger, grief, guilt.

Dodu's rhythmic respiration throughout the play is exciting to witness and certainly adds to the dramatic process. When angered, his breath is emitted in rapid sweeps, causing his eyes to dilate and literally pop out of his head. When attempting to discover Alice's identity and his own, he begins to cough. Rather than calm his spasms, he encourages them by sucking on a candy especially designed to cause coughing. In other words, he fosters his quixotic breathing, interrupting and even partially cutting off life's forces or breath. To act in this manner implies a lack of rapport with himself and the world about him. His function in life is unclear. He is forever shifting his point of view.

Dodu becomes highly emotional and he exteriorizes his turmoil in a variety of ways in rapid succession — laughter, tears, hysteric's, calm — introducing thereby different rhythmic breathing sequences. Such extreme activity represents a frenetic attitude, a desire to escape from his worldly domain because of his inability and unwillingness to cope with whatever seems to bother him.

Breathing and motion in general are subjective ways of experiencing the rhythms of the universe. They are also an exteriorization of emotional situations. Dodu's quixotic breathing and his turmoil, spasms and vacillating rhythmic processes, indicate a fearful and painful relationship with the world in the persons of his wife and daughter. Alice's Mother's forceful, exact and virile motility symbolizes her dogmatic and domineering ways. As for Alice — a charming trickster, a murderous, a delightfully cruel young girl — within her cohabit all emotions, undifferentiated at the outset of the play and underlining her immaturity; differentiated at the end of the drama, when she goes her own way.

**ACTION AND PSYCHOLOGY OF CHARACTERS**

The play's action is simple. It consists of the strangulation of the Mother, the threatened demolition of Dodu's egg and Alice's cruelty upon leaving him.

The fact that bonds are severed in Weingarten's drama indicates the necessity of changing the characters' attitudes and course in life. The vicious, negative and possessive demeanor of Alice's Mother merits hostility and revenge from her daughter. The fact that Alice reacts violently indicates a certain awareness on her part of her situation, her identity and her role in life. She refuses passivity and identification with her mother. Alice is determined to act on her own.

The Mother's dialogue, replete with onomatopoeias, creates a mood of vindictiveness, guilt and pathos. The repetitious nature of her speeches reinforces the droning and negative relationship she has with her daughter. The fact that Alice
never once responds verbally (indicating her presence only by means of her kicking, heaving, moving, jostling under her blanket) gives the impression of complete submission. Throttled by an over-powering mother, she represents passivity par excellence.

Dodu is as ego-centric, callous and vindictive as Alice’s Mother. He is unaware of his daughter’s needs and desires. Furthermore he is an essentially weak individual, non-existent in his home environment, ineffective in dealing with both wife and daughter.

Alice expresses the need of a father in the Garden episode when she conjures him forth in her vision. She sees her father as a man ill at ease, disconnected, stuttering and essentially irrational. Such character traits are discernible in the clothes he wears: the sleeves of his jacket are too short and he is constantly tugging at them, pulling them down, trying to adjust them in some way or another. Later on he wears a Chinese robe with sleeves that are far too long. In these two instances the outer covering, which represents his actions and relationships, is not in harmony with the thoughts and feelings of the inner man.

The fact that he is forever stuttering, stammering and irritable implies a lack of security and understanding of himself. His conversation is disjointed and certainly beyond Alice’s comprehension. Indeed, he is poles apart from his daughter who not only does not recognize her father but does not even understand the significance of the egg. She thinks it is a telephone booth. Dodu reacts instantly. He is furious at her limited knowledge, her inability to comprehend such things. When Alice fails to understand the meaning of the Latin lettering on his home (Anno ... M ... C ... O ... V) Dodu is again aroused. Not once, however, does he take the trouble to illuminate her, to explain, to kindle some kind of fire between them. Only annoyance is expressed. Such is the unfruitful relationship parents have with their children.

Dodu is so unsure of himself, so aware of his own failings and weaknesses, that he fears his own daughter. He senses Alice’s desire to harm him, to “eat him.” He even looks upon her as a lioness. She denies such carnal instincts. When he asks her to prove she is a woman by getting undressed, Alice is angered. He retreats into his egg, then emerges with a hammer and nails and hangs a sign which reads “Absent because of death.” Alice threatens to take the hammer and smash the egg. Dodu is so terrified that he confesses he is sick and that if she destroys his egg, he will surely die. In an interesting rhythmic inter-change, Alice assumes the stance and attitude her mother had in Act I. She becomes a termagent, threatening Dodu and waving the hammer before his eyes. He is in such a state of nerves that he begins to sob. She informs him of her departure and he murmurs “If you leave, I shall kill myself.” He attempts to bribe her with all sorts of material possessions: a toy speaker, a piece of cord, an old transistor, candy, camera, a pencil, an armful of old boxes, cans, old shoes and half a cucumber. Nothing satisfies Alice because Dodu is forever trying to equate the material with the spiritual. It is not by heaping wealth upon a human being that love is born or that hostility vanishes.

When a series of pictures are projected onto the egg (a plaid design, Mickey Mouse) and then colors (white, green, blue, red) are flashed onto Dodu’s abode, the meaning of this visual activity becomes clear: the heralding of cataclysmic events. Emanating from within the egg are sounds of war, planes in flight, screams and killing. This aural transposition of infernal sounds is not only an allusion to holocausts in general, but an exteriorization of Alice’s inner chaos — the turmoil she has in part sown and a pre-view of her departure.

Alice exits and Dodu remains, sad and lonely. Like Lewis Carroll’s Humpty-Dumpty, Dodu pays the penalty for his lack of comprehension, his spineless ways, his belligerent attitude toward his daughter and the world at large. As for Weingarten’s Alice, she realizes finally, as had Carroll’s, that “of all the unsatisfactory people” she had ever met, Dodu is the prize.
The pain of growing up, of severing relations, either overtly or covertly, with the past, is over. Alice has left the Luxembourg Gardens—a 20th century rendition of the Garden of Eden—to create her own existence, her own life in a still undefined world.

Structurally speaking... *Alice in the Luxembourg Gardens* is a remarkable drama.

*Cartoon by Franco Giacomini, Torino, Italy*