

the intricate and complex oscillating process of makebelieve, of *pretending* to be ("imitation" of), and at the same time being what one is not, *yet really is*. For, by figuratively or symbolically donning his "mask," the actor, like his masked counterpart,

establishes before us a particularly interesting and energetic human being, who is not simply the actor and not properly the character, but the actor-as-character, to whom we relate in a special way (6).

This "special" actor-audience configuration and response is the complex psycho-physical experience and feeling of ecstasy and strangeness, the *terribilita*, the alarm-excitement, attraction-repulsion, empathy-alienation experience and response, which makes the theatre an event. And, if the actor is an adept role-player, the inviolate hermetic irradiations of his role-as-character will certainly give a sense of, as well as make one feel and intimately experience, the presence of some profound energy that goes beyond and transcends the mere temporal demonstrations of what some *real person* is like (5). The certitude of this is encapsulated in the fact that the "actor-as-character" is an embodiment of the "double impulse" of the dramatic and theatrical art; that is,

the ecstasy of power over others and the ecstasy of self-surrender... its presence always shapes the audience's expectations. The actor-as-character is a godlike figure who in some senses defies the gods, becomes more vulnerable to them (15).

Speech is one of the actor's most important tools for profound and effective theatrical communication. In fact, one would be right to say that speech is to acting what wings are to a bird. Its importance to acting and the theatre, however, needs no detailed elaboration here, except to posit that speech (dramatic dialogue and monologue) and the mask idiom are intimately homologous, adaxial, and complementary. Speech, like the mask, creates a variety of visual *ad hominem* images which derive from the metaphysical chthonic world of myth and archetype. These images have their roots in the visceral domains of the human mind. It is, therefore, not surprising that Eric Sellin (1975: 61-64) enthusiastically accepted the mask idiom as, perhaps, the most veritable language that is not only native but belongs *strictly* to the theatre than the everyday

language that is commonly used in the theatre today.

While there are fundamental bases for truth in Sellin's point of view, it is equally important to understand that speech or dramatic dialogue, as a masking device, conveys intensive dramatic ideas through the elements of visual and aural theatricality; through the variations and unexpected possibilities inherent in the improvisation; and, through a medium of improvised words that may or may not employ the interchanges of dialogue. In its relationship with the mask, Ruesch and Kees (1956: 93) have, in fact, observed that speech sets up "chords of tactile images that often produce sharp and immediate physical and emotional reactions." And, Michael Goldman more exquisitely considers speech as a rapidly changing mask with which the actor attains his freedom to affect the audience. He states very clearly that

Speech in particular, because of its nobility, its density of impressions, should always be thought of as a disguise [mask] - a disguise that slips, reveals, changes, strains to be adequate, strains even to be true or transparent to what it describes, breaks away, breaks down, stiffens, must be bolstered up. It is the fastest-changing mask of all (Goldman 1975: 93).

5. Conclusion

Much is yet to be discovered about mask, its aesthetic profundity, and its true and proper relationship and significance to acting, the actor, and the theatre. The evidence before us has not only proved its importance and indispensability to the theatre, but has gone as far as to suggest that the mask idiom offers infinite theatrical possibilities to the practitioner who most profoundly understands its language. For example, the idiom or concept of mask, when adapted for acting as it is applied to masking *per se*, could precipitate within a performance a diversity of pre-emptive subtexts, unusual patterns of movements, even in design and costume, and could suggest other possibilities for lighting and effects; all of which aim at a more perfect synchronization of all the creative and artistic elements of the production in order to achieve the highest possible spectacle. Such an adaptation will give to the performance an important and unusual spark of vitality, and will make the actor come alive by his poses, gestures,