Marjaana Kurkinen

THE SPECTRE OF
THE ORIENT

Modern French Mime and
Traditional Japanese Theatre
in the 1930s
Dissertation Abstract

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The objective of the dissertation is to analyse the influence of the traditional Japanese theatre forms in the development of modern mime in France in the 1930s. In the scholarship on modern French mime, Oriental theatre - very often specified as Japanese theatre - is frequently mentioned as an influence behind the development of this art form. Yet, detailed analysis and exact references are rarely presented. This dissertation aims to fill this gap. The analysis focuses on the work and theories of two Frenchmen, Étienne Decroux and Jean-Louis Barrault in the 1930s, which was the decade when they started to renovate the art of mime. Their goal was to create a serious art form which would build on a rigorous training method and conscious aesthetics.

The methods used in the study consist of archival research and applying the different approaches of intercultural theatre research on the material. The potential influences were searched from the theories, texts and performances of Decroux and Barrault in the 1930s. Parallels with Eastern theatre theories were clearly found from their respective texts. Decroux’s writings are compared with the writings of Zeami Motokiyo. In Barrault’s case, the writings on the Japanese martial arts are used. The actual evidence of either of the mimes having seen performances of Japanese theatre during the period concerned is minimal, and, in Decroux’s case, the mime pieces that he developed do not show any clear Japanese influences. Yet, Decroux’s role as a master teacher approaches the role of the Japanese masters in various arts. In Barrault’s case, the influences are more discernible. He ended up creating performances that in their use of mime as an integral and important part of a performance strongly resemble the aesthetics of Japanese traditional theatre. The French writer Paul Claudel’s contribution to Barrault’s development was considerable and it is analysed as part of the study.
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I dedicate this work to the memory of my father, Pentti Kontinen, who would have been happy to see the project completed.
INTRODUCTION

This study analyses the possible influence of traditional Japanese theatre forms on modern French mime in the 1930s. This decade is generally considered one of the turning points in the history of mime, during which the remnants of 19th century pantomime, dominated by the *commedia dell'arte*-derived Pierrot pantomime, were superseded by modern mime based on total corporeal expression and conscious analytical and theoretical approach. The main stage of the development was in France and the work of Étienne Decroux (1898-1991) and Jean-Louis Barrault (1910-1994) is generally considered of central importance.

There were several reasons behind the development. Both 19th century French pantomime tradition and the theatrical renovation movement in France during the 1910s and 1920s, as well as modernism in arts contributed to the birth of modern French mime. Also *Oriental theatre* is often mentioned as an inspiration behind the renovation of mime but, unlike in case of other influences, there is not much elaboration nor detailed scholarship on the topic. This study aims to fill this gap. With theoretical tools of intercultural theatre research, this study deciphers what exactly were the *Oriental* elements that modern French mime in general and the work of Decroux and Barrault in particular, absorbed in the 1930s. Both the theories and the practical work of these two individuals are analysed in order to locate the possible impact of the *Oriental*. The task involves the question of how much knowledge of *Oriental* theatre forms these two Frenchmen had or could have had during the period concerned and through which channels it could have reached them. Neither Decroux nor Barrault visited the *Orient* during the decade. Thus information on the visits of *Oriental* theatre companies to France, available literature on the topic, and contacts with persons familiar with *Oriental* forms contribute to this study.

For example: Lust 1974, 20; Felner 1985, 79; Leabhart 1989; 64 and Leabhart 1997,3; Wylie 1993, 111 and Wylie 1994, 179; de Marinis 1980, 20 and 24; Barba 1997, 9 and 11. There is more about these scholars’ contribution to the history of mime in Chapter I.
theatre traditions is important.

The basic question evokes further questions on whether tapping the Oriental sources was common among other representatives of 1930s mime than Decroux and Barrault, and whether the Oriental was more evident in their mime than in those contemporary French theatre productions which aspired for expression that defied the dominance of word in the theatre and wished to keep its status on an equal level with the other elements of a performance.

Obviously, Orientalism is an abstract and controversial concept, and Oriental theatre with its multiple and varied performance traditions, a far too large and vague point of reference for a study of this scale. These concepts will be further clarified in the course of this study but in order to make the problematics tangible, I have restricted "Oriental theatre" to the Japanese traditional theatre, very much for the reason that the scholars actually refer to traditional Japanese theatre forms as the influence behind modern French mime more often than they refer to the other Oriental theatre forms. As will be seen, there is also evidence that information on the Japanese traditional theatre forms, namely nōgaku (= nō and kyōgen), kabuki, and bunraku, was available in France prior and during the period in focus in this study.

When trying to trace the Oriental in this case the Japanese traditional theatre impact on the development of modern mime we are, of course, moving in the difficult area of interculturalism and its importance or irrelevance for the development of theatre. Additional problematics can be added by questioning whether the possible Japanese influences that the scholars seem to sense in the work of Decroux and Barrault filtered into their art already in the 1930s or later in their careers. When tracing the Spectre of the Orient from modern French mime, one could basically choose to look at their long careers, which both lasted

until the beginning of the 1990s.

The collaboration between Étienne Decroux and Jean-Louis Barrault for the development of modern mime took place in a fairly short period of time, i.e. in 1931-33. Decroux had started the work on his own already at the end of the 1920s, and after 1933, he continued on the same course, eventually establishing his own mime school and mime company in 1940. From 1935 on, Barrault launched his own career with three strongly physical theatre productions which made extensive use of the techniques of modern mime. *Autour d'une mère* (1935), *Numance* (1937) and *La Faim* (1939), laid the foundation for his future eminence in the French theatre. In Decroux's and Barrault's work, we can actually see two distinctive trends of modern mime: mime as an independent art form and mime as an important part of a theatrical production.

Both Decroux's and Barrault's work is deeply rooted in the French theatrical renovation of the 1910s and 1920s, which started from Jacques Copeau's manifesto for dramatic renovation in *La Nouvelle Revue Française* in 1913, and the subsequent establishment of *le Théâtre du Vieux-Colombier*. The work was later continued and expanded by the animateurs of the *Cartel des Quatre*, Charles Dullin, Louis Jouvet, Georges Pitoëff, and Gaston Baty, as well as several other individuals who had worked and studied with Copeau, especially those who, in 1931, formed the *Compagnie des Quinze* under the direction of Michel Saint-Denis. Étienne Decroux studied briefly at *l'École du Vieux-Colombier* in the 1920s, performed with Baty's and Jouvet's companies, and was until 1934 a member of Dullin's company at the *Théâtre de l'Atelier*. Jean-Louis Barrault, for his part, started his apprenticeship at Dullin's company in 1931, and it was at *l'Atelier* where their joint experimentation for the development of mime took place.

There are several reasons to focus in the 1930s in this study. It was the decade when Decroux and Barrault created the theory and practice of modern mime, and
chose the paths that they would follow for the rest of their respective careers. Also, many of the references to the Japanese influence that scholars have made, seem to indicate that this influence was there at an early stage.

One reason for restricting the treatment to the 1930s is that the following decade opened yet another chapter in the history of mime. The first years of the 1940s brought in a certain regression to 19th century pantomime. The epitome of the new decade was the immensely popular film *Les Enfants du paradis* (1945), a romanticised story directed by Marcel Carné about Jean-Gaspard Deburau, the legendary creator of the 19th century Pierrot pantomime. Especially Barrault who played the role of Deburau, contributed crucially to the film, but also Decroux was involved in the role of Deburau's father.

It was probably the popularity of *Les Enfants du paradis* that caused Barrault, who by then had otherwise completely moved to 'regular' theatre productions, to create two Pierrot-Harlequin-themed mimes in the mid-1940s (*Baptiste* 1946 and *La Fontaine de Jouvence* in 1947) in which Marcel Marceau, a student from Decroux's school, was introduced in the role of Harlequin. Marceau, naturally, has become a virtual synonym for mime from the 1950s on, combining the techniques of modern mime with the romanticism and certain naivety of 19th century pantomime. Decroux who steadfastly continued on his own course as a teacher and polemist never gained such popularity with his performances and, in spite of his long career, remained relatively unknown to the general audience. However, his work has always ranked high in peer reviews and after the war it inspired Gordon Graig to exclaim that in Decroux's art Western theatre had eventually reached the ideal of the *Über-marionette*, Craig's ideal actor. This happened after a special evening of mime in Paris on June 27th 1945.

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3 The film was made in 1942 but, due to the war, found wider distribution in 1945.

4 This event was hosted by Jean Dorcy. Both Decroux and Barrault performed in it with Decroux's students and Elian Guyon.
The opening of Decroux's École du Mime in 1940, the film Les Enfants du paradis, and the increased interest in mime during the post-war years can be seen as the fruit of the intense ground work of the previous decade. It can also be added that the 1930s is interesting as an extremely polarised decade during which the deep mistrust in the objectivity of verbal expression was marked. As will be seen, this provides some links not only to the popularity of mime but also to the appeal of the Japanese and other Eastern cultures.

The 1930s also offers several valuable points of reference both in the field of mime as an independent art and in mime which was used as part of theatre performances. The 1930s was a decade when mime, distinctly different from 19th century pantomime, was popular and practised by also other performers than Decroux and Barrault. The shows of the American mime Angna Enters and the works of the representatives of the British mime movement serve as examples in the category of independent mime, and the achievements of la Compagnie des Quinze in the early 1930s in the category of mime as a part of theatrical performances. Antonin Artaud's controversial Les Cenci (1935) is another example of the strongly physical theatre of the time. Modern dance and dance theatre, which blossomed and continued to develop during the same period, should not be ignored either. The German dancer and choreographer Kurt Jooss' work, especially his widely-performed Der Grüne Tisch (1932), serves as an interesting point of comparison in this area.

The fact that all these 1930s performers, not only Decroux and Barrault, were active in mime that sought to distance itself from 19th century pantomime, remains an under-researched area in the history of modern mime. Their contribution deserves a study of its own. The reason for including a brief look at the work of Enters, the British mimes, la Compagnie des Quinze, Artaud, and Jooss in this study, is to examine whether any influences of traditional Japanese theatre are discernible in their enterprises. Was there possibly a trend of Orientalism behind all these performers' work or were Decroux and Barrault
the only ones who, possibly, absorbed Oriental elements in their performances? Could this assumed Oriental influence have separated the work of Decroux and Barrault from the work of their contemporaries and contributed to its durability?

There is yet another area that has been neglected in the scholarship on modern French mime, namely the mime literature that was written during the first decades of 20th century. Examples of breaking from 19th century tradition and searching the concept of new mime can be found in the French and Anglo-American books published either before or at the same time as Decroux and Barrault worked on their theories. Such works as Charles Aubert’s *L’Art mimique. Suivi d’un traité de la pantomime et du ballet* (1901) or the American Elise J. Harwood’s *How We Train the Body: the Mechanics of Pantomime Technique* (1933), and the numerous books written by the British mimes in the 1930s, are some examples. Again, these works could be studied from several angles. In this study, these works are examined mainly through the question on the possible Oriental influences in them, and evaluated as possible sources of inspiration for Decroux and Barrault.

The main contribution of this study to the research on modern French mime is the systematic search for the Oriental elements in the work of Étienne Decroux and Jean-Louis Barrault in the 1930s, and an attempt to clarify how those elements might have found their way in their art and theories. An attempt to incorporate different methods of theatrical interculturalism’s an approach that has not been tried in this field of research before. Another contribution is the examination of Decroux’s and Barrault’s early work in the context of other contemporary mime and theoretical writings on mime. Decroux and Barrault’s work is often seen as the only epitome of modern mime during the period, but it is evident that there were also other theorists and performers who searched for new mime in their respective productions.

The work proceeds from the definitions of Modern mime and Oriental theatre.
Theatrical interculturalism (Chapter I) to a brief look on the historical and ideological background for the period concerned (Chapter II). The central theoretical framework which will be applied in the study, namely the different theories of Theatrical interculturalism and Orientalism and an overview of the actual performances of traditional Japanese theatre in France before and during the 1930s are presented in Chapter III. The influences on and the actual theory and practice of modern French mime mirrored by the contemporary mime are covered in Chapter IV. The search for links to traditional Japanese theatre starts in this chapter, proceeding from the influence of Jacques Copeau and Charles Dullin to a more speculative level, namely to the parallels of Decroux and Barrault writings with the theories of Zeami Motokiyo and the principles of Japanese martial arts as represented in the writings of Deshimaru Taisen.

Further connections between modern French mime and mime in traditional Japanese theatre forms, are explored in Chapter V, and the literature on Japanese theatre that might have influenced or inspired Decroux, Barrault and their contemporaries will be presented in Chapter VI. Chapter VII concentrates on mime as a part of theatre performances. The focus is on Jean-Louis Barrault three productions in the 1930s which, as performances, were actually closer to total theatre of traditional Japanese theatre forms than Decroux pure mime was. This chapter will also introduce parallels with the contemporary physical theatre and, especially, Antonin Artaud and Paul Claudel influence on Barrault.
I. SOURCES, KEY CONCEPTS AND RECENT SCHOLARSHIP

The primary source materials of this study consist of published texts, autobiographies, and memoirs written by Étienne Decroux and Jean-Louis Barrault, as well as their published interviews. Similar materials have been used to illuminate the work of their contemporaries.

Étienne Decroux, often called "the father of modern mime", devoted his entire life for developing his theories on mime as an autonomous art and for teaching mime, not only in France but in several other countries, especially in the United States. Considering Decroux's status as a mime theoretician, a lot more has been written about him than what he has written himself. A collection of his writings, *Paroles sur le mime*, was first published in 1963, two decades after he had founded his mime school in Paris in 1940 - and four decades after he had gotten inspired by corporeal expression at the *École du Vieux-Colombier*. *Paroles sur le mime* contains some of Decroux's articles from the 1930s but most of its material results from his later elaborations. Starting from the 1940s, he willingly gave interviews, and there are also published notes that his students have taken on his lectures.

There are no texts from the 1930s in which Jean-Louis Barrault would have expressed his ideas about mime or theatre. Even later, Barrault never admitted a desire to build systems, in spite of the fact that he wrote articles and gave interviews in which he expressed his theoretical or philosophical visions on mime. Many of these texts are memoirs which potentially reflect his views back in the

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5 For more detailed information, see Dorcy 1961, 75-76.

6 The second enlarged edition was published in 1977.

7 I have not interviewed Decroux who died in 1991. For the background information, I have interviewed a Finnish performer, Ms. Riitta Pasanen who studied with Decroux for two years in 1983-85. Thomas Leabhart's interviews are, naturally, most valuable sources.
1930s.

The most concise presentation of Barrault’s theories is included in chapters "Éducation Première" and "Essai pour un petit traité d'alchimie théâtrale" in his Réflexions sur le théâtre from 1949. There is also a section, "Alchimie du corps humain", in his Souvenirs pour demain, published in 1972, which is a condensed version of "Essai pour un petit traité d'alchimie théâtrale".

Manuscripts, newspaper reviews, articles, photographic materials and hand programmes stored at the Auguste Rondel and Gustave Fréjaville collections of the Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, Paris, have been the main archival materials consulted. A considerable part of this material has been used also by other scholars of modern French mime and French theatre. However, the hand programme of Étienne Decroux’s performance at the World Exhibition in Paris in 1937 has not, to my knowledge, been referred to earlier. The Rondel collection was also a valuable source for materials on the visit of the Nihon-Geki-Kyōkai group in Paris in 1930.

For the sections on modern dance and mime, especially the work of Angna Enters and Kurt Jooss, the hand programmes and newspaper reviews stored at the William Seymour Collection at Princeton University Library have been most useful. The Dance Collections and the Billy Rose Theatre Collection of the New York Public Library have also provided plenty of interesting primary material - most of which could not, however, be included in this study because they were not relevant to the core questions. Copies of the 1930s British publication, The Mime Review, were first encountered in the collections of the British Library, but copies of it can also be found from the Billy Rose Theatre Collection. The collections of the British Library were an important source for the secondary materials on the history of mime and pantomime. The copy of How We Train the Body: the Mechanics of Pantomime Technique by Elise J. Harwood was an interesting discovery from the Teachers=College Library at the Columbia
University, as were some other publications related to the physical education during the period concerned.

Of filmed and videotaped materials, Marcel Carné’s film *Les Enfants du paradis* (1945)\(^8\) is a virtual showcase for Jean-Louis Barrault’s mime skills, although in this film, modern mime has to be read through the revival of 19th century pantomime. Decroux’s role in *Les Enfants du paradis* is more marginal, and unfortunately, I have not had an opportunity to see any other films of Decroux’s performances. A videotape, produced by the Odin Teatret, in which Decroux’s student, Yves Lebreton, shows Decrouvian training methods\(^9\) has been very illuminating, and for the background information, I have also interviewed yet another student of Decroux’s, Ms. Riitta Pasanen\(^10\).

As far as the secondary sources are concerned, there are three major areas that are essential for this study, namely, research on modern mime, literature on Japanese traditional theatre forms, and theoretical writings on *Orientalism* and *theatrical interculturalism*. Research on history of mime and pantomime, modern dance, non-verbal expression, as well as modernism and theatre in the 1930s in general, are also relevant and have been used in appropriate contexts.

1.1. Mime, Pantomime or Dumb Show?

Definition of the concepts 'mime' and/or 'pantomime' and their difference could easily form a topic of an entire study. There is a lot of confusion and ambivalence

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\(^9\) Odin Teatret and Yves Lebreton, *Corporeal Mime* (no date).

in the usage\textsuperscript{11}. For example, British English, American English and French have their own conventions for using the two terms. British English reserves 'pantomime' solely for the specific Christmas entertainment. American English and French use both terms interchangeably. In all these languages, the words can refer to a theatrical genre, a performer or a play.\textsuperscript{12}

'Mime' is the preferred term in the current English and French scholarship\textsuperscript{13}. It is a general term which can be used to refer to the past and present exponents of the art, even if the mime that emerged from Decroux\textsuperscript{14} and Barrault\textsuperscript{14} experiments in the 1930s, is often specified as \textsuperscript{14}modern mime\textsuperscript{15}. Scholars writing on their work often describe it as the first, conscious exponent of 'modern mime' which covers all 20th century mime, at least until the emergence of 'post-modern mime'.

The terms 'pantomime' and 'dumb show' usually refer to the mime of certain historical periods, but because individual performers often use these terms, especially this applies to \textsuperscript{14}pantomime\textsuperscript{14} to express their own aesthetic ideas and to describe their art, they cannot be eliminated from the modern usage either.\textsuperscript{14} In mime, connection between the performer and the art form is strong and the mime is often the sole creator and performer of the piece. Thus each performer tends to have his/her own definitions, theories and preferences - which, subsequently,

\textsuperscript{11} The history is usually traced back to the ancient Greek and Roman theatre forms, \textit{mimos} and \textit{pantomimus}. This history will be touched upon briefly in Appendix 1.

\textsuperscript{12} 'Mimodrama' or 'mime play' are sometimes used for productions requiring several performers.

\textsuperscript{13} This is evident in the titles of some major works of the 1980s and the 1990s, such as Felner's \textit{Apostles of Silence. The Modern French Mimes}; Leabhart's \textit{Modern and Post-modern Mime}; Pavis's \textit{L'Analyse des spectacles. Théâtre, mime, cinéma}. An example on Italian is de Marinis's \textit{Mimo et mimi}.

\textsuperscript{14} It has been said that Decroux and Barrault were the first practitioners of modern mime to attempt to differentiate between the terms 'mime' and 'pantomime' (Alberts 1989,5). Another example, although not a very common one, is to use 'mime' to indicate the performer and 'pantomime' the art itself (Hunt-Hunt 1964, 8).
affect the language of scholars.

Further confusion emerges from the specifications often added to both terms. 20th century mime literature is full of such concepts as 'mime corporel', 'mime pure', 'pantomime blanche', 'mime statuaire', 'mime de la fin', 'subjective mime', 'objective mime', which will be clarified in the course of this study.

In this study, 'mime' is used as a general term in order to avoid the confusion caused by the restricted use of the term \textit{pantomime} in British English, and also because 'mime' is used more consistently than \textit{pantomime} in the current theoretical writings published in English and French. Another reason for adopting the term \textit{mime} is that Étienne Decroux and Jean-Louis Barrault, whose work this study focuses in, used the term 'mime' to characterise their own work.

There will be further elaboration on the terminology later in this study. At this stage, 'mime' is defined as a genre in performing arts in which speech (dialogue or monologue of the actor(s)) is abolished or clearly subordinated to other performance elements. Mime is a genre that relies principally on the corporeal expression of the performer(s) to communicate the message. Mime can either be an independent show or combined to another performance. The word 'mime' can refer to performer, performance or to a theatrical genre. Terms 'pantomime' and 'dumb show' are used mainly in the historical references, and in cases when authors have chosen it as a contrasting term for 'mime'.

Mimes themselves have written a considerable amount of mime manuals. Most of these books are not included in this study - unless, of course, they were published immediately before or during the period concerned. It is, however, interesting how much of also the academically-oriented mime literature is written by individuals who are actively involved in performing and/or teaching mime. As if there would be a constant search for justification for this art form!
As far as Anglo-American mime literature is concerned, Bari Rolfe's work can be mentioned, mainly because she has compiled a collection on annotated texts related to the history of mime, *Mimes on Miming*\(^{15}\). Even if the book is sketchy, it gives a solid account on the history of mime as expressed by mimes and mime afficionados, and anticipates the more profound literature of the 1980s and 1990s.

The 1980s brought studies on the birth and aesthetics of the work of Decroux and Barrault. In 1985, Mira Felner published her *Apostles of Silence*\(^{16}\), a presentation of the theories and practices of Decroux, Barrault, Marcel Marceau and Jacques Lecoq\(^{17}\), i.e. the time covered reaches from 1910 to the early 1980s. Connecting the theories of these four French mimes to larger cultural context of modernism, is a truly valuable contribution, even if Felner's discussion of modernism is based on very few references. Her chapter on Barrault's early productions is thoroughly researched and serves a good sounding board for my research, in which I have used much of the same archive materials.

Methodologically, Felner relies on archival research and interviews which she transforms into description and analysis. One of her informants is Jean Dorcy, who was a teacher at the *Vieux-Colombier* School and who has himself written reminiscences and comments on the development of modern mime in *A la rencontre de mime et des mimes*, published in 1958.\(^{18}\) In spite of the fragmentary and not particularly analytical nature of Dorcy's sketches, the book offers a valuable insight in the times of the birth of modern French mime, and also to the

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\(^{15}\) Rolfe 1981/1979.

\(^{16}\) Felner 1985.

\(^{17}\) Lecoq is Felner's own teacher and it is not thus surprising that the chapter on Lecoq is basically a summary of his theories and affirmation of their superiority compared to the theories of the other mimes.

\(^{18}\) Felner actually refers more to Dorcy's published texts than to the interviews conducted in 1972, which provide only marginal information.
work of some of Decroux's and Barrault's contemporaries in the 1930s.

Thomas Leabhart's *Modern and Post-modern Mime* is in many ways an interesting, well-informed, and intuitive contribution to the history of modern mime but, at the same time, full of sweeping generalisations and undocumented statements, which makes it slightly difficult to refer to. The book is partially an attempt at an academic work, partially an affirmation of Leabhart's views on mime. Solid theoretical constructions do not interest Leabhart. *Modern and Post-modern Mime* is of the nature of a historical chronicle, taking a lot for granted and leaving a lot of intriguing questions and tracks unfollowed. Leabhart is a performing mime himself and, as a devout student of Decroux, has done a lot to preserve his heritage in his own articles and interviews. Interestingly, a fair amount of Decroux's purism seems to have absorbed also into his writing. Such is the zealouness of the students of Decroux that one is let to understand that writing or doing research on Decroux's art without having first-hand experience on his mime, disqualifies the scholar altogether.

Another mime turned academic, and a fervent Decrouvian, is David Alberts who in his dissertation, *A Critical Analysis of the Historical and Theoretical Issues of*...

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19 Leabhart 1989.

20 For example, when writing about Copeau's *Vieux-Colombier* school and nô theatre's influence on Decroux, Leabhart states that 'when he (Decroux) took over the school of the *Piccolo Teatro* in Milan from Jacques Lecoq, he confided to Lecoq that he hoped to make the students there move like Japanese actors' (Leabhart 1989, 31-32). However, there is no reference on an interview or a written document here.

21 For example, when Leabhart writes about the influence of Arthur Waley's *The nô plays of Japan* on Copeau saying that 'information such as this can only have confirmed Copeau's own convictions' (Leabhart 1989, 21), the reader is let to understand that Waley's book, which was published in 1921, would have affected Copeau's concept of *tréteau nu* which he launched already in 1909.

22 Most of the interviews are published in *The Mime Journal* which has been edited by Leabhart since 1974.

23 An example of this is Leabhart's criticism of Felner who never studied with Decroux nor interviewed him in person (Leabhart 1989, 54).
Modern Mime\textsuperscript{24}, aims to prove what an absolutely unique concept Decroux's modern mime is. Alberts goes through the history of mime on basis of the occurrence of the word mimos, or as he calls it, mimic theatre. These performances, of course, include a whole range of mostly farcical performances, which were not silent or speechless theatre. Eventually, Alberts piles all pre-Decrouvian forms of mime under the concept Historical Mime and reserves the concept Modern Mime for Decroux's art. It is interesting that Alberts manages to keep the history of dance completely separated from the history of mime. While keeping diligently track on all theatre forms with the word 'mime', he completely ignores ballet pantomime and modern dance theatre.

Compared to the above-mentioned works, Kathryn Wylie's Satyric and Heroic Mimes. Attitude as the Way of the Mime in Ritual and Beyond.\textsuperscript{25} is of its own class. Surely, Wylie takes the same broad approach to mime as Alberts, actually going even further back in its history, to primitive rituals from which she traces two major lines in the history of mime, the satyric and the shamanistic. She too has to define her colours in relation to Decrouvian and non-Decrouvian, predominantly Lecoqian mime, and is clearly affiliated with the Decrouvian camp. Thus it is not surprising that she sees Lecoqian mime belonging to the satyric tradition and Decrouvian mime as an epitome of the more profound shamanistic tradition. Especially interesting, from the point of view of this study, are the connections that Wylie makes between the aesthetics of nô theatre and Decroux's concepts. Wylie's insights are well-formulated and very much in alignment with my original intuition and further elaborations.

It is not only the trend of the sacred and the profane, the shamanistic and the satirical in mime that makes Wylie's work intriguing. Also her analysis of the concept of attitude\textsuperscript{26} which is central in Decroux's theoretical constructions, is

\textsuperscript{24} Alberts 1992. Alberts' work is not published as a book but as a facsimile by University of Michigan Dissertation Information Services.

\textsuperscript{25} Wylie 1996.
most insightful. Perhaps it is not unexpected that Wylie does not write a separate conclusion to her book, but lets the chapter on Decroux culminate the work.

Modernism and post-modernism are essential theoretical frameworks for Felner and Leabhart, who both wish to find a place for modern French mime in this context. Interestingly, Alberts and Wylie do not show much interest in modernism. Furthermore, both Alberts' and Wylie's works represent a trend which does not consider silence or lack of speech as an important denominator for mime. It is clear that both Alberts and Wylie see mime as actor's theatre, in which the skill for sublime physical expression is a prerequisite. The definition being as wide as that, one is actually tempted to ask whether the word 'mime' could not be replaced by the word 'theatre', or that perhaps the word 'theatre' itself should be divided into 'mime' and 'spectacle', the latter comprising the forms in which other theatrical elements are equal or more dominant than the actor's verbal and physical expression?

Research on modern French mime is dominated by U.S. scholars, possibly because of an easier access to the academic publishing channels, but also because of the corps of Decroux's students in the United States. The U.S. scholarship on modern mime is often self-referential and, for example, French and Italian scholarship on mime is sparcely referred to in it. Unlike French and Italian scholars, U.S. mime researchers hardly apply such methods as semiotics on their material. Semiotic approaches do not show even in the work published in the 1980s when semiotics were popular in theatre research. The paradigms of the U.S. research on modern mime have been Bakhtinian carnivalism, shamanism or examining modern French mime as a part of modernism.

Of French mime literature, *Le théâtre du geste: mimes et acteurs*\(^\text{26}\), edited by Jacques Lecoq, has its definite value as a collection of essays and interviews on

\(^{26}\) Lecoq 1989.
mime, physical acting and visual theatre from their earliest days to the 1980s. The theoretical level of these articles varies, practically all forms of non-verbal theatre are touched upon, and the illustrations are exemplary. For this study, Yasu Ohashi’s article on gesture in Japanese theatre has been valuable. In this article, Ohashi provides interesting comments on the use of gesture and mimed expression in traditional Japanese theatre forms.

More theoretical insights can be found from Patrice Pavis\textsuperscript{27} who contributes to mime research in several articles. Especially inspiring are his observations on the semiotics of the body in mime. In Italy, the highly analytical work of Marco de Marinis has been most inspiring and the collection edited by him, \textit{Mimo e mimi. Parole e immagini per un genere teatrale del Novecento}\textsuperscript{28} has been useful for this study since its articles aim to clarify not only the history of modern mime but also the varied and very often inconsistent theoretical concepts used by Decroux and Barrault.

Neither U.S. nor European scholarship deals systematically with the possible impact of \textsc{Oriental}, more specifically, Japanese theatre forms on modern French mime. References to the similarities are made and, especially in Wylie\textsuperscript{25} work, clear parallels drawn, but they are not seen as a possible result of conscious appropriation or unconscious infiltration. The development of modern mime is also often seen as a fairly insular French phenomenon even if, as pointed out earlier, there were performers and theoreticians in search of new mime also in other countries. The work of Angna Enters and the British mimes, for example, is rarely, if at all, mentioned in the history of modern mime of the 1930s. Barrault\textsuperscript{24} productions are given attention, but many scholars - especially the ones with strong Decrouvian background - seem to feel slightly uncomfortable with including them in the history of modern French mime. The other contemporary

\textsuperscript{27} Pavis 1982, 1996a.

\textsuperscript{28} de Marinis, 1980.
performances which used mime as an important element in theatre are not given particular attention either. By including these areas as points of reference for Decroux and Barrault’s early work, this study aims to bring new perspectives to the history of modern French mime.

1.2. Oriental, Eastern and Japanese

There are several reasons to study modern French mime in the light of Japanese theatre in particular. Firstly, traditional Japanese theatre is invariably mentioned as an inspiration for modern mime, more often than any other Asian theatre form. Secondly, the study deals mainly with France where traditional Japanese theatre was the Asian theatre form with the most solid visit and research tradition. As will be seen in Chapter II, the Cambodian or Balinese dancers or occasional Indian performers who could be seen in Paris during the 1930s and the decades preceding it, were more marginal than the visits of Japanese performers and theatre groups.

Thirdly, there are published studies on Japanese influence on French theatre in general, giving valuable background for the study of Japanese influence on mime in particular. And finally, however varied Eastern performing and training traditions are, they contain some common features which the Western theatre practitioners and audiences tend to find particularly intriguing. Notably, the "totality" of theatre, i.e. the fact that performances combine physical, visual, auditive, and verbal elements in equal proportions, the anti-naturalistic stylisation - or, the ultimate realism - in the expression, and the emphasis on the art of the actor. In this respect, traditional Japanese theatre can stand as an example of Asian theatre. The traditional Japanese theatre forms discussed in this work are nōgaku (= nō and kyōgen), kabuki and bunraku.
The concept of *Oriental* and its multiple and controversial readings will be returned to in more detail in the discussion on intercultural theatre. In this study, 'Oriental theatre' refers to Chinese, Japanese, Korean, South-East Asian and Indian theatre and, more specifically, the traditional theatre forms in these countries. 'Asian theatre' would also be a possible choice for a term, but in that case, also Central Asian theatre should be included. 'Far-Eastern' would be a justified term because French writers frequently use its equivalent, 'Extrême-Orient'. 'Oriental' is, nevertheless, used in the English language literature more often.

'Eastern theatre' is another wide concept which occurs in literature, especially when contrast with 'Western theatre' is emphasised. Especially after the heavy criticism on Western attitudes towards the *Oriental* as *the Other* it seems that 'Eastern' has become a more politically correct concept, which has the same geographical meaning but without post-colonial connotations. It can also more easily than 'Oriental' be used to cover also modern theatre in the area in question. When 'Oriental theatre' is used it is increasingly often paired with 'Occidental theatre', not with 'Western theatre'.

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29 Please see Appendix 2.

30 Bablet 1975, 35.
to the theatre of industrialised European and North American countries (Australia can also be included). Curiously enough, both of these terms seem to be equally sufficient when different periods of 'Western' or 'Occidental' theatre are discussed, i.e. the term 'Occidental' does not seem to pair with traditional as much as the term 'Oriental' does.

In this work, I shall use both Eastern and Oriental and their counterparts Western and Occidental since neither of these term pairs has gained absolute priority over the other in scholarship and in other literature.

Scholarship on the Japanese traditional theatre forms, nō, kyōgen, kabuki, and bunraku is plentiful, although only a part of it is available in Western languages. The French literature on traditional Japanese theatre that was published before or during the 1930s, is treated mostly as primary source material, i.e. as an element that could have influenced the work of Decroux and Barrault. Part of this literature has references also to Zeami writings. However, in the section that seeks parallels with Decroux and Zeami theories, I have used three later translations which all contain introductions to and commentaries about nōgaku, namely René Sieffert La tradition secrète du nô. Suivi de Une journée de nô; Sekine Masaru Ze-ami and his Theories of Noh Drama; and J. Thomas Rimer and Yamazaki Masakazu On the Art of the Nō Drama. The Major Treatises of Zeami.

Inoura Yoshinobu and Kawatake Toshio The Traditional Theater of Japan and Benito Ortolani Japanese Theatre. From Shamanistic Ritual to Contemporary Pluralism have been used as concise presentations on traditional Japanese theatre forms.
1.3. From Oriental to Intercultural

The literature that concentrates on the influence of traditional Japanese theatre on Western theatre - and vice versa - is not necessarily very extensive but includes some very informative works. Leonard Pronko’s *Theater East and West. Perspectives toward a Total Theater.*\(^{31}\) is one of the first explorations in this area. Shionoya Kei’s *Cyrano et les samuraï. Le théâtre japonais en France et l’effet de retour* (1986) offers a valuable overview on the visits of Japanese performers to France during the first decades of this century and the reverse influences from France to Japan. Christina Nygren’s *Möte mellan Öst och Väst. Metafor och konvention i en japansk shingeki-föreställning* (1993) can also be mentioned, even if it deals only with influences of Western theatre on the Japanese theatre form, *shingeki*. All these works provide useful background material on the exchanges between Japanese and Western theatre and drama.

All the above-mentioned works deal with what is currently referred as interculturalism in the theatre or theatrical interculturalism, but are by no means the latest exponents in the area. Since this study focuses on the possible influence of traditional Japanese theatre on the emergence of modern mime in France, it is logical to search theoretical framework from the discourse and elaborations on interculturalism in the theatre, which emerged at the end of the 1980s and gained further popularity during the 1990s. In a way, interculturalism can be seen as continuation and elaboration of an older trend of Orientalism.

The concept of ‘Orientalism’ is full of controversies. In a sense, it can be used to refer to all forms of interest that Western art and scholarship held towards Middle and Far Eastern cultures. This interest generally led either to romantic

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\(^{31}\) Pronko 1967. Interestingly, Thomas Leabhart mentions his discussions with Pronko (a colleague at Pomona College) while preparing his *Modern and Post-modern mime* (Leabhart 1989, xii). Leabhart does not refer to Pronko’s work, though.
idealisation of the Oriental to an affirmation of the superiority of Western culture. A classic work analysing the trend is Edward Said's *Orientalism. Western Conceptions of the Orient*.32

The terms 'intercultural theatre' or 'theatrical interculturalism' are not without problems either, and among scholars there is healthy resistance to promoting a new theatrical genre per se.

- it might be more productive to speak of intercultural exchanges within theatre practice rather than of the constitution of a new genre emerging from the synthesis of heterogenous traditions.33

As a working definition, we can say that 'intercultural theatre' refers to theatrical performances which include a varying amount of contents and techniques from theatre of other cultural areas distinctly different than the area in question. Theatrical interculturalism is a general term which refers to the corpus of such performances as a trend, if not as a genre. Intercultural theatre research, for its part, is concerned with the processes and outcome of theatrical interculturalism.

Said's criticism is just one element that has alerted Western scholars to a more nuanced approach towards the Orient and its influence in Western culture - and vice versa. Interculturalism is a more politically correct approach than Orientalism and, supposedly, takes into account the flows from one culture to another. However, it would be too hasty to conclude that Western desire to exploit Oriental and exotic theatre traditions would have totally disappeared as, for example, the polemics around Peter Brook's *Mahabharata* or Ariadne Mnouchkine's productions shows. The scholars, for their part, have attempted to grasp the flows and the controversies with increasingly sophisticated approaches.

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32 Said 1978/1991. Said's argumentation will be dealt with more detail in Chapter III.

33 Pavis 1996, 1.
The works of, for example, Patrice Pavis and Erica Fischer-Lichte\textsuperscript{34} serve as good examples and have been most useful for framing the theoretical approaches which will be presented in Chapter III.

\textsuperscript{34} Fischer-Lichte 1990, Pavis 1996a, Pavis 1996b. These anthologies contain articles from both of these authors and other contributors.
II. THE 1930s: POLITICAL, PHYSICAL - AND MODERN

1. Political Extremes steal the Word...

The 1930s was a charged and polarised decade, starting with the economic recession and ending with World War II. Ideologically and politically, the 1930s can be called a decade of extremes. In France, it was a period of heavy inflation, political scandals, and tension at the workplaces. The conservative governments were briefly superseded by socialists and communists = Front Populaire in 1936-37. Somber undertones were added through developments in the neighbouring countries: in Germany, National Socialist Party came to power in January 1933, Italy succumbed to Mussolini = fascists, and in Spain, the Civil War of 1936-39 ended in the falangist victory.

From perspective of intercultural influences and exchanges, the strongly nationalistic 1930s does not, at first sight, seem the most relevant decade of 20th century. In spite of the nationalistic trend, it should nevertheless be remembered that, in France, the anti-fascist groups that were active in the Front Populaire were resolutely international. Paris was also the centre for French cultural avant-garde and one of the cultural capitals of the world, where intellectuals from many totalitarian countries sought refuge. The undisputable international status of the city was further enhanced by major exhibitions, such as Colonial Exhibition in 1931 and World Exhibition in 1937. The first one brought to the city, among other attractions, the group of Balinese dancers which so profoundly affected Antonin Artaud. The second one gave, among other attractions, a possibility for both French and foreign experimental theatre and dance companies to present

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35 Other centres of modern art had also emerged by the 1930s, especially New York and Berlin (Wohl 1986, 76). Of these Berlin, of course, lost the status after the National Socialist attack on the = degenerated = art started.
their work. One of the visitors was the group of the German dancer and choreographer Kurt Jooss, with a programme that included the piece *Der Grüne Tisch (The Green Table)*, with which Jooss had already won the first price at an international dance competition held in Paris in 1932.

Also Étienne Decroux gave his contribution, although he does not feature in the publicity and press as much as Jooss and many of the other performers. However, a hand programme shows that *La Compagnie théâtrale 1787* presented a piece named *Bec dans l'eau* by Étienne Decroux at the *Comédie des Champs-Élysées* in September 1937. The programme contains a synopsis of play text:

> Le roi de l'automobile a remplacé ses ouvriers par des machines. Ceux-ci, privés de salaires n'achètent plus aux commerçants qui, ruinés de ce fait, n'achètent plus au roi de l'automobile. Des lors, la révolte des chômeurs est possible. Pour la tuer dans l'œuf, le "roi" envoie son économiste parmi eux, avec la mission de leur brouiller l'entente. La tentative échoue, et on fait appel au dictateur qui essaiera d'abrutir le peuple à force de défilés.

This play was not a pure mimodrama even if the goal was to diminish the importance of text and stage decoration. It was described as an *prologue et un acte* which consisted of nine episodes, and it was played by four actors.

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36 According to M. Raymond Cogniat, interviewed by *Le Figaro*, the French performers which would likely to be included were Sylvain Itkine's group (*Le Diable écarlate*); Claude Dauphin's group (*Masques*); Autant's and Lara's *Art et Action*; Medieval theatre by a University Group; *Comédiens Routiers*; *Compagnie Quatre Saisons*; and *Les Compagnons de Jeux* de Henri Brochet which would perform "*Le Chevalier Misère*, pièce japonaise au quatorzième siècle*. *Le Figaro* 13.4.1937 *Les Spectacles que les Jeunes Compagnies présenteront au Théâtre d'Essai*. (Rondel Rt 12.811).

37 Hand programme G.F.I (25). The performance was paired with the performance of Sylvain Itkine's group.

38 Hand programme. G.F.I (25).

39 The four actors were Julien Verdier, Suzanne Lodieu, Pierre Burin and Decroux himself (Hand programme G.F.I (25)).
The story of *Bec dans l’Eau* was clearly in touch with the spirit of the times: automation is abolishing the jobs and the industrial dispute at the auto factory is ended violently by a dictator. Automobile industry with its de-humanising assembly lines and automatisation is familiar, for example, from Aldous Huxley’s novel *Brave New World* (1931) in which characters swear in the name and honour of Ford, to Charles Chaplin's film *Modern Times* from 1936. The fight between a despotic capitalist and employees is portrayed in another contemporary film, Jean Renoir's *Front Populaire* classic *Le Crime de M. Lange* from 1936.

Étienne Decroux inherited an interest in politics from his father, and in his youth he even considered a political career. According to Decroux’s son, Maximilien, his father’s political inclinations at that time were presumably close to Trotskyism. The theme of *Bec dans l’Eau* was thus not a surprising choice, although it cannot be said that Decroux’s 1930s mime proper was loaded with as straightforward political message as this play.

Nor does Jean-Louis Barrault seem overtly political in his 1930s productions. Certainly, the world of *Autour d’une mère* (1935) is that of a rural working class and *La Faim* (1939) shows a world polarised between the haves and have-nots. The first work was based on William Faulkner’s novel *As I lay dying* and the second on Knut Hamsun’s novel of the same title. The overall themes of these plays, however, deal more with an existentialist or metaphysical than a political struggle. In his third 1930s production, *Numance* (1937) which was based on Cervantes’ text, Barrault wanted to give support to the Republicans at the Spanish civil war, but that was just one motivation for staging the play.

In *Brave New World*, Huxley shows how repetitive moral statements are used to

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41 Barrault 1972, 113.
affect the behaviour of the citizens. Such verbal manipulation was not strange neither to the totalitarian regimes of the time nor to the politicians representing totalitarian ideologies. Radio broadcasting made this kind of propaganda even easier.\textsuperscript{42} It is intriguing to see mime, and also modern dance, in which gestures and bodily expression take over words, as an artistic statement against political phraseology of the 1930s. Ironically, however, physical culture was also appropriated for nationalistic and totalitarian purposes.

2. ... and the Physical Culture

The belief in the value of physical culture was widely spread during the first decades of 20th century. Physical exercises were often paired with nationalistic or patriotic values. The primitive gymnastics movement, developed in connection with the People's College movement in Denmark is a typical example:

The aim of this movement is to furnish enjoyable, wholesome physical activity for young working people. It is a revolt against the formal Ling System, although it has, in a way grown out of it. The basis of the program is made up of athletics, games, and folk dances. - - National songs are often sung with the exercises.\textsuperscript{43}

The Swedish Ling system of gymnastics was followed and formed the basis of contemporary physical training in many European countries and in the United

\textsuperscript{42} It was not only in the radio in which language was used hypnotically. For example, in addition to the 'regular' political rallies, National Socialists in Germany favoured huge outdoor spectacles in which a hypnotically reciting chorus played a major role (Zortman 1984, 28). These Thingspiel contained pageantry, parades, and even pantomime, often in the form of tableaux vivants, but eventually the growth of the chorus diminished the actors' attempts to mime and gesture (Zortman 1984, 91). In this interesting example of words taking over the gesture, Zortman is referring to the historian Arthur Kutcher\textsuperscript{=}'s evaluation of one of the last Thingspiel spectacles in 1936.

\textsuperscript{43} Wood - Cassidy 1927, 350.
States. Jacques Lecoq is convinced that it influenced also Decroux:

Cette gymnastique fut la première expérience d'éducation physique d'Étienne Decroux (avant qu'il ne s'inscrive à l'école du Vieux-Colombier de Jacques Copeau) qui conserva de cette pratique la richeur des attitudes.

A good example of the Ling system’s influence on mime is the manual, *How we train the body; the mechanics of pantomimic technique* written by Elisa J. Harwood in 1933. She divides her own training method into two independent phases, organic and harmonic.

The primary purpose of organic training in health, increase of vitality and the formation of habits which shall build character, resulting from the development of the various mental faculties which are influenced directly by physical work. Organic gymnastics also aim to establish correct posture and proper carriage, observed chiefly in the walk, and to develop the body into an harmonious whole under the control of the will.

Harwood’s organic training is based upon the Ling System which aims at harmonious bodily development. Every muscle in the body was to be developed in the right relation to every other muscle.

The purpose of harmonic training, which is the other part of her system, is the development of the possibilities of the body for expressive manifestation or reaction to stimuli. The exercises employed must not be mistaken for movements expressing emotion. They are simply mechanical manipulations practiced for freeing the agents to

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44 Harwood 1933, 12; Lecoq 1987, 60.
45 Lecoq 1987, 60.
46 Harwood 1933, 11.
47 Harwood 1933, 12.
such an extent that they will automatically react to pictures in the mind.\textsuperscript{48}

Harwood's writing shows that theorising on physical training and its components and its necessity for the expression was 'in the air' not only in Europe but also in the United States, and that the inspiration did derive to some extent from the same sources even if they could be used for different purposes.

The French favoured also hébertism, a physical training method developed by a widely-travelled ex-officer Georges Hébert. Also l'École du Vieux-Colombier had strict physical training programme based on the method of Hébert\textsuperscript{49}. The idea of these exercises was to reunite modern man with his body which he had alienated from. A certain idealisation of primitive cultures was strong.

\begin{quote}
Ayant voyagé beaucoup, Hébert avait constaté que les peuples primitifs avaient un développement physique harmonieux grâce aux exercices naturels auxquels leur mode de vie les contraignait: marcher, courir, sauter, grimper, lever-porter, lancer, attaquer-se défendre, nager, équilibrisme et quadrupédie.\textsuperscript{50}
\end{quote}

Hébert himself taught at the Vieux-Colombier school briefly, later Jean Dorcy took charge of the exercises. As will be seen later in this study, some traces of hébertism can be found also from Decroux\textsuperscript{50} early work.

From the primitive it is easy to move to nudism which, again, was popular during the period. Freikörperkultur, which emphasised the importance of nature and nudity in human well-being, is an example from Germany. When developing their new mime, Decroux and Barrault covered themselves only with loincloths, so that the work of muscles could be better observed. Whether this was nudism

\textsuperscript{48} Harwood 1933, 19. In this context Harwood refers to Steele McKay whose exercises trace back to Delsarte.

\textsuperscript{49} These had in 1921-22 replaced the Dalcrozian eurythmics exercises which Copeau had grown dissatisfied with (de Marinis 1997, 28).

\textsuperscript{50} Lecoq 1987, 61.
or sculpturalism is hard to tell. Nevertheless, this minimal costume stayed as part of Decroux’s image for decades, although in public performances he eventually resorted to the use of leotards.

Another aspect related to physical culture were the systems for categorising individuals by either their racial features or by general physical appearance and drawing conclusions on the individual’s mental characteristics on the basis of this. It is logical that this would be of interest also for theatre theorists and practitioners. A French example of these theorists is Pierre Abraham, who applied the medical and psychological research on the correspondence of gestures and psyche in theatre. Abraham divides human beings in four physical types which all have their typical psychological natures. He pays special attention to the variation of mimicry, and its concentration on certain parts of face, between the different types. He does not write much about the possible differences in the total corporeal expression of these types, but it can be assumed that the same differences would reflect also on this level.

Against this background, it is slightly surprising that there is no evidence of Decroux or Barrault being interested in these theories or similar categorisations. Certainly, they categorised their findings but, possibly, because they wanted to find concise grammar of movement and gesture applicable to all human types, they were not interested in restricting their work on character or personality types at this stage. As will be seen later in this study, Decroux did develop outlines for socio-occupational character types later in his career.

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51 Abraham 1933, 1. Abraham a member of Gaston Baty’s theatre group from 1931 on and had thus a direct outlet for the theories.

52 Abraham 1933, 3. The types are named ‘respiratoire’, ‘digestif’, ‘musculaire’, and ‘cérébral’. On functional level there are only two categories of human types, concave and convex.
3. The Era of the Unspoken

Some scholars hold that the popularity of mime in France is a protest against the overwhelming dominance of the word in French culture. However, mistrust in word is not restricted solely in France. It can be seen as a wider philosophical mistrust in language power of expression, prompted by the advancement of science, mathematics and psychoanalysis. As mentioned earlier, the 1930s strongly propagandist use of the language might have added to this perception.

George Steiner's article *The Retreat from the Word* shows, that a deep mistrust in the accuracy of verbal expression forms an essential part of the whole Western modern thinking. Steiner argues that retreat from the word has been most startling and pronounced in philosophy, starting from Descartes and, especially, Spinoza. In 20th century, this mistrust became even more pronounced.

Wittgenstein's entire work starts out by asking whether there is any verifiable relation between the word and the fact. - Wittgenstein compels us to wonder whether reality can be *spoken of*, when speech is merely a kind of infinite regression, words being spoken of other words.

Steiner continues that modern art has rebelled against realism since post-impressionism and that non-objective and abstract art reject the mere possibility of linguistic equivalent. It was this intellectual and aesthetic frame that also modern French mime was tied to. Not surprisingly, modern mime shunned

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53 Felner 1986, 168 (based on Harold Rosenberg).

54 Psychoanalysis had its influence on the French theatre of the early 20th century. The drama of Henri René Lenormand from 1920's is a clear example. Another is so called théâtre du silence from the same decade which, without having any pantomimic aspirations, emphasised that the silence or silences in dialogue had more importance than the words (Sorbets, *La Petite Illustration* 22.7.1922).

55 Steiner 1961, 21.

56 Steiner 1961, 22.
resolutely the idea of deriving gestures from their linguistic equivalents.

The profound difference between Western and Oriental approaches to the word is one of the most interesting aspects that Steiner outlines in his paper. Steiner argues that the verbal character of Western civilization derives from Greek-Judaic inheritance, whereas in Oriental metaphysics

the highest purest reach of the contemplative act is that which has learned to leave language behind it. The ineffable lies beyond the frontiers of the word.\textsuperscript{57}

An equally interesting point taken up by Steiner is that the language of modern science is figurative and mathematical, and that, in modern world, the chasm between the language of words and of the language of mathematics grows increasingly wider.

\textit{--- until the seventeenth century, the sphere of language encompassed nearly the whole of experience and reality; today, it comprises a narrower domain. It no longer articulates, or is relevant to, all major modes of action, thought, and sensibility.}\textsuperscript{58}

Mathematical sciences, especially chemistry and physics, advanced greatly in the beginning of 20th century and, no doubt, this progress affected the intellectual atmosphere of the first decades of the century. The year 1932, sometimes called the "miracle year" of physics\textsuperscript{59}, saw the discovery of neutron, which eventually led to the unveiling of nuclear fission at the end of the decade. News on scientific discoveries and the individual scientists working on this area in different countries, were covered in the media to such extent that sometimes the results appeared in newspapers and magazines before they were published in scientific journals\textsuperscript{60}.

\textsuperscript{57} Steiner 1961, 12.

\textsuperscript{58} Steiner 1961, 24.

\textsuperscript{59} Sime 1996, 125.

\textsuperscript{60} Sime 1996, 261.
This advancement of science was not always seen as a positive trend. Especially after World War I, there were strong anti-science tendencies stressing the role of intuition instead of science and the role of action instead of contemplation as sources of knowledge.\footnote{Wohl 1986, 73.}

Surrealism, psychoanalysis, love of animals, sanitarianism and sports are modern movements. What have they in common? The rebellion of life against progress, which often tends to smother or strangle life.\footnote{Decroux (1961), xx.}

Aldous Huxley's \textit{Brave New World}, with its vision of genetically, mentally, and chemically regulated humankind is clearly one of the anti-science statements. However, it seems that advancement of science and technology was also glorified among modern artists.\footnote{Futurism and constructivism are the most obvious examples.} In Paris, people were not only aware of trends in art but "ideas of the fourth dimension, relativity, in ethics if not in physics, non-Euclidean geometry, and the unconscious were everywhere."\footnote{Crunden 1993, 330-331. To be exact, Crunden writes here about Gertrude Stein's circle.} Also Decroux and Barrault's \textit{A science of mime} was to be based on clearly defined principles of movement as an expressive, physical art.\footnote{Alberts 1989, 2.}

It is symptomatic that Decroux's work has been described mathematical or geometric in many occasions. Behind Decroux's efforts for corporeal mime we can also see the (modern) individual need to claim a domain, to carve a niche, to find one's own element for the periodic table. The persistence with which Decroux worked with his discovery can, again, be compared to scientific
laboratory work. A parallel to science and scientific discipline division can also be seen in his emphasis on mime as a separate art form which would be different from theatre and different from dance.

Mistrust in word, controversial relation to science, and search for new, abstract, non-linear forms of expression are all common denominators for the multifaceted movement of modernism or as Robert Crunden summarises:

> European modernism first of all stressed the disruptions and discontinuities of a modernity which affected time, space, and sound. Evolving out of an evolutionary paradigm based on Darwinian biology, modernists attacked linearity as conveying a false order to experience of life.\(^\text{66}\)

How does Decroux\(^\text{3}\) and Barrault\(^\text{3}\) modern mime relate to modernism?

4. Modern French Mime as Part of Modernism

Especially the 1980s scholarship attempts to place modern French mime in the context of modernism. This serves two purposes. On one hand, it helps to justify the uniqueness of the mime style which was developed from 1930s on. On the other hand, this approach aims to fortify modern mime's status as an independent art form.

As far as the time of conception of Decroux's and Barrault's theories is concerned, it is easy to find links to modernism. The early work of Decroux and Barrault co-incides with the period defined as "the center of the intellectual gravity for the Modernist movement - - located roughly in - - 1900-1940"\(^\text{67}\). And

\(^{66}\) Crunden 1993, xii.

\(^{67}\) Quinones, 1986, 13.
even if somewhat different timing is used, such as Robert Wohl's generational approach, which sees the generation 1914, i.e. the ones born in the late 1880s and early 1890s, bringing the epicenter of the modernism to the years 1890-1933, it is not too far-fetched to place Decroux (born in 1898) and even Barrault (born in 1910) to this generation. Especially since, like romanticism in 19th century, modernism emerged at different times in different arts. The importance of France as the source of the modernist creative influence is undeniable in all other arts except dance and architecture.

The critic Harold Rosenberg writes that the modernist movement started in the late 19th century with symbolism and proceeded through Freud's influence to expressionism and, finally, to abstractionism. The only constants of this multifaceted movement, which he calls Paris Modern, were conscious aesthetic theorising coupled with a search for new forms, and the consistent repudiation of naturalism, with its literal replication of reality.

Mira Felner ties the most important French 20th century mimes, Étienne Decroux, Jean-Louis Barrault, Marcel Marceau, and Jacques Lecoq, to Rosenberg's Paris Modern and the fight against dominance of word in the French culture. She sees strong correspondences between the theories of these movements and the thoughts of the four individual mimes. Yet Felner questions whether the work of the four mimes forms an unique genre with its own aesthetics. She ends up concluding that, despite the strong differences in the four mimes' work and theories, there are common features which justify the use of the term 'modern French mime'. These common features are: conscious formal aesthetics, need to establish mime as an art form, and an emphasis on movements' development.

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68 Wohl 1986, 68.

69 Greenberg 1986, 18.

70 Felner 1985, 169.
priority to action.⁷¹

Felner sees that Jacques Copeau was the first one to combine the ideology of Paris Modern to the mime tradition. Of the four performers, Barrault is closest to the mainstream of the whole movement, and of all of them, most significant as a theorist. Decroux can be identified with the first stages of the movement, Marceau with the later developments and Lecoq with the last, abstractionist, stage. This way the 'modern French mime' not only gains legitimacy as a term but can be called 'the corporeal expression of contemporary aesthetics' and a new step in the history of mime.

Thomas Leabhart discusses modernism quite along the same lines but not as systematically as Felner. He mentions the development of science and technical inventions, the sports, the simplicity of line, the abstract aspirations. According to Leabhart, reducing things to their essence likens Decroux's work to the work of modernist painters and sculptors, especially Mondrian and Brancusi⁷². Felner has similar allusions. She writes that it was cubism that affected Decroux's work most directly⁷³. Leabhart also states that the corporeal mime studies are like the best cubist paintings⁷⁴.

The most interesting aspect of modernism from the point of view of this study, is the interest in the exotic and foreign. The modernist was a member of a fairly restricted circle of artists and intellectuals⁷⁵, an outsider to whom to be most modern was to be most alienated, and that meant to feel most at home in

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⁷¹ Felner 1985, 168.
⁷² Leabhart 1989, 49.
⁷³ Felner 1986, 62.
⁷⁴ Leabhart 1989, 49.
⁷⁵ Wohl 1986, 67.
ancient Greece or China, or in medieval Europe or Japan. As seen in Steiner’s argumentation, Western mistrust in word led to the appreciation of Oriental metaphysics which played down the role of verbal language. Modernism seems to be yet another route to the East.

The idealisation and admiration of past and foreign theatre forms, such as commedia dell’arte or Japanese, Chinese or Balinese theatre, can be found from all major theatrical renovators of the first four decades of 20th century. Jacques Copeau and Edward Gordon Craig are clear examples, so are Antonin Artaud, Bertolt Brecht, and Vsevolod Meyerhold. Their knowledge of non-European genres might not always have been accurate to the point but, for the most part, none of them was particularly concerned about it. The main goal was to gather tools for the renovation and revitalisation of Western theatre.

Against this background, it is quite legitimate to ask if Decroux and Barrault had similar ideas as these men of theatre when they set out to renovate the art of mime. It is time to look closer at the problematics of the intercultural in the theatre, and to examine what Oriental theatre exactly meant in the 1930s. Especially important is to find out what Japanese performances were accessible for Decroux and Barrault before and during the 1930s, and what theoretical approaches could be applied for analysing the possible influence of these in their work.

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76 Crunden 1993, xxii. To be exact, Crunden is here speaking about the first American modernist generation but the same might be extended to other modernists.
III. THE INTERCULTURAL ORIENT EXPRESS

1. Intercultural Theatre and Intercultural Theatre Research

It has already been tentatively defined that 'intercultural theatre' refers to theatrical performances which include a varying amount of contents and techniques from the theatre of other cultural areas that are distinctly different than the theatre of the area in question. \textit{Theatrical interculturalism} is a general term which refers to the trend or phenomenon. \textit{Intercultural theatre research}, for its part, is concerned with the processes and outcome of \textit{intercultural theatre} and \textit{theatrical interculturalism}.

Since intercultural theatre research emerged only two decades ago, it is often assumed that the processes of theatrical interculturalism are, at least to some extent, conscious, and that researchers have an opportunity for direct observation of performances and are able to interview performers to search and confirm - or to question - the intercultural influences. Historical perspective, in this case the focusing in the 1930s, adds its own dimension, especially when it comes to the conscious appropriation of other cultures by the performers. In addition to relying on the direct and indirect testimonies and evidence of the possible impact, it is also necessary to ask what influences were available either for conscious appropriation or for more unconscious infiltration.

Patrice Pavis approaches his definition of the intercultural theatre through discussion of the related terms. He differentiates between:

- \textit{international} or cosmopolitan which arises mainly for economical reasons and expresses itself in international festivals and tours;
- \textit{intracultural} which searches for the lost national traditions;
- \textit{transcultural} which focuses on the universal human condition behind the
various cultural expressions;
- ultracultural which involves a mythic quest for the lost purity of theatre;
- precultural which focuses on the common strata of the Eastern and Western theatre practice before they become acculturated in particular traditions;
- postcultural which emphasizes the post-modern fragmentation of culture. A certain element of post-culturalism is embedded in the theatre which liberally uses fragments of other cultures;
- metacultural when one culture comments another developing a critical commentary on a meta-textual level and becomes an interpretive meta-language.77 Only after this analysis, Pavis proceeds to his definition for intercultural theatre as a theatre which

- creates hybrid forms drawing upon a more or less conscious and voluntary mixing of performance traditions traceable to distinct cultural areas. The hybridization is often such that the original forms can no longer be distinguished.78

To what extent can Étienne Decroux's and Jean-Louis Barrault's mime with its alleged Oriental influences, be perceived as intercultural theatre, or would the other categories suit better for describing it? This will be seen when Decroux's and Barrault's work is examined through three model categories of theatrical interculturalism, which seem particularly relevant for the research topic: the pre-expressive model; the 'degreeable' or 'infiltration' models; and the 'misunderstanding' models.

78 Pavis 1996, 8.
1.1. The Pre-Expressive Model

Theatre anthropology, as represented by the director and founder of ISTA (International School of Theatre Anthropology)\textsuperscript{79} Eugenio Barba and also by the American director and scholar Richard Schechner, is a predecessor for the intercultural theories of the 1980s and 1990s. What makes theatre anthropology particularly interesting for this study, is that the points of its non-European theatrical attachment are predominantly in the various genres of Oriental theatre. While Schechner is focusing mostly on traditional Indian theatre, Barba's interest covers also Japanese theatre. Not surprisingly, Barba calls his own theatre concept \textit{Eurasian} also, a large part of ISTA's research focuses in comparing traditional Asian theatre forms with each other rather than with Western theatre forms.\textsuperscript{80} The key theoretical frame in Barba's Eurasian theatre is the pre-expressive model, which actually is very close to what Pavis categorises under the precultural.

The pre-expressive model attempts to find universal principles which are common to different performance traditions. This common substratum can, according to Barba, most naturally be found from the theatre which is, above all, \textit{bios} as opposed to theatre which is sustained by \textit{logos}\textsuperscript{81}, i.e. theatre that is not essentially verbal but lays the emphasis on the other theatrical elements. Ian Watson summarises the premise underlying Barba's pre-expressivity:

\begin{quote}
No matter which culture an actor is from, his or her body consists of a certain mass, a
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{79} Theatre anthropology dates back to the 1960s and was then strongly influenced by Jerzy Grotowski's experimentation which among the European actor training tradition used the Oriental as an inspiration (Schechner 1969, 200). ISTA was founded in 1979 and it is based in Holstebro, Denmark although seminars and workshops are organised also in other countries and locations.

\textsuperscript{80} Watson 1996, 228.

\textsuperscript{81} Barba 1996, 220.
trunk and extremities, has a centre of gravity, and opposing groups of muscular tensions that he or she uses to walk, stand up, sit down, dance, etc. And regardless of the performer's chosen genre - be it Topeng, Odissi, Noh or corporeal mime - these biological givens are physical tools he or she has to work with.  

Most interesting is that, for Barba, Étienne Decroux's corporeal mime provides the most consistent Western sounding board for the pre-expressive elements that are so prevalent in Oriental theatre forms. As a matter of fact, Decroux's *Paroles sur le mime* (1963) was one of the sources against which he tested the principles of theatre anthropology. Emphasis on a codified system, trunk, tension and the actor's presence are some areas that appealed to Barba in Decroux's corporeal mime. Richard Schechner emphasizes the same elements in his *Between Theater and Anthropology* (1985) calling them *underlying patterns* and *the very thought of performance*.

One similarity between Barba's and Decroux's experimentation is their introvertism which borders neglect of the audience. Experimentation is conducted between and for peers in laboratory-like circumstances. This neglect of audience leads to doubt that the theory of pre-expressivity taken to its essentialist extreme would place the work of teachers above the work of most revered performers in both Eastern and Western theatre.

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83 Barba 1997, 8.

84 Schechner 1985, 23.
What is more important though is that, should we follow Barba's logic, it would not be relevant to trace Oriental influences on Decroux's and Barrault's work, but to locate common pre-expressive features in it and in Oriental theatre forms. This is one way to explain similarities and would certainly remove the question whether the possible infiltration process was conscious or unconscious. Barba's observations on Decroux, to which I shall yet return, are very perceptive and accurate, but the pre-expressive model is not a particularly dynamic approach. That is why it is useful to look at the other models of intercultural theatre.

1.2. The 'Degreeable' or Infiltration Models

These models see intercultural influences as a series or continuum in which the influencer and the influenced are treated as definable entities.
Patrice Pavis presents his theory of interculturalism in the form of an hourglass in which influences from source culture filter to target culture.\(^8^5\)

### SOURCE CULTURE

1. cultural modelling  
2. artistic modelling  
3. perspective of the adapters  
4. work of adaptation  
5. preparatory work by actors  
6. choice of theatrical form  
7. theatrical representation of the culture  
8. reception-adapters  
9. readability  
10A. artistic modelling  
10B. sociological and anthropological modelling  
10C. cultural modelling  
11. given and anticipated consequences

### TARGET CULTURE

As will be seen in the next chapter, Pavis\(^\text{\textsuperscript{85}}\)’s model has been criticised for being too mechanical and rational. Marvin Carlson presents a softer version by elaborating Michael Gissenwehrer’s theory. However, this model follows also the pattern of degrees. Carlson’s model moves in the axis of the concepts of \textit{foreign=}

\textit{foreign=}

\textit{familiar}^8^6:


\(^8^6\) Carlson 1990, 50. Gissenwehrer's classification is also published in Fischer-Lichte 1990 (p.154).
1. The totally familiar tradition of regular performance.
2. Foreign elements assimilated into the tradition and absorbed by it. The audience can be interested, entertained, stimulated, but they are not challenged by the foreign material.
3. Entire foreign structures are made familiar instead of isolated elements. The Oriental *Macbeth* would be an example of this.
4. The foreign and familiar create a new blend, which then is assimilated into the tradition, becoming familiar.
5. The foreign itself becomes assimilated as a whole, becoming familiar. Examples would be *commedia dell'arte* in France or Italian opera in England.
6. Foreign elements remain foreign, used within familiar structures for *Verfremdung*, for shock value, or for exotic quotation. An example would be the Oriental dance sequences in the current production of *M. Butterfly* in New York.
7. An entire performance from another culture is imported or recreated, with no attempt to accommodate it with the familiar.

Carlson's model is, in a way, heavier in the waist than Pavis's hourglass. The richness concentrates in the hybrid forms in the middle, while at both ends are the pure representations of the familiar and the foreign. There is an assumption of a conscious process on the part of the creators in both of these models. There is also an assumption that the creators of a performance are well-acquainted with the source culture which is introduced to the target culture.

Tentatively, both Pavis's hourglass and Carlson's model seem to be useful for analysing the influence of traditional Japanese theatre on the development of modern mime. However, when taking into account the time difference, possible gaps in the knowledge of traditional Japanese theatre forms and the either conscious or unconscious appropriation of foreign cultures for own purposes, it is important to look into yet another model category, the misunderstanding models, which set out to challenge the rational approach of especially the degreeable models.
1.3. The 'Misunderstanding' Models

Naturally, the above mentioned models take into account the 'in-betweens', or as Pavis calls them. However, there are theorists who wish to emphasize especially this part and bring in the role of misunderstanding or misinterpretation of a foreign culture.

Misunderstanding can be perceived either as a positive and productive factor caused by good faith or as a result of a conscious or unconscious exploitation of a foreign culture. Scholars who take the positive approach, see both source and target cultures as equally powerful, and are prone to emphasize reciprocity and communication. For example, Franz Norbert Mannheimer writes, in a very conciliatory tone, that perhaps the terms 'misunderstanding' and 'understanding' should not be used at all, but rather the terms 'desire' and 'satisfaction'.

Catherine Diamond who is predominantly interested in Eastern adaptation, appropriation and misinterpretations of Western theatre, agrees:

> Better to understand the motives - artistic and otherwise - of such exchange, one should first dispense with the whole notion of 'misunderstanding'. There are no 'misunderstandings', only more or less persuasive interpretations. What are so facilely labelled 'misunderstandings' should be seen as different, often culturally biased, but still highly individual perspectives.

Also Nicola Savarese, who does not subscribe Barba's Eurasian, pre-expressive theatre concept nor the slightly mechanical direct or reciprocal influence theories, writes that the history of the so-called influences of oriental art is fundamentally

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87 Mannheimer 1990, 23.  
88 Diamond 1999, 144.
the story of alienations producing further alienations in which the artists were immersed in the unstoppable chain of changes and that

the sense of encounter between Oriental and Occidental theatres does not reside within so called reciprocal 'influences', but is to be found in the consideration of the analogies and differences, and in communicating our experience of them.

Antonin Artaud's perception of the Balinese dancers is a good example of misunderstanding - or using Diamond's terminology: persuasive interpretation of the Oriental, and Erica Fisher-Lichte's analysis of his response is a good example of a scholar's response:

Artaud put aside everything which might have made the performance of the Balinese players 'understandable' in the usual sense of the word. He got rid of any possible comprehension of the folkloristic aspects of this Asian theatre, of its plausible mythological content, its conventional rules and its well calculated routine (which he nevertheless admired). Artaud needed the strictly incomprehensible, irrational theatre, the revelation of the transcending force of the 'other' which he desired with all his heart.

A more critical representative of the misunderstanding line might well see Artaud, who got inspired by the Balinese dancers in the 1930s, as an example of Western appropriation of the Orient. Edward Said's critical views on Western conceptions of the Orient were published in his monograph Orientalism in 1978. Said's central argument is based on Michel Foucault's proposition of knowledge

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89 Savarese 1988, 68.

90 Savarese 1988, 74.

91 Savarese 1990, 48.

as a mechanism for producing power\textsuperscript{93}, from which it follows that the West systematically presents the Orient as a composed object of knowledge, and uses this construction for its own ideological purposes. Thus \textit{Oriental}=should and could not basically be used as a synonym for \textit{Eastern}=but should be seen as a more complex concept. Needless to say, Said does not perceive misunderstanding, or misinterpretation, as a positive factor, but as a power position which subordinates the non-Western to Western needs.

One form of appropriation named by Said is the search for rejuvenation which Western cultures sought from Oriental cultures. This approach could also be applied for evaluating Artaud's response to the Balinese dance group:

\begin{quote}
Since romanticism: the regeneration of Europe by Asia was a very influential idea, especially in the sense of defeating the materialism and mechanism. But what mattered was not Asia so much as Asia's use to modern Europe.\textsuperscript{94}
\end{quote}

It should be said that many theatre practitioners have, in the name of artistic freedom and individualism, refused to take as strong stand as Said against the appropriation of other cultures, and have pointed out that borrowing, indeed, takes place both ways\textsuperscript{95}. However, also critical - or critico-moralist - voices continue to be heard in the theatrical interculturalism discussion of the 1990s. There are scholars who see Western intercultural theatre productions as blatant exploitation of non-Western, very often Oriental, cultural traditions\textsuperscript{96}. John Russell Brown notes this 'Asian' trend in his contribution to the theatrical

\textsuperscript{93} Lewis 1996, 16.

\textsuperscript{94} Said 1978/1991, 115. In this context, Said writes about Asia but mainly his Oriental points of reference are from the Near-East.

\textsuperscript{95} For example, Richard Schechner interiewied by Patrice Pavis (Pavis 1996, 45).

\textsuperscript{96} For example, Rustom Bharucha's critical views (Bharucha 1984) provoked a fair amount of debate among the intercultural theatre practioners, for example Richard Schechner (1984).
exploitation debate of the 1990s:

The forms favoured for export to Europe and North America in the name of intercultural theatre are usually those of the most ancient and site-specific Asian traditions, and the performances copied have been developed over centuries to serve religious beliefs in which present-day exploiters have no shred of faith, and to reflect lives that in their daily observances and habits are as much unlike those in the industrial West as may be imagined.\(^\text{97}\)

Whether the process is seen as positive or negative, spiritual rejuvenation and physical renovation are invariably aspects which the West seeks from the Orient. In the field of theatre there are two inter-related areas for which the new impulses were - and still are - sought for, namely non-verbal expression and the corporeal skills of the actor.

The need to get closer to non-verbal expression and performance elements is generally recognised to be one of the reasons behind the fascination with non-European theatre forms:

Most European avant-gardists were critical of the state of contemporary civilization and wanted to overcome the logocentrism of the Western world, to depose the image of man defined as an individual personality and to break the limiting conception of space. Others, such as Artaud, wanted to attack the dominance of rational argumentation.\(^\text{98}\)

It is easy to find connections to modern mime, a theatre form that does away with words altogether, in this quest. Attacking logocentrism and breaking the limiting conceptions of space were central for both Decroux and Barrault. Problematics of individual personality can also be addressed through mime: the

\(^{97}\) Brown 1998, 11.

\(^{98}\) Fischer-Lichte 1990, 15.
mime performer usually alters personalities in a solo performance, creating something that, in the words of the American mime Angna Enters, could be called *The First Person Plural*.  

Corporeality aligns with modern mime as well. For modern mime, full use of body as a medium is as essential as white face was for 19th century mime. Patrice Pavis writes about the transportability of corporeal training in intercultural exchanges:

> Intercultural theatre is at its most transportable and experimental when it focuses on the actor and performance, on training of whatever duration conducted on the "others" homeground, or an experiment with new body techniques. - - It is only ever effective when it is accepted as *inter-corporeal* work, in which an actor confronts his/her technique and professional identity with those of the others.  

When thinking about the emphasis on non-verbal and corporeality, the hypothesis that modern mime of the 1930s would have been influenced by Oriental theatre and subsequently be an example of intercultural theatre - either in positive or negative sense - is justified. Before examining this more thoroughly, it is necessary to question how the intercultural theatre theories of the 1990s, which were inspired by the intercultural theatre productions of the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, apply to the 1930s. It is also necessary to define a concrete model for the Oriental to be used in this study.

1.4. Interculturalism in Historical Perspective

How different was theatrical interculturalism in the 1930s compared to the

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99 This is the title of one of Enters’ books. As a matter of fact, some scholars see the origins of the word ‘pantomimus’ as a reference to a person who ‘mimes all’.

100 Pavis 1996, 15.
intercultural theatre of the 1990s? In the four first decades of 20th century, Western approaches towards non-Western performance traditions could be coarsely divided to:

1. Outright commercial exploitation of exotic themes: music hall exotica, such as Owen Hall’s *The Geisha* which was popular in both France and England at the turn of the century.¹⁰¹

2. Mainstream theatrical exploitation: some imported performances which were tailored for the Western audience, such as the European and U.S. visits of Kawakami Otojirō and Sadayakko (1900-1902), Hanako (1901-22), and Tsutsui Tokujirō's *Nihon-Geki-Kyōkai* group (1930) - and also the Balinese dancers at Colonial Exhibition in Paris (1931).

3. Mainstream theatrical exploitation: Western performances done in good faith but without exact cultural knowledge or training: for example, Max Reinhardt's *Sumurum* (1911) in Berlin or Firmin Gémier's *Le Masque* (1927) in Paris.

4. Experimental attempts at reproductions which were often based on literature: the *nō* play *Kantan* at Jacques Copeau's *École du Vieux-Colombier* (1924).¹⁰²

5. Inspired writing based on distant respect which considered the Oriental so inaccessible and ideal that it could never be completely grasped in the West: for example, the writings and comments of Edward Gordon Craig, Antonin Artaud and Paul Claudel.

The most grotesque music hall numbers might have disappeared but the other approaches remain valid also in the 1990s. However, there are some new aspects to be taken into account. The key element that has brought interculturalism under discussion is the availability of intercultural actor training, in which Western

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¹⁰¹ Basically, the two early 20th century *Oriental* operas of Giacomo Puccini, *Madama Butterfly* (1904) and *Turandot* (1926), could also be included in this category.

¹⁰² William Butler Yeats' *nō*-inspired dance plays (written in 1915 - 1939) might be included either to the previous or to this category. They were not original Japanese texts but Yeats' own creations but, like *Kantan*, they were performed for a small, private audiences, unlike Gémier's and Reinhardt's productions.
actors have, especially after World War II, been more at the receiving end. The interest and possibilities for these kinds of experiences were more limited in the 1930s. Theatre visionaries might have admired occasional performers, they might have read about non-Western theatre forms, but training with master performers of Eastern theatre forms was not as self-evident as it is today, when a Western actor can enroll in a kathakali school in Kerala, buy lessons from a nô master in Japan, or have a workshop with topeng dancers in Denmark.

The 1990s discourse on interculturalism is also reflecting the post-colonialist and post-imperialist themes of the 1960s and 1970s. It was only after World War II, that the colonial world finally broke down and the struggles of independence started to erode earlier Western perceptions of the Orient. A strong amount of Western self-reflection is without doubt inspired by Edward Said and other scholars, who from their respective points of view have added to, and also challenged Said's views. And even if Oriental theatre still is a revered source of professional rejuvenation, and Eastern countries justified places to search for inspiration, for many Western performers, there is also a need to understand and respect non-Western cultures as equal. Another matter is, that the economic inequality between the West and a number of Eastern countries still exists. On average, Western performers have much more opportunities to buy training from the East than vice versa, and individual Western artists are not necessarily aware how much impact their quest for training and subsequent use of the techniques affects the original art form and the culture surrounding it. Scholars have paid attention to this aspect as well.

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104 For example Reina Lewis in her *Gendering Orientalism. Race, Femininity and Representation* (1996) problematises Said's views from gender perspective by pointing out that in *Orientalism* (if not necessarily in Said's later works) gender occurs only as a metaphor for the negative characterization of the Orientalized Other as 'feminine' (Lewis 1996, 18).

2. Japanese Theatrical Exchanges with the West

2.1. Between East and West

East-West cultural appropriation is not a one-way street. Western performance styles, themes and texts have been - and are - used in Eastern and other non-Western theatre. The Japanese, whose traditional theatre forms I have, for the reasons given earlier, chosen to represent the Oriental theatre in the 1930s, have probably been the most elusive borrowers from the West, including China. Thinking about the origins of kabuki, for example: do not the legends tell that Okuni, the creator of onna kabuki, used to dress up in clothing and jewelry inspired by the Portuguese missionaries?  

It would, indeed, be simplified to see traditional Japanese theatre forms as merely exploitable, exotic, and virginal source material for Western theatre. In Meiji period (1868-1912), after Japan was opened to and by the West, traditional theatre forms were consciously appropriated by the Japanese themselves for political and ideological purposes. Kabuki was formed to a representatative of the modern, Western-oriented Japan when Ichikawa Danjūrō IX (1839-1903) polished it and, with themes taken from Japanese history and its heroes, made it representable for both the imperial court and to Western spectators. During Meiji, the more aristocratic nō was performed rarely although eminent Western

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106 For example, Erica Fisher-Lichte gives a condensed summary of these (Fisher-Lichte 1990, 11-18). A more polemical approach is taken by Catherine Diamond in her article on the Asian orientalist productions of Greek tragedy (Diamond 1999).


visitors did have an opportunity to see it. During Taishō period (1912-1926) also no became increasingly accessible for larger audience and attracted a growing number of amateurs.\footnote{Nygren 1993, 25.}

The traditional theatre forms did get some competition from shimpa, the originally amateur-based theatre with roots in the late 1880s. The most productive period of shimpa was the first decade of 20th century. Along with contemporary Japanese plays, shimpa introduced Western classical repertory to Japanese audiences. Shingeki, which was born in university circles in the first decade of 20th century eventually perfected and professionalised the performances based on Western repertoire, as well as had great impact on the development of modern Japanese drama. Shingeki also gave new impulses to kabuki: the kabuki actor Ichikawa Sadanji (1880-1940) collaborated with one of the shingeki's most important figures, Kaoru Osanai (1881-1928). Both Sadanji and Kaoru made study trips to Europe, and Ichikawa Sadanji's company also performed in Moscow in 1928.

Since Meiji period, Japanese individuals representing different fields of art and scholarship travelled to Europe, the United States, and also to Russia/Soviet Union, bringing back influences and applying those in their work. Thus they contributed to Westernisation of Japan. For example, Kaoru's major influences came from "primarily non-Anglo-Saxon authors"\footnote{Ortolani 1995, 247.} and the directors Konstantin Stanislavsky and Max Reinhardt. Another major name in shingeki's history, Hijikata Yōshi (1998-1959), studied in Germany and was eventually influenced by Vsevolod Meyerhold, both stylistically and politically.

We have already touched on the political polarisation of the West in the 1930s. Also Japan went through waves of political upheavals during Meiji, Taishō and
Shōwa (1926-1989) periods. These events reflected in the theatre. The first champions of shimpa were actually radicals fighting against the conservative government. Among them was Kawakami Otojirō, who would bring the first Japanese theatre company to Europe in 1900. However, by then, Kawakami had already given up his radicalism and gained success with extremely patriotic and spectacular plays during the war between China and Japan in 1894-95. Shingeki was originally relatively apolitical, but in the 1920s when Japan was suffering from economic crisis, social upheaval and the repressive politics of the conservative government, the younger shingeki generation, among them Hijikata, moved strongly to the left. Eventually this led to censorship and arrests of authors and performers. The repression intensified during the 1930s when Japan started its military expansion in Asia by establishing Manchukuo in 1932.

Especially in the 1930s, the Japanese colonialism which was directed towards other Asian nations was as fervent as the Western varieties of the ideology. Jennifer Robertson analyses the Japanese cultural colonialism and, in this context, makes a difference between Said’s concept of Orientalism which refers to the West’s presentation of the Other (the non-West) as absolutely different from the West and orientalism in the meaning of, for example, the various orientalist schemes created by the Japanese wartime ideologues to rationalise their imperialist claims in Asia and the Pacific.

Japan which arguably was not colonized by Euro-American powers but was itself a colonizer, complicates the critique of Orientalism and the oppositional construction of an internally coherent third world. ¹¹³

It could be said that Japan defined its position in between East and West, and, from that position, the on-going cultural influences were more of a norm than an


¹¹³ Robertson 1998, 98.
exception. Interestingly, the Japanese performers who came to the West during the first decades of 20th century - and were marketed as representatives of the traditional Japanese theatre - were themselves interesting mixtures of East and West and the old and the new.

2.2. Japanese Theatre in France: From Woodblocks to the Stage

2.2.1. The First Encounters

The late 19th century brought *japonisme*, an intense interest in and appropriation of Japanese art, to France. Among the art works that inspired the artists were Japanese woodblock prints with their lavish range of *kabuki* actor portraits and some pictures of theatre buildings. There were also occasional attempts to stage Japanese plays or plays on Japanese themes - the first of these took place as early as in 1871. However, Parisian audiences did not get a chance to see live Japanese performers until 1900 when Kawakami Otojirō's group of thirty members performed in connection with World Fair and subsequently toured in Europe. Their performances were advertised as *kabuki* even if the programme actually consisted of adaptations from the *kabuki* repertory performed by a *shimpa* group. The star of the otherwise all-male group was Kawakami's wife, Shinoya 1986, 15. The play was *Seiryūji*, translated by Léon de Rosny as *Le Couvent du Dragon Vert*. In 1879 Maeda Masana, in collaboration with Judith Gautier, presented, *Yamato*, an adaptation of *Chūshingura* which Maeda had translated into French.

114 Shinoya 1986, 15. The play was *Seiryūji*, translated by Léon de Rosny as *Le Couvent du Dragon Vert*. In 1879 Maeda Masana, in collaboration with Judith Gautier, presented, *Yamato*, an adaptation of *Chūshingura* which Maeda had translated into French.

115 The Paris Exposition in 1867 did have *geishas* in display and also two groups of Japanese acrobats performed in connection with it (Pronko 1967, 115).

116 The programme consisted of such plays as *Kesa, Jingoro, Takanori, The Geisha and the Chevalier* (compiled from from *Ukiozuka-hyoku no Inazuma* or *Sayaaté and Kyōkanoko-Musume-Dojōji*), *The Shōgun, The Sorceress*, and *Kosan*. Also an act from Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* was included (Shionoya 1986, 32). Loie Fuller participated actively in modifying the selected material to the Parisian audience's taste (Shionoya 1986, 39.)
Kawakami Sada (1872-1946) or Sadayakko, who was not an actress but an accomplished geisha who had musical and dance training - and obvious talent.

The visit took place during Meiji period when Japanese visitors still had a strong desire to study in the West. It is reported that the purpose of Kawakami Otojirō’s trip to Europe and to United States was to study Western theatre, not to perform, but that a theatre manager in San Francisco persuaded him to gather a group and give performances. In Europe, the manager of the group was Loie Fuller, the notorious American dancer who had settled in France, and who with her keen business sense had realised the Western audience’s hunger for the exotic and the different.

The audience sought to discover the rest of the world, the uncivilized world, through them, and wanted to soothe itself with a sense of its own superiority by then being able to congratulate itself for having been able to evaluate and penetrate the mysteries which that world, the other world, undoubtedly still possessed.

Following Kawakami Otojirō’s and especially Sadayakko’s success, Fuller discovered and promoted another Japanese female performer, Hanako who ended up staying and performing in the West for twenty years, from 1901 to 1922. Like Sadayakko, Hanako had a background as a geisha, was made a star in

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117 Sadayakko is an artistic name, a combination of the artist’s first name and her geisha name Yakko. Also spelling Sada Yacco is widely used. It is not known whether the name was coined by Loie Fuller, as the name Hanako was. Hanako’s real name was Ota Hisa.

118 Pronko 1967, 122. According to Pronko, it was also due to an accident that caused Sadayakko to replace a female impersonator.

119 Ortolani 1995, 237.

120 Savarese 1988, 65.

121 Savarese 1988, 65. It is interesting how Saidian opinions on the audience are compared to his liberal attitude of the intercultural exchanges between artists.
a group of Japanese performers, and like Sadayakko she gained acclaim for her tragic death scenes.\textsuperscript{122} In addition to pieces modified from traditional Japanese repertory, Hanako also appeared in a number of pieces \textit{à la japonaise} composed by Loie Fuller.\textsuperscript{123}

There were many groups imported from the (unspecified) Orient at least in London in the beginning of 20th century - the Japanese group with which Hanako came to Europe was just one among them.\textsuperscript{124} It is possible that some of these groups performed in Paris as well, since it was customary that the managers toured the companies in European capitals and other major cities. As far as theatre performances are concerned, there was at least one other Japanese performance during the first decades of the century. In 1910, two members of the Kawakami group, named Udagawa and Kawamura, who stayed in Paris to study European theatre, presented a tragic mimodrama, \textit{Vengeange}, in which they each played various roles, such as a samurai, an old man, an old woman, a young man, and a servant.\textsuperscript{125}

World War I silenced the Eastern theatrical front for some years, and situation stayed quiet throughout most of the 1920s. Ichikawa Sadanji IX and his group visited Moscow in 1928 but, unfortunately, they did not extend the tour to other

\textsuperscript{122} Savarese 1988, 64; Pronko 1967, 120-121. Even if the actresses had not received \textit{kabuki} training they followed performing conventions typical for \textit{kabuki} (Savarese 1988, 68).

\textsuperscript{123} Savarese 1988, 67. The plays had such titles as \textit{A Drama of Yoshiwara, The Japanese Puppet, The Tiny Japanese}, and \textit{The Japanese Ophelia}. For an American modern dancer, these themes were not that queer of a topic. For example, Ruth St.Denis gained acclaim with her \textit{Indian} \textit{Dance} \textit{Raddha} and Ted Shawn with his \textit{Sword Dance}. The exotic was used in the early modern dance as deliberately as in music hall.

\textsuperscript{124} Savarese 1988, 66. The group was not a theatre company but consisted of dancers, musicians, and acrobats.

\textsuperscript{125} Marchès, Leo \textit{Acteurs Japonais, Liberté} 27 mars 1910. Cited in Shionoya 1986, 67. Pronko reports also that Sadayakko returned for a tour in Europe in 1908 (Pronko 1967,123). The dancer Ito Michio who had originally come to Europe in 1911 to study modern dance also ended up fulfilling the Western craving for the Japanese by performing, as well as acquiring and translating materials on \textit{nô}, in Yeats=\textit{At the Hawk\& Well} (1916).
European capitals since they could have offered, for example, the Parisian audience the most authentic kabuki than it had seen and would see for decades. Instead, Parisians were entertained by another kabuki company, Tsutsui Tokujirō Nihon-Geki-Kyōkai in 1930.

### 2.2.2. Nihon-Geki-Kyōkai

In Sadayakko and Hanako's case the publicity focused on the individual artists, the star actresses, even if they performed with a larger group. Both were marketed as Eastern equivalents of the great Western actress-divas, although neither of them had been on stage in Japan. The 1930 visit of the Japanese group, Nihon-Geki-Kyōkai, led by Tsutsui Tokujirō was a different event. The group was advertised as an ensemble, a kabuki ensemble to be exact. In twenty years, the Western emphasis had switched from star actors to ensembles - the work of Copeau and his followers was not without its effect. Léon Moussinac summed up the change in 1931:

> Ce qui n’est plus que l’expression de l’esprit individualiste est condamné. Ce qui tend vers l’expression de l’esprit collectif est sûr de vivre. Au spectacle de demain, en effet, la participation sera collective. Et la création anonyme, en quelque sorte. La structure du monde change.

Considering how strong the cult of star actors is in kabuki, this is slightly ironic but, again, the actors of the Tsutsui's group were not professional kabuki actors. They were practically unknown in Japan, and, unlike in the traditional kabuki even today, all women's roles were played by women. Tsutsui did not have an

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126 Savarese, 1988, 65; Pronko 1967, 122. Mixed theatre companies were still forbidden in Japan, and even in shimpa plays, the women roles were played by men.

127 Moussinac 1931, 28.
onnagata in the group\textsuperscript{128}.

There was no strong emphasis on any of the leading actors, although Tsutsui as the leader of the group did get more attention than the others and was interviewed individually\textsuperscript{129}.

Performances of Nihon-Geki-Kyōkai took place at the Pigalle theatre from May 2 to May 15. The programme consisted of four pieces which were synopsised in the hand programme\textsuperscript{130}:

1. \textit{Koi-no-Yozakura} (L'amour au temps des cerisiers en fleurs) was described as a lyrical dance drama and presented a street scene from Tokyo's Yoshiwara with its various characters.

2. \textit{Kyō-no-Ningyō} (La poupée), "scène mimo-danse", told a version of the Pygmalion story: a sculptor falling in love with a statue of his own creation.

3. \textit{Kanjin-chō} (Le passage de la frontière). This was a piece of kabuki repertory written to Ichigawa Danjurō VII. But scholars are unanimous that this performance can not be described as a real kabuki performance\textsuperscript{131}

4. \textit{Kage-no-Chikara} (La Providence cachée), a highly melodramatic piece with lots of sword fights ending with a seppuku.\textsuperscript{132}

The collage was tailored for Western audiences, both European and American,

\textsuperscript{128} Shionoya 1986, 71. At this point, women were allowed on the stage with men in Japan. Shingeki had eventually changed the situation, and the first school for actresses had been founded by the Kawakamis in 1909.

\textsuperscript{129} Denny, 7.5.30 \textit{Le Soir}; Larchin, \textit{Paris Presse} 27.4.30.

\textsuperscript{130} Rondel Re 2407 (2).

\textsuperscript{131} Shionoya 1986, 70, Pronko, 123.

\textsuperscript{132} In the second programme there was another medieval war drama from the kabuki repertory, Banzuin Kobei (i.e. Benzen Kobei), but there are no press reviews on this. Perhaps it wasn't performed after all?
since the group was on its way from the United States. The emphasis was on mimed and danced pieces even if spoken text had more room than in the Kawakami and Hanako productions. Critics mentioned the subordination of word to gestures and made references to ballet and pantomime. Above all, Tsutsui trusted in the flashy combat scenes.

Ces hautes vertus qui forment, pour nous, l’apport le plus précieux de nos hôtes japonais se manifestent surtout dans les danses proprement dites, mais aussi dans les cérémonies saisissants et splendides simulacres de combat.

In addition to regular press reviews, the visit inspired some longer articles by writers who had already seen kabuki and other traditional theatre performances in Japan. Their reaction was favourable even if they pointed out the differences between Tsutsui and the "real" kabuki.

Charles Dullin was one who saw the performance and wrote about it in Correspondance, the monthly publication of l'Atelier. He writes of having always been interested in old Japanese theatre forms and having used them to confirm his theories of theatre. This is what he wrote about the Nihon-Geki-Kyōkai performance:

A d’autres moments certains gestes s'imposent comme les gestes rituels d'un officiant. Le corps de l'acteur japonais n'est pas seulement souple comme celui du plus habile des danseurs, mais il semble façonné par le théâtre et pour le théâtre. Ils doivent beaucoup aux marionettes et aux masques. Cette forme élevée de l'art dramatique leur a laissé des traces profondes. C'est sans doute grâce à elle qu'ils ont appris à se servir de leur corps comme moyen

133 Larchin, Paris Presse 27.4.30.
134 Strowski, Paris-Midi 2.5.30.
135 Levinson, Candide 22.5.30.
136 Yamata, Le Figaro 4.5.30; Denny, Soir 7-9.5.30, Laut, Le Monde Illustrée 10.5.30.
137 Dullin 1930, 33-35.
There is no indication that Étienne Decroux knew about the visits of the Kawakami group or Hanako, which took place in his early childhood and youth. References to these earlier visitors were made in the press during the visit of the Tsutsui group but there is no knowledge if Decroux read about or saw the Nihon-Geki-Kyōkai performance. We can, however, speculate that it is unlikely that he would have been completely unaware of it, being already a member of Dullin's l'Atelier and considering how much media attention the visit received. If Decroux happened to see the performance, he certainly did not rush to write an enthusiastic article, like Artaud after seeing the Balinese dance group, - even if, judging from Dullin's article, there were elements in the performance which could have been in accordance with his budding theories of mime, namely the comment on the difference between the gestures of dancers and actors and the discussion on the influence of the mask and marionettes on physical expression, and that the body can be a more eloquent means of expression than the face - or as Dullin concludes: "Le visage est rarement à l'échelle du théâtre".

2.2.3. French Performances à la japonaise

In 1927, Firmin Gémier organised an International Theatre Festival in Paris and produced a modern kabuki play, Shuzenji Monogatari or Le Masque by Kido Okamoto, for it. The play, written in 1909, tells about an old mask maker who carves a mask with a look of death and which eventually causes the death of his daughter. A great part of the play tells about the artist's sorrow for losing his

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138 Dullin 1930, 35.

139 Dullin 1930, 35.
daughter. Most of the second act consisted of a village festival and was made up almost entirely of dance and mime. Gémier himself played the role of the mask maker, Yashao, and was in charge of the production but, what is more interesting, he also used Japanese artists and actors in it. The stage design, the costumes, the *mise en scène* were done by a Japanese artist, Ōmori Keisuke.\(^{140}\) and the cast included several Japanese actors who helped the other actors in their movements.\(^{141}\) It should be noted that Gémier was not the first director to use Japanese consultation. Already in 1910, Lugné-Poe had staged *L'Amour de Késa* and consulted a Japanese writer, Kikuchi Yuho when preparing it.\(^{142}\)

*Le Masque* was performed only from June 24 to June 27 at the *Comédie des Champs-Elysées* and both Gémier's acting and the whole production got favourable reviews.\(^{143}\) Pronko sees this performance as important because of its honesty and authenticity; for him it was finally a Western performance of Japanese theatre which did not succumb to false, music-hall *japonisme* which, in his opinion, had found its way, for example, to André Antoine's direction of Paul Anthelme's adaptation of *Chûshingura* or *l'Honneur Japonais*, at the *Odéon* theatre in 1912. It is interesting that Pronko\(^{144}\) criticises Antoine's production harshly whereas Shionoya\(^{145}\) gives a very positive report of it - never mentioning that Antoine was the director, though.

There is no evidence that *Le Masque* was seen by Decroux, but again it is possible that he heard about it. In spite of the short run, it did not go unnoticed in

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140 Shionoya 1986, 65.
141 Pronko 1967, 126.
142 Shionoya 1986, 78.
143 Shionoya 1986, 65; Pronko, 127.
144 Pronko, 124-125.
145 Shionoya 1986, 81.
the press, and Gémier was, after all, one of the eminences of French stage. Jean-Louis Barrault, who was seventeen in 1927, remembers that his mother worshipped Gémier and took him to see some of Gémier’s performances in his youth. There is no mention about Barrault seeing this particular one, though. Nor does he mention the Nihon-Geki-Kyōkai performances which took place a year before he entered the school of l’Atelier and joined Decroux in creating the new mime.

At this point, it is necessary to proceed to an analysis of parallels between traditional Japanese theatre forms and modern mime. First, the central concepts and techniques of modern mime will be presented. After that comes a look at the formative years of Decroux and the search for Japanese influences from that period. The texts of Decroux and Barrault from the 1930s will be analysed next by comparing their contents with the writings of Zeami and the martial arts teacher Deshimaru Taisen. After a look at other contemporary mime and possible Japanese influences in it, Decroux and Barrault’s work will be examined through the different intercultural models presented earlier in this chapter.

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146 Barrault 1974, 44.
IV. MODERN MIME

1. Theory and Techniques of Modern Mime

Since this study focuses on the 1930s, the formative decade of modern mime, the primary source materials derive from the late 1920s, when Decroux started experimenting with mime\textsuperscript{147}, and the 1930s, when Jean-Louis Barrault collaborated with Decroux before launching his own career in 1935. Some exceptions to the timing of the sources are justifiable, especially when the materials can be classified as reminiscences of the decade, either in interviews or in autobiographies\textsuperscript{148}. In many cases, it has also been necessary and clarifying to look at and to refer to texts which were written by Decroux and Barrault later than the 1930s, taking into account that they might include concepts and views that were not fully formulated or particularly central in the 1930s. Texts that contain views on Oriental theatre belong to this group, as well as certain elaborations on the concepts of modern mime.

Modern mime was earlier defined a new genre because it differentiated itself from 19th century pantomime and its aesthetics which built on \textit{la commedia dell’arte}-derived characters and narrative storylines. Pantomime relied strongly on mimicry, the facial expressions which were further emphasised with white make-up. Hands were used to form conventional gestures, which the audience deciphered and translated into sentences\textsuperscript{149}. Modern mime, for its part, laid the

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\item \textsuperscript{147} Leibhart 1989, 40. Decroux’s first attempt to form a mime group was in 1929.
\item \textsuperscript{148} This is not uncommon in the scholarship on modern mime. After all, both Decroux and Barrault’s careers were extremely long and the lines between the decades tend to get blurred. For example, Marco de Marinis uses some materials from the 1970s when dealing with Jacques Copeau’s influence on Decroux in the 1920s (de Marinis 1997, 35).
\item \textsuperscript{149} A simple example would be the sentence “I love you” which would be expressed by the mime first pointing at her/himself, then placing her/his hands on her/his heart, and
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emphasis on total corporeal training and expression in which the expressive organs of the body were in hierarchy. In this hierarchy, torso was the most important part, then came the arms and limbs, and only then the face.\textsuperscript{150} Human body would be treated as a keyboard in which each muscle could be played separately.\textsuperscript{151} In this \textit{mime corporel} (corporeal mime), face was covered with a neutral mask and conventional gestures were strictly avoided. Linear narrative was not considered important. Sculptural image and its evocations were more essential than storyline, and thus this new mime was also called \textit{mime statuaire} (sculptural mime).

The three most important technical concepts of modern mime, developed by \textcite{Decroux 1977, 89. Felner 1985, 60.} Étienne Decroux and Jean-Louis Barrault, are \textit{le contrepoids} (counterweight or counterbalance), \textit{le raccourci} (foreshortening), and \textit{l'attitude} (attitude). \textit{Le contrepoids} refers to the muscular work of a mime and is the technique that makes the invisible visible. A simple example of the \textit{le contrepoids} is miming the lifting of a heavy suitcase:

\begin{quote}
- - the tendency of most performers is to feel kinesthetically the effort involved in counter-balancing the weight of the bag. In every case, the inexperienced mime will tend to \textit{raise} the shoulder - -. As a matter of fact, of course, the shoulder should be lowered, pulled down by the weight of the imaginary bag.\textsuperscript{152}
\end{quote}

\textit{Le raccourci} refers to the technique which distills out the essence of the movement. Movement is condensed or shortened to its barest minimum, following the principle of eliminating all that is not essential for understanding it. For example:

\begin{quote}
finally pointing to the object of her/his emotion.
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{150} Decroux 1977, 89. Felner 1985, 60.

\textsuperscript{151} Decroux 1973, 32-33. Felner sees this concept of keyboard analogous to Craig\textsuperscript{¶} idea of \textit{Über-marionette} (Felner 1985, 64).

\textsuperscript{152} Graves 1958, 103.
The part of the body that is first concerned will be the part of the body to move first. If you hear a sound in real life, you turn to look at it. In mime, we move the ear closer to the source of the sound.  

The third concept, attitude, goes beyond a mere technique:

*Attitude* supports *le contrepoids* and *le raccourci* by providing an emotional and intellectual frame of reference for each physical action. Without *attitude* the physical illusions based on *le contrepoids* and *le raccourci* would be nothing more than purely technical exercises.

*Attitude* is a result of fixing the body or parts of the body in a momentarily held pose, and can be called the primary stylistic device in corporeal mime.

According to Decroux and Barrault, modern mime was an independent art form, different from theatre and dance, and it did not use such elements as music, costumes and stage design, i.e. it was *mime pure* (pure mime). Vocal sounds, however, could be used and were nearly always present. Unlike 19th century pantomime, modern mime was to be serious art in which silence and abstraction, along with corporeality, were the key elements. The terms *objective mime* and *subjective mime* were used to clarify this aspect. *Objective mime* dealt with the objective reality and, with refined techniques of the body movement (i.e. *le contrepoids* and *le raccourci*) made the invisible objects visible and actions understandable. Even if this illusion was built solely with total corporeal expression, it was the area which linked it to the tradition of pantomime.

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154 Alberts 1989, 90.
155 Wylie 1994, 190.
156 Leabhart 1989, 47.
157 Barrault 1949, 62.
Subjective mime, for its part, dealt with various mental states which were translated into corporeal expression. Barrault gives the following example of subjective mime:

An example of subjectivity would be if I were to climb a tree, give the idea that I wanted to raise myself up, and once there, become a tree. At that point, poetry begins and one becomes a tree.\textsuperscript{158}

Subjective mime aimed to be a purely modernist invention, and probably (sic!) did not exist in the nineteenth century, just as modern dance, also concerned in this way with 'states of the soul translated into bodily expression' did not exist before Isadora, Ruth StDenis and Ted Shaw.\textsuperscript{159}

The pictures taken of performers of subjective mime actually resemble pictures taken of performers of modern dance, as Eric Bentley\textsuperscript{159} observations on reactions to the photos taken of Decroux\textsuperscript{158}' Le Combat antique show:

Most people to whom I have shown the pictures have immediately thought of dance movements. They think of Decroux in the last two photos as soaring - probably to music. Quite the opposite is the case. The steady flow, the regular rhythmic pulse of dance (I speak in this chapter of traditional dance and not of Miss Graham\textsuperscript{158} dancing) is not present. The movements are sudden and irregular and earth-bound like those of life.\textsuperscript{160}

\textsuperscript{158} Weiss 1979, 9.

\textsuperscript{159} Leabhart 1989, 63.

\textsuperscript{160} Bentley 1953, 188. Bentley\textsuperscript{158} book contains pictures of Decroux in Le Combat antique. The resemblance to dance can also easily be observed, for example, in Étienne Bertrand Weill\textsuperscript{158} pictures of Decroux miming Meditation in 1957 (The Mime Journal 7-8, 1978, 24-28).
It is symptomatic that, even if he sees and knows the difference between corporeal mime and dance, Bentley still makes a clarifying note when it comes to modern dance - in this case, to the art of Martha Graham. Modern mime seems to invite some identity problems, especially when it moves completely to the level of subjective mime. Borderline cases with the domain of modern dance, that moved to abstraction and non-linear structures with ease, but would also use earth-bound movements, are inevitable.

It seems evident, though, that one of the key elements of mime, both historical and modern, is the innate realism, the desire to make the invisible visible, concrete and understandable for the audience. It could be said that, in order to be mime, the performance has to create a more equal relation to the audience than what is the case in a dance performance. The audience of mime has responsibilities - it must be an alert collaborator, writes the mime Angna Enters. This does not mean that the audience should spend the entire performance deciphering gestures and movements:

Mime is not a puzzle to be decoded by the audience, but rather a way for the spectator to recognize something basic in his experience and to relive it through the movement of the performer.\(^\text{162}\)

In a way, the division of mime into objective and subjective mime is extremely revealing. Modern mime seems to be in its element when it moves in the axis of the objective and the subjective, alternating between the concrete and the abstract. Kathryn Wylie divides the history of mime into shamanistic and satyric tradition\(^\text{163}\) but this is a slightly heavy-handed categorisation. Mime, both

\(^{161}\) Enters 1965, 129.

\(^{162}\) Lust 1974, 17.

\(^{163}\) Wylie 1994. According to Wylie, such forms as ancient Greek mime, the commedia dell'arte and the work of Jacques Lecoq belong to the satyric tradition, whereas forms like ancient Roman pantomime, nô theatre, and Decrouvian mime belong to the shamanistic tradition.
historical and modern, is essentially an art form that combines the shamanistic and the satyrical, the serious and the grotesque. Another interesting trend is that whenever mime or pantomime is rediscovered or renovated, there seems to be a tendency to emphasize the seriousness, i.e. the shamanistic nature of the art.  

It is tempting to compare the objective mime-subjective mime division to the semiotic division of signs into icons and symbols. Icons, as concrete representations of the object, seem clearly related to objective mime. Symbols, and also metaphors, belong to the domain of subjective mime. It should be admitted here that Decroux himself does not wish to talk about signs. He prefers to talk about analogies:

Mime does not, however, resort to symbols or signs to portray concrete objects or gestures as do Hindu dancers with their mudras or deaf-mutes with their sign language.

Modern mime is interested in objects only if they can serve as metaphors, he nevertheless specifies.

An interesting step towards subjective mime is the previously mentioned mime statuaire (sculptural mime) which is strongly based on the use of l’attitude. Auguste Rodin’s ideas on the art of sculpture can be found in Decroux’s theories: he revered the idea of a statue which was motionless yet bursting with movement.

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164 For a more detailed history of mime and pantomime, focusing especially in this aspect, please consult Appendix 1.

165 Lust 1974, 17.


167 Felner 1985, 65.

Systematisation, codification, 'scientific' approach and technical exactitude are evident in Decroux's and Barrault's work on mime. Especially Decroux's life-long insistence on the purity of mime brings to mind an astute search for elements. Against this background, it is logical that his work did take place in laboratory-like circumstances, among a devoted group of collaborators and students.

Neutrality is another concept that appears prominently in Decroux's theories. Such concepts as neutral mask or neutral walk reflect a desire to get to the essence of expression. Pursuit for the rational and the neutral is at its clearest in one of the four basic character types that Decroux developed, namely in the Man of the Drawing Room (homme de salon) which, according to Wylie, represents the highest ideals of Western rationalism.

Search for the essence of phenomena was already found to be in alignment with the ideology of modernism, and the work of Decroux and Barrault can thus be seen as part of this continuum. When it comes to system building and constructing coherent aesthetics of physical expression, we can trace yet another continuum in the history of French mime. For example, there were individuals among le Cercle Funambulesque, a group of late 19th century French pantomime enthusiasts, who called for a dictionary of gesture. And even earlier, at the turn of 18th and 19th centuries, the French ballet master Georges Noverre built a system of pantomime on the basis of his interpretations of the

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170 The other three character types were: Man of Sport (homme de sport), Man of Dreams (homme de songe), and the Marionette. Again, as an entity, these were introduced later than in the 1930s to Decroux theories, even though, for example, the sport movements were in his training and repertory from the very start.


172 Hugounet 1889, 245. The gestures in this context refer to the conventional gestures of 19th century pantomime, but it seems that Decroux had similar dreams: he envisioned a vocabulary of movements that could be transmitted to students (Felner 1985, 58).
ancient Roman pantomime. Much later than in the 1930s, Decroux actually called Noverre a brother and expressed a wish to write more about his contribution to mime. Even if Decroux, and also Barrault, draw a clear line between dance and modern mime, the classical ballet and its rigorous training system influenced Decroux deeply:

The stance of the corporeal mime performer, the use of basic positions for the unfolding movement, and the geometric paths followed by the body in space reveal the strong influence of the techniques and aesthetics of classical ballet.

An example of a coherent theory of mime is presented in Charles Aubert’s *L’Art mimique. Suivi d’un traité de la pantomime et du ballet* which was published in 1901. It is somewhat surprising that this work has not caught the attention of scholars of modern mime. Neither do Decroux and Barrault refer to it in their respective writings. Yet Aubert’s work is an interesting borderline case between old pantomime and modern mime, and it is revealing to compare its message to Decroux’s and Barrault’s truly modern abstract pantomime, which they developed thirty years later. The areas to be looked at are: nature of movement, expressive use of different parts of the body, role of attitude, le contrepoids and

173 More about Noverre’s theories in Appendix 1.

174 Decroux refers to Noverre in the forewords of the English translation of *Paroles sur le mime*: Noverre who was born in Paris in 1727 and died in 1810, was primarily a dancer. But he worked with both theory and practice to build up a type of pantomime the character of which had previously been unknown (Decroux 1985, 154). He never got to write more about Noverre, though.

175 Wylie 1994, 184.

176 Aubert 1901, 5. The book was translated to English in 1927 and entitled *The Art of Pantomime* in spite of the special meaning that British English has for the word *pantomime*. It might have been more accurate to translate the French word *pantomime* to *mime*.

177 Wylie 1994, 175.
le raccourci, and the idea of language and grammar in the body language - and influences of traditional Japanese, or possibly any other form of Eastern theatre.

Like Decroux and Barrault, Aubert is convinced of the importance of mime in actor training and strongly critical about 19th century pantomime. He is also concerned about the lack of both adequate courses and the scarcity of theoretical literature on pantomime\textsuperscript{178}. Aubert shares Decroux's distaste for white-face pantomime and states that characters derived from la commedia dell'arte tradition should be discarded. Real life offers better characters for mime\textsuperscript{179}. This is clearly something Decroux could have agreed with. Aubert's dislike for white-face extends to a dislike for all kinds of masks. It can be assumed that Aubert means various kinds of character masks. Decroux's neutral mask or veiled face, which has the advantage of giving the actor a possibility to portray sentiments without being ridiculous\textsuperscript{180}, seems to reflect similar distaste.

The key word in Aubert's pantomime is action, and his definition for the art is: "la pièce de théâtre jouée en langage d'action"\textsuperscript{181}. He does not claim movements' priority to action, which Felner considers one of the important signs of modernism in mime\textsuperscript{182}, but sees all movements of the actor as part of acting. Aubert further divides dramatic movements into five categories: action movements, character movements, instinctive movements, descriptive or speaking movements, and complementary movements. Complete dramatic

\textsuperscript{178} Aubert 1901, 5. The pantomime classes were introduced to the Conservatoire by Georges Wague in 1916.

\textsuperscript{179} Aubert 1901, 203. This brings into mind Jacques Copeau\textsuperscript{\textregistered}' desire to create modern commedia dell'arte characters.

\textsuperscript{180} Decroux 1978, 31. Interview by Thomas Leabhart.

\textsuperscript{181} Aubert 1901, 11.

\textsuperscript{182} Felner 1985,
expression requires at the same time posture, gesture and facial expression. Here we, indeed, find a difference to the ideas of Decroux and Barrault who wanted to diminish the role of face as a relevant means of expression. According to Aubert, emotions are portrayed mainly by facial expressions while Barrault and Decroux would seek to express emotions by *l’attitude*. Nevertheless, Aubert emphasises that it is definitely not enough to make gestures and grimaces but that, in the language of action, every part of the body should be controlled.

Hands are another interesting aspect. Using them was for Decroux and Barrault as '19th century' as using facial expressions. For Aubert, hands are important in descriptive or speaking movements constructed to express thoughts, needs, and wishes or to indicate a place or direction. Aubert is concerned about the impossibility of handling an object which is not on stage or referring to a person who has not yet appeared on stage. References to past and future actions are another problematic area for him. When it comes to absent objects, Decroux's and Barrault's *le contrepoids* does, indeed, offer a solution. The more abstract concepts Decroux and Barrault would try to deal with in subjective mime, on a level which went beyond the 'gesticulation' with hands.

For Aubert, characterisations consist mainly of postures or attitudes. There are similarities between Decroux's and Barrault's concept of *l’attitude* and Aubert's concepts of posture or attitude. For example, Felner considers *l’attitude* to express both pose and mood, and also to be the basis of all characterisation in modern mime.

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183 Aubert 1901, 12.
184 Aubert 1901, 9.
185 Aubert 1901, 12.
186 Aubert 1901, 11. Aubert uses the terms *attitude* and *posture* interchangeably.
Aubert's system sees mime as a language which, in many ways, has to be translated from spoken language to language of action, including the admission that all things cannot be expressed by mime. Neither Decroux nor Barrault would subscribe the idea of direct translation. Nevertheless, they also take up the question on the grammar of mime. According to Barrault, modern mime is a language comparable to verbal language and has the basic grammar:

- **subject**
- **verb**
- **object**
- **attitude**
- **movement**
- **indication**

The corresponding parts of body are for subject, the torso, i.e. the spinal column and the respiratory system, and for object and indication, the limbs. With this grammar the mime's body can be said to write a silent sentence in the space.¹⁸⁸ For Aubert, verbs are the key grammatical concepts in mime. Substantives transform into verbs, as do most of the adjectives and also those adverbs which yield to be expressed without words.¹⁸⁹

Aubert does not swear for the purity of mime, i.e. reluctance to combine mime with other theatrical elements. He is willing to combine mime with music - with caution, so that the result will not be ballet-pantomime - as well as with props and natural sounds. His central idea, after all, is to prove how mime can enhance the actor's art in a regular theatre production. However, he thinks that speech should definitely not be combined in those mimed sections which are used in a regular play.¹⁹⁰ The reason for using mime is that it can reach levels which cannot be reached by words: the emotional, the sensational, the dreamlike.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁸ Barrault 1949, 35-36.

¹⁸⁹ Aubert 1901, 192.

¹⁹⁰ Aubert 1901, 221.

¹⁹¹ Aubert 1901, 174. This line of thought occurs already in 19th century symbolism, as well as in the later théâtre du silence, which was inspired by Freud's psychoanalysis.
In addition to the mime used in theatre performances, Aubert also envisions a new, independent mime which shall resemble animated pictures, and in which the characters will be living statues. These productions would be entirely different from plays and theatre\textsuperscript{192}. The similarity to Decroux’s and Barrault’s theories in this respect is clear and striking.

A brief look at Charles Aubert’s ideas, published thirty years before Decroux and Barrault started experimenting with modern mime, shows that they were by no means the first 20th century theorists to ponder mime’s role in actor training and to call for the renovation of mime. The areas in which Decroux and Barrault clearly went further were the whole process of practical experimentation, playing-down of the importance of facial expression and the use of hands, and discovery of a technique for bringing invisible objects on stage with the help of le contrepoids, and, finally, an attempt to deal with abstract entities through subjective mime.

Aubert’s book is a valuable and interesting contribution to the history of modern mime but it has to be concluded that there are no direct references to any form of Eastern theatre in it. It is time to have a closer look at the formative years of modern mime, especially the influence of Jacques Copeau’s École du Vieux-Colombier where Decroux studied and Charles Dullin’s Théâtre de l’Atelier where both Decroux and Barrault acted and experimented during the first years of the 1930s. Their texts written during this period will also be analysed. Perhaps we can find the Oriental trail from these sources. For comparison, the contemporary mime and the possible Japanese or Eastern influences in it will be looked at as well.

\textsuperscript{192} Aubert 1901, 175.
2. The Influence of the *Vieux-Colombier* on Modern Mime

2.1. The Formative Years at *l’École* and with *les Copiaux*

The origins of Decroux's theories can be traced back to training and research conducted at Jacques Copeau's *Vieux-Colombier* school in the 1920s. There are several documents pertaining to this period\(^\text{193}\), and merely an overview on the most crucial aspects is presented here.

Étienne Decroux entered the *Vieux-Colombier* school as a part-time student to improve his skills as a political orator in 1923. The school was then divided into two sections, the first being devoted to the students whom Copeau planned to train as the first generation of 'ideal actors'. The second section offered courses for general public\(^\text{194}\). In addition to studying diction, Decroux took his first, rudimentary lessons on physical expression under the guidance of Copeau's daughter, Marie-Hélène Dasté\(^\text{195}\). However, the real revelations in mime for him were the end-of-the-semester performances of the professional section of the school in 1924.

An indisputable *Vieux-Colombier* influence on Decroux's 'mime-to-be' were exercises called *les masques*, which were short, speechless sketches performed wearing a neutral mask and nearly without clothes. These were directed and

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\(^{194}\) The school was established in 1921 and operated in connection with the *Vieux-Colombier* theatre. Heads of the first section were Suzanne Bing and Copeau himself. The second section was headed by Jules Romains.

\(^{195}\) Dorcy 1961, 43. Marie-Hélène Dasté was a member of the *Vieux-Colombier* theatre company. Her husband, Jean Dasté, was also a member of the company and performed later in Barrault's first mime productions. Dorcy himself was in charge of the physical training of the professional section of the school.
developed by Suzanne Bing and the students. The goal of these exercises was, first, to train the body to parallel and support whatever might otherwise be communicated vocally and, second, to give actor a means of expression, a physical instrument that is independent of dialogue.\textsuperscript{196}

On mimait des actions modestes: un homme taquiné par une mouche, veut s'en défaire; une femme déçue par la tireuse de de cartes, l'étrangle, un métier, un enchaînement de mouvements de machine. Le jeu tendait à la lenteur du ralenti de cinéma. - - On reproduisait les bruits de la ville, de la maison, de la nature, le cri des animaux. Cela avec la bouche, les mains, les pieds.\textsuperscript{197}

Decroux could not perform in these because he had studied at the school only a year but he writes that these were the very exercises that inspired him to start to develop the new mime.\textsuperscript{198} It can also be emphasized that 19th century pantomime was not on the curriculum of Copeau's school. It was not a theatre form that would have inspired Copeau, as it would not inspire Decroux either. Copeau's work went already beyond the linear narrative of 19th century pantomime.\textsuperscript{199}

Use of a neutral mask would appear in Decroux's theories, as would the nearly nude body. Neutral mask would also remain in Decroux's mime, while the Vieux-Colombier exercises eventually started introducing more character masks. Nudism, in addition to being a popular movement during the period, served also the aesthetic goals of Decroux.

\textsuperscript{196} Angotti-Herr 1974.

\textsuperscript{197} Decroux 1977, 18.

\textsuperscript{198} Decroux 1977, 18 and 33. Also in Decroux 1973, 29. Interview by Leabhart. The circus and acrobatic skills were also taught at the Vieux-Colombier school but there is no indication that Decroux would have been enthusiastic about these. Neither does he make references to the Montessori based exercises that Suzanne Bing introduced to the curricula. Whereas, miming of myths, which was linked to their more academic studies of Greek culture could have had some influence on Decroux's future work, for example Le Combat antique.

\textsuperscript{199} Felner 1985, 47.
Retrouvent le geste naturel, libéré des contraintes morales où la religion chrétienne l'avait enfermé, le corps apparait dans sa nudité avec les exercises du stade et de plein air, quittant peu à peu un mode vestimentaire qui l'étouffait.\(^{200}\)

At the *Vieux-Colombier*, there were strict preparation rites which preceeded *les masques*. Jean Dorcy describes these excercises, which aimed to induce an inner peace before proceeding to the mask work. They included breathing, conscious inhaling and exhaling, relaxation, and clearing of the mind using something of a mantra\(^{201}\).

Decroux did not become a "full-time student" until Copeau had closed the school in May 1924 and moved to the country (Morteuil) with a group of fifteen devotees, to be called *les Copiaus*. This was, no doubt, a turning point for Decroux. It was also an important training period for other actors who would be influential and visible in the 1930s theatrical life.

*Les Copiaus* lasted until 1929. Decroux stayed with the group only for half a year - he left the company at the end of February 1925\(^{202}\). There are very few references to him in the *journal du bord* notes edited by Denis Gontard. For November 4, 1924, it is mentioned that he worked, along with other new students, on diction and dramatic exercises with Suzanne Bing. John Rudlin writes about the first productions:

The pieces were composed by different means: for *L'Objet*, Copeau had the actors improvise in the living room (their only rehearsal space) while he watched. He would then restage and shape the action and write down the dialogue. A "comedy-ballet" emerged, linking sketches for an object (which turned out to be a jazz tune, to which the play ended in a dance). *L'Impôt*, on the other hand was adapted by Copeau from a

\(^{200}\) Lecoq 1989, 59.

\(^{201}\) Felner 1985, 44-45.

\(^{202}\) Gontard 1974, 67.
piece by Pierre de L'Estoile concerning a poor man who tried to keep the king's adviser from drinking his beer by drinking it all himself.\footnote{Rudlin 1986, 8.}

There is no mention about Decroux in the cast of \textit{L'Objet}. In \textit{L'Impôt} he played the role of M. Gourd\footnote{Gontard 1974, 53. There is no further description on this role.}. Many of \textit{les Copiaus} performances were collective improvisations and the emphasis was on equal group work, not on individual performers. Comedy and farce were close to Copeau's heart and theatrical principles. In this recpect, it is actually interesting to notice the emphasis on tragedy and the serious in the work of Decroux and Barrault.

The \textit{journal du bord} reports that one month before Decroux left the company, in January 1925, he performed with it in Lille. Decroux's involvement with the \textit{Vieux-Colombier} school and the subsequent \textit{les Copiaus} period was very short compared to many who were to be active in theatre and also in the field of mime in the 1930s, most notably \textit{la Compagnie des Quinze} and its individual members, such as Léon Chancerel, Marie-Hélène and Jean Dasté. Yet, the \textit{Vieux-Colombier} is the first on Marco de Marinis' list of the early influences in Decroux's development. The other influences listed by de Marinis are: the theories of Gordon Graig; sculpture and poetry with their plasticity, aesthetism and formal rigour; classical dance; physical sports; different kinds of manual labour; and - Far Eastern theatre, especially \textit{nô} \footnote{de Marinis 1980, 17-20. Decroux had varied experiences in manual labour which would later show in his mime pieces. Examples of manual labour are often used in mime - so, there is nothing particularly original in this.}. Some of these can be seen having filtered to Decroux's art through the \textit{Vieux-Colombier} as well. For example the writings of Gordon Graig, classical dance, and the role of physical training were important parts of the \textit{Vieux-Colombier} training system.

Obviously, the reference to Far Eastern theatre and \textit{nô} in particular is interesting for this study. It is also worth pointing out that even if de Marinis lists the
influence of *Vieux-Colombier* separately from the influence of Far Eastern theatre and *nō*, he does not refer to any other sources of Oriental theatre that Decroux would have been exposed to\(^{206}\). Thus this aspect would also belong to the influences filtered through the *Vieux-Colombier*.

Furthermore, even if de Marinis writes about Far Eastern theatre and *nō*, there is actually no indication that the *Vieux-Colombier* would have experimented with any other Far Eastern theatre form than *nō*\(^{207}\). Thus a close look at the production of *Kantan*, a *nō* play rehearsed at the *Vieux-Colombier* school and Decroux’s reaction to it is most important.

### 2.2. *Kantan* - the *nō* play

Arthur Waley’s English translations of Japanese *nō* plays were published in 1921. John Rudlin writes that Suzanne Bing studied these and the writings of Noël Péri, the French scholar, in the summer of 1923.\(^{208}\) As a result of this, it seemed clear that *nō* was a form that included many of the things which they had been working on by themselves: chorus work, singing, mime, dance, recitation of poetry, music and mask work, all, furthermore, played on a bare wooden floor\(^{209}\).

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\(^{206}\) de Marinis 1980, 20. Decroux himself refers to a whole course on Japanese Noh that was quite well done which would have been taught at École du Vieux-Colombier (Decroux 1973. Interview by Leabhart, 29) but there are no other similar references.

\(^{207}\) If desired, one could see some similarities to *kyōgen* farces from the above-mentioned play *L’Impôt*. Drunken servants or underdogs trying to get the best over the arrogant representatives of authority are as common in *kyōgen* as in *commedia dell’arte*.

\(^{208}\) Interestingly, it seems that neither Bing nor Copeau consulted the Pound-Fenollosa book which was published in 1916. Neither does Rudlin indicate that they knew about Yeats’s experiments with *nō*.

\(^{209}\) Rudlin 1986, 48. Thomas Leabhart mentions that Copeau translated *Kantan* into French from Waley’s version (Leabhart 1989, 30-31).
Suzanne Bing's contribution to the project was crucial, even if there is no doubt about Copeau initiating it and his interest in nô. For instance, Leonard Pronko refers to Copeau’s unpublished notes on Asian theatre\textsuperscript{210}, and mentions that the group was surprised to find so much similarity between the dramatic principles and Copeau's theories\textsuperscript{211} - and in 1926 he certainly did write to Paul Claudel:

\begin{quote}
- - J'ai la plus grande impatience de lire votre étude sur le Nô. Depuis longtemps je me suis approché de cette forme sublime. Je l'ai étudiée autant qu'on peut le faire dans les livres que nous possédons en français et en anglais. Elle m'a beaucoup influencé et je m'en suis inspiré dans le travail que je fais faire à mes jeunes élèves.\textsuperscript{212}
\end{quote}

Waley's book contains 19 nô plays and one kyôgen text. One of them, Kantan, was selected and the group worked on it for a year. John Rudlin indicates that it was Suzanne Bing, not Copeau, who selected the play.

Bing, perhaps surprisingly, chose a fifth category Noh play (---) for them to work on. Other categories offer more obvious dramatic qualities for a first occidental encounter, but it was judged that the students were not yet ready for warrior's ghosts, demons and madwomen.\textsuperscript{213}

Indeed, Kantan does not have any of these elements. The play is a simple story based on a Chinese fable, about a young man, Rosei, who is on his way to the world. He stops at an inn, falls asleep on a sage's magic pillow which in a dream shows him how his life is going to turn out. He wakes up and concluding that all worldly success is futile, returns to his home village.

\textsuperscript{210}Pronko 1967, 89.

\textsuperscript{211}Pronko, 1967, 90. Thomas Leabhart, again gives very inaccurate information. He writes (Leabhart 1989, 21) that the Waley book influenced to Copeau's idea of trèteau nu. How could it have - trèteau nu was launched more than ten years before Waley's book was published!

\textsuperscript{212}Claudel 1966a, 146.

\textsuperscript{213}Rudlin 1986, 49.
The play is usually attributed to Zeami - although there is no definite certainty on his authorship - who made some changes to the original story.

The "sage" is eliminated, and in the dream Rosei immediately becomes Emperor of Central China. This affords an excuse for the court dances which form the central "ballet" of the piece. In the second half - - - the words are merely an accompaniment to the dancing.\(^{214}\)

First we are introduced to the hostess of the inn who informs about the location and the magic of the pillow. Rosei enters, the hostess goes off to cook a meal. Rosei falls asleep. In his dream he is fetched to the palace by an envoy and two attendants carrying a litter. Then the chorus describes the splendours of the palace where he enters. Also a boy dancer is present on stage, but he does not start dancing until later, in the scene in which Rosei has already reigned fifty years and celebrates with his court. The boy's Dream-dance inspires Rosei to dance the \textit{gaku} or Court Dance while having a dialogue with the Chorus. Rosei wakes up, has his final dialogue with the Chorus which urges him to turn back home. The play is over.

Because of an accident, this play was never performed in front of a full audience but as an open rehearsal, and thus there are no reviews available. However, it is reported that, even if Bing and the group never intended to create a \textit{nô} demonstration or imitate the style, the atmosphere of the performance reached a great authenticity. The comments of the French writer André Gide and the British director Henry Granville Baker, who both were present at the rehearsal, are often used to support this claim.\(^ {215}\) It should be said, that neither of these men was a specialist in traditional Japanese theatre, and thus the impression of authenticity merely indicates that \textit{Kantan} corresponded with their orientalist expectations or with their experiences on the performances of Japanese visitors in

\(^{214}\) Waley 1988, 193.

\(^{215}\) Shionoya 1986, 85; Bentley 1953, 259.
Europe. For example, Gide is reported to have admired Sadayacco's performances. Nevertheless, later scholarship on the project shows that a serious attempt to understand and respect the style of nō was involved.

Leonard Pronko has studied Suzanne Bing's notes on the Kantan project and builds an analysis on these. He agrees that the group did not try to escape the limits set by the nō style but confined itself to them. Because the nō speech is declaimed and chanted, they transposed the natural rhythms and inflections to music. Particularly lyrical or emotional moments were aided by the flute, while two drums gave a natural rhythm which seemed to command the movement of the actors and the very breathing of the spectators. Following the Japanese practice, all solo parts were played by men. Nevertheless, there were some women in the chorus which had an effect on the intonation and volume of it. An assistant was on stage to hand the necessary props to the actors, arrange their costumes, and perform all the functions assigned to a nō prop man. Faces were kept impassive, gestures were slow and solemn. Pronko cites Suzanne Bing's notes:

We enabled our postures, attempting to make of them a melody of noble and beautiful poses, one engendering the next according to the logic of the drama. A little more daring and obedience, and we composed the dances, one slower, another faster, as required. The Noh actor must never forget that he is acting a poem. He must refuse to call on facile personal emotion, which works directly on the emotion of the audience. -

- The Noh actor leaves the stage exhausted by this constraint.

Most interesting is that Decroux was one of the few present at the rehearsal-performance of Kantan, and it is not excluded that, since the whole project lasted

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216 Shionoya 1986, 85
for a year, he might have seen it in the process of making. The performance is
reported to have made a strong impression on him.

Decades later Decroux remembered this rehearsal as one of the most beautiful things
he had ever seen in the theatre. One could argue that it influenced the whole of
Decroux's subsequent work; years later, when he took over the school of the Piccolo
Teatro in Milan from Jacques Lecoq, he confided to Lecoq that he hoped to make the
students there move like Japanese actors.219

Unfortunately, Leabhart does not give any actual references for this interesting
speculation. Yet, in an interview conducted by Leabhart, Maximilien Decroux
sees that his father found Kantan 'admirable' and that he was always inspired by
it.220 In the same interview, Maximilien Decroux makes an interesting comment
on the students of the Vieux-Colombier school:

They studied things that professional actors did not know, among them the Japanese
Noh, from which, indirectly, mime came. - - It was impossible to find a professor of
Noh, so they did Noh based on what they recalled having seen five years earlier at the
Exposition Universelle. They did something completely different from Noh; they did
what would become mime.221

This statement has to be treated with caution. There is no other documentation
that would indicate that Copeau, Bing or any of the students involved saw a nō
performance at a World Exhibition. On the contrary, the biggest surprise for both
performers and the small audience of Kantan was how close to nō they managed
to get, without having any first-hand experience on it. There is actually no
evidence of a nō performance which would have taken place in 1919 in Paris. Nō
was introduced to French audience at the Théâtre des nations festival in 1957222.

221 Decroux, M. 1997, 54. Interview by Thomas Leabhart.
222 Sieffert 1960, 8.
The only Japanese performer that the students might have seen was Hanako, who was staying in Europe during the period, and her repertoire was far from no.\textsuperscript{223}

In *Paroles sur le mime*, Decroux writes about an inaudible spectacle, consisting of mime and sounds:

Tranquille dans mon fauteuil, je vis un spectacle inouï. C'était du mime et des sons. Le tout sans une parole, sans un maguillage, sans un costume, sans un jeu de lumière, sans accessoires, sans meubles et sans décor. Le développement de l'action était assez savant pour qu'on fit tenir plusieurs heures en quelques seconds et plusieurs lieux en un seul. On avait simultanément sous les yeux le champ de bataille et la vie civile, la mer et la cite.\textsuperscript{224}

This comment is often seen to be about Kantan. For example, de Marinis makes the connection in his earlier writings.

Decroux ricorda quindi l'enorme impressione suscitata in lui dallo spettacolo che gli allievi organizzarono a fine corso, nel giugno del '24, e diedero solo in forma privata, davanti a un publico ristretto. Si trattava della rappresentazione del Nô giapponese Kantan, sul quale la scuola aveva lavorato per un anno intero.\textsuperscript{225}

However, it is not clear if Decroux really refers to Kantan in his text. In an article written in 1939, this comment is made immediately after he has described les masques.\textsuperscript{226} His references to a play without words, make-up, and costumes or to battlefields do not seem to fit to the description of Kantan. And, indeed, after a careful reading of the text, Marco de Marinis has concluded that Decroux is not writing this eulogy about Kantan but about another closed student performance, which took place slightly later the same spring.

\textsuperscript{223} Hanako returned to Japan in 1922.

\textsuperscript{224} Decroux 1977, 18.

\textsuperscript{225} de Marinis 1980, 18-19.

\textsuperscript{226} Decroux 1977, 18.
In it, the students performed vocal mime compositions which were "more representative of the style and development of the school" - according to one of its participants, Jean Dasté -- as compared to the staging of the Japanese Nô.  

This information does not invite to a conclusion that nô theatre would have had a particularly profound influence on Decroux when he started his work on mime. Yet, it is interesting to examine briefly if there are similarities between Suzanne Bing's notes on the central elements of Kantan and Decroux's early writings. First of all, Kantan contains dialogue, even if it is veered towards stylised, musical incantation. Decroux was strongly against mixing any alien arts, such as speech, music or dance, with mime. Neither did he endorse the use of chorus, not even if it would have been used, like in ancient Roman pantomime, to recite the story which the mime performed corporeally. Props and costumes he tried to omit as much as possible - the idea of using a prop man sounds most impossible. The use of only male actors was not anything categorical for Decroux either. He realised his first production with his wife and worked also with other female performers. Eliane Guyon, for example, performed in the early productions. Surely, some scholars have noticed certain masculinity in the corporeal mime:

Corporeal mime which is best suited to angular, androgenous, lightly muscled, curveless, linear bodies, shows a clear preference for the masculine model of homo clausus.  

This, however, cannot be considered a particularly domineering element in the Decrouvian mime, unless we see the whole concept of neutral=being closer to

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227 de Marinis 1997, 29.

228 Please see Chapter IV.3.1.

229 Wylie 1997, 85. In this quotation, Wylie is examining Decroux in the context of classicism. The concept of homo clausus refers to the ideal of the civilised middle-classes of the 18th century.
the masculine than to the feminine. There is no indication that Decroux would have evaluated male performers better or more suitable for corporeal mime than female performers, or that he would have systematically desired to create any sort of male or female impersonation in modern mime. As a conclusion, there seem to be more differences than similarities between Decroux’s principles and the production of *Kantan*.

However, there is no question that the *Vieux-Colombier* period was crucial for Decroux’s development. In his recent elaborations, Marco de Marinis divides the *Vieux-Colombier* influence on Decroux into two main levels, thematic and technical. On the thematic level

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- almost all the numbers and mime plays of Decroux found their distant origin, even as far as the subjects were concerned, in the exercises and dramatizations of the Vieux-Colombier school.\(^{230}\)

The most important themes were the trades and the machine. Those would later appear in *les Copiaux*’ performances in Burgundy, clearly before Decroux started to develop them in the late 1920s\(^ {231}\).

In addition to the thematic influence, the technical influence of the *Vieux-Colombier* on Decroux’s work is considerable. de Marinis divides it into six major areas:

1. covered face which leads to enhanced corporeal expression
2. transgressing the pantomimic convention of correspondence between words and gestures
3. work on the dynamic qualities of movement (for example, slow motion, jerky movements, sudden immobilisations)
4. the principle of the articular and muscular interdependence of the body

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\(^{230}\) de Marinis 1997, 35.

\(^{231}\) de Marinis 1997, 37. It could also be added that these were typical themes for the silent film of the time.
5. the *raccourci*, i.e. the compression of the action in space and time into its essential parts without losing its comprehensibility and recognizability

6. the mime as one's own dramatist

Throughout his article, de Marinis builds his argumentation around Copeau's influence on Decroux, first challenging it and then eventually admitting the influence, stating that Copeau was "the father, or at least one of the fathers of contemporary mime - - without wanting to be - in spite of himself"\(^{232}\). Interestingly, de Marinis mentions Suzanne Bing only *in passim* - in a footnote.\(^{233}\) Yet, I would like to emphasise that the exercises that influenced Decroux most were not guided or developed by Copeau but by Suzanne Bing - and the group of students - and thus, for example, the genealogy of modern French mime that Mira Felner\(^{234}\) presents should be questioned. This, in spite of the fact that Suzanne Bing herself held a most devoted admiration towards Copeau, *le patron*.

Decroux himself gives credit to Suzanne Bing in the beginning of his *Paroles sur le mime* mentioning that she has been unduly forgotten and that without her, there would not have been a school, only a chaos.\(^{235}\) He also mentions that during his first year at the school he did not get a single lesson from Copeau\(^{236}\).

Barrault was aware of Decroux's early influences and also he mentions Suzanne Bing:

\(^{232}\) de Marinis 1997, 34.  

\(^{233}\) de Marinis 1997, 40.  

\(^{234}\) Felner 1985, 49. The genealogy goes from Copeau via Decroux and Barrault to Marceau and Lecoq.  

\(^{235}\) Decroux 1977, 13.  

\(^{236}\) Decroux 1977, 15.
Les premières notions de mime, Decroux les tenait du Vieux-Colombier et particulièrement de l’effort magnifique et désintéressé d’une femme à qui nous devons beaucoup: Suzanne Bing. Decroux avait notamment étudié avec Suzanne Bing le jeu du masque et il parlait de Suzanne Bing toujours avec respect et admiration.237

Perhaps we should call Suzanne Bing Ahe mother of modern mime@In addition to playing an important role in developing les masques, her contribution to the Kantan project was most crucial.

As seen, Marco de Marinis does not indicate other sources of the Far Eastern and nō influences than the Vieux-Colombier and Kantan. Thomas Leabhart, for his part, takes a broader view, referring to the influence of primitive cultures on Decroux’s work. In this context, Leabhart writes about the influences that Decroux got from Balinese and Cambodian dancers who performed in Paris. Leabhart’s writing has to be challenged on two points. Firstly, it is totally wrong to classify these performances as examples of primitive art - ’exotic’ would be a more accurate term. Secondly, Leabhart does not provide any evidence that Decroux saw these performances and thus could have ”incorporated certain articulated movements”238 from them into his technique.

Leabhart writes also about the influence of the nō play, i.e. Kantan, on Decroux’s technique but does not give any details of the process. He presents these influences matter-of-factly, without any concrete evidence. However, it seems that Decroux, in later interviews spoke favourably about nō.239 Returning to Suzanne Bing’s notes, such elements as impassive face, slow and solemn gestures, use of noble poses, and constraint of emotion are some things in

237 Barrault 1949, 32.

238 Leabhart 1989, 41. The Balinese group performed in Paris but King Sisowath’s Cambodian dancers gave a public performance only in Marseille, at the Colonial Exhibition in 1906 when Decroux was eight! The group’s two Paris performances were arranged for a restricted audience (Savarese 1988, 71).

239 Kusler Leigh 1979, 48; de Marinis 1997, 29.
Kantan that Decroux might basically have identified with. Thus it is too early to discard the possible influences, at least before a more detailed look at Decroux's writings in the 1930s. These - or rather just one of the two articles that date back to the 1930s - is compared to the central concepts of Zeami Motokiyo. Since we, thus far, have found no other even potential influence of traditional Japanese theatre on Decroux than nō and since Zeami is the most important writer on nō - as well as the presumed writer of Kantan - this choice seems justifiable. Further motivation for this approach is that, there is at least one scholar who claims to find endless similarities between Decroux's mime theories and Zeami's writings. Also Barrault's texts pertaining to the early years of modern mime will be analysed in this context - but from a slightly different perspective.

3. The 1930s Texts on Modern Mime

3.1. Mime as a Remedy for Actor's Art

Most of Decroux's texts included in Paroles sur le mime are from the 1940s and the 1950s. There are only two articles from the 1930s. The first one is a short piece of memories from the Vieux-Colombier, which was originally published in Le Théâtre et la Danse in July 1939. This article, in which Decroux, among other things, writes about his impressions on the student performances of the Vieux-Colombier, was already referred to in the previous chapter. In addition to this, Paroles sur le mime contains an article by Decroux which is definitely written before he started the collaboration with Barrault. It was originally published in January 1931 in Gestes et Jeux, a publication of Jean Dorcy's Proscenium group

\[240\] Wylie 1993, 111-112.
and is titled "Ma définition du théâtre". In it, Decroux is more concerned about the art of the actor in general than about mime. Mime is, nevertheless, presented as a remedy for the deteriorated state of the actor's art.

Decroux sees the actor as the only element that has never been missing in the theatre. "Le théâtre, c'est l'art d'acteur", theatre is actor's art, he writes. There is nothing particularly new in this statement. Emphasis on the importance of the actor in the theatre can be found from Jacques Copeau and Charles Dullin and, indeed, from Charles Aubert. More original is Decroux's opinion that, since the actor's art is the essence of the theatre, all other arts are alien arts. To save the theatre, all these alien arts must be banished from it for thirty years. During the first ten years of this period, all stage structures that would help the actor should be removed. For example, the actor has to be able to indicate his height without any technical means.

During the first twenty years, all vocal sounds are forbidden. After that follows a five year period of inarticulated sounds. Only during the last five years, the speech is allowed and even then it must be created by the actor, not by the playwright. After the thirty years, the plays will be created so that the actor mimes the action, proceeding to sounds and finally to the improvisation of the text which the playwright writes down. Only after this, alien arts are allowed to the theatre. And strictly on the actor's terms.

It is easy to hear echoes from Craig and Artaud theories here. For Copeau and the Cartel des Quatre directors, this remedy would have been too radical. None of the French theatre renovators of the preceeding two decades would have banished the text as categorically as Decroux in his early article did - however deep their concern about the actor's art was. Nor would they have totally banned the other, alien, elements, although Copeau with les Copiaus - perhaps in spite of

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himself - got fairly close during the last years of the 1920s. It is not surprising, however, that a decade later, in 1942, Gaston Baty criticised Decroux for over-emphasizing the mimic element in the theatre. Decroux's response to this criticism was, that only in those occasions when both verbal and mimic elements were poor, they could be mixed in a performance. It seems that in ten years Decroux had softened his stance slightly: the thirty year period did not have importance and mixing of the elements was possible, if not advisable. And definitely controversial is, that in the 1940s he surprised the audiences with Les Petits soldats, a mime play which contained singing and speech to the extent that Maximilien Decroux compares it to musical comedy. Yet the statements against mixing the elements appear in Decroux's thoughts still in the 1950s, as can be read from Eric Bentley's article on the purism of Decroux, and in 1962, he still held the opinion that a play should be rehearsed before it was written, and that the theatre was above all actor's art.

It should be remembered that he considered dance and music alien arts as well. And however close especially les Copiaus and la Compagnie des Quinze, which realized its first productions the same year as Decroux's La Vie primitive was performed for the first time, proceeded to create productions which based on improvisation and a text of their own live-in-playwright, they would never have met Decroux's purist standards. Dancing and music were an essential part of les Copiaus and la Compagnie des Quinze productions - so much so that Decroux commented them sarcastically.

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242 Decroux 1977, 49.
244 Bentley 1953. The article on Decroux is included in Bentley's collection of essays, In Search of Theater, and written in 1950.
245 Decroux 1977, 43.
246 Decroux 1973, 31. Interview by Thomas Leabhart. They danced, of course they danced! But it does not constitute a revolution in the theatre to dance at the end of a play!
There is one reference to Japanese theatre in Decroux’s article: he uses Japanese nō as an example of theatre which does not indulge in stage design but produces all acts and plays in the same set\textsuperscript{247}. He does not elaborate the theme, though, even if his emphasis on the work and importance of the actor would be in accordance with the importance of the actor in traditional Japanese theatre. With the exception that the Japanese actor, however good his physical skills, would not leave dialogue, dance or music out of his art. When it comes to the playwright’s position in traditional Japanese theatre, this was not particularly strong in the earlier days. Classical texts were, indeed, to a great extent, created by actors, but in the course of the history, also the task of the playwright became its own profession.

3.2. The Secret Flower of Modern Mime

There are endless similarities between the art of the Nō and corporeal mime: the strict discipline based in imitation of a master teacher, which is begun at an early age and continued throughout life; a method that demands self-abnegation and the imposition of acquired technique in which the student must not merely imitate the exterior form but must penetrate to the interior essence of a figure or movement to discover the impulses from which it springs; the study of basic character types (roles) that serve as models for the mastery of the techniques of imitation; the cooling down of emotion which is translated through technique in order to create an impersonal expression of a universal emotion or idea; the importance of will, distance and control as means to manipulate the body like a marionette; abstract and symbolic movement patterns deriving from a movement aesthetic built upon sculptural and architectural principles; a preference for attitude than for gesture; the technique of precarious balance between forces of resistance and momentum; the importance of economy of movement; the idea of transported immobility; the

\textsuperscript{247} Decroux 1977, 39.
Kathryn Wylie’s list of the similarities is long and impressive. When theories of no and their possible similarities with theories of modern mime are concerned, it is natural to turn to the writings of Zeami Motokiyo (1363-1443). In this context, only three of Zeami’s treatises are looked at, namely Fūshikaden (Teachings on Style and Flower, 1402), Shikado (The True Path to the Flower, 1420) and Kakyō (A Mirror Held to the Flower, 1424). The first one because it is the best-known and most often cited work of Zeami and the second and third because they deal with the fundamentals of the actor’s art. Unlike Zeami’s later, more esoteric and religious texts, these three are close to the physical training and the practice of the art of no.

The focus here is solely in pondering the parallels - the question whether Decroux and Barrault actually were familiar with Zeami and his texts will be dealt with later. In this comparison, the focus is also more in the theories of Decroux than in those of Barrault, whose texts will be looked at from a slightly different perspective.

While doubting the influence of Oriental theatre training on Decroux’s work, more precisely the character type of Man of the Drawing Room, Kathryn Wylie, nevertheless, sees that the aspiration towards this aristocratic character epitomises Decroux’s quest for yūgen (Grace) that Zeami writes about in Kakyō. For Zeami the way to start to create yūgen was, indeed, the imitation of nobility. As far as Decroux is concerned, this aspect remains slightly

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248 Wylie 1993, 111-112.
249 Wylie 1993, 117.
250 Zeami 1984, 93 (Kakyō).
controversial. Due to his socialist background and idealisation of manual labour, the obvious elitism found in Zeami’s writings seems quite far from his ideologies. Zeami’s revered patrons were the members of the nobility, according to whose tastes and presence the whole performance and its rhythmic pattern based on jo-ha-kyū should be created. In nō, the lower characters and their occupational gestures should not be too realistic - or rather too naturalistic - to disturb the sensitivity of the audience. This kind of a sensitivity towards the audience was alien to Decroux. Not only did he lack the desire to please the audience, but he would actually go as far as attacking his audience for not understanding his performances. Barba goes as far as speculating that perhaps Decroux’s mime was made for a non-existent audience.

Neither is the strong emphasis that Zeami places on starting the training from early age and the analysis of the actor’s development, developing and preserving the *hana*, through the years similar to Decroux’s training. He did train his son, Maximilien, for the trade, but normally his students started their training as adults. Decroux never established a mime school for children.

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251 Zeami 1984, 82-83 (Kakyō). Surely, there were financial reasons behind this: the nobility, namely the samurai elite of the time, was the most important patron of the nō companies. Ortolani also refers to theories which point out in Zeami’s writings there is a clear trait of wishing to improve the lowly status of the actors by tying the tradition of nō to Zen buddhism and the nobility that favoured this religion (Ortolani 1995, 87, 109).

252 Zeami 1984, 18 (Fūshikaden), 85-86 (Kakyō).

253 Zeami 1984, 10 (Fūshikaden). Zeami admits that sometimes, when performing for less sophisticated audiences, it is necessary to choose the style that this audience can appreciate (ibid. 41).

254 Dorcy 1961, 49.

255 Barba 1997, 13. Also, a student observed that, in the lack of public performances, certain sessions at Decroux’s school became very much like rituals, open only for the initiates (Sklar 1985, 73).

256 A good practical definition for *hana* is *stage presence* (Chappell 1984, x).
Of the relationship between movement and text, Zeami has clear views, which are quite opposite to Decroux\(^*\) who held that through the text, the actor would in fact become the author\(^*\)s slave.\(^{257}\) For Zeami, the text comes first: all the movements and bodily postures depend on the text.\(^{258}\) Surely, the training of the child actor is based on dancing, movement and chant\(^{259}\) rather than the text - after all chant and dance are the two basic arts to be trained\(^{260}\) - but in mature acting, the chant and the voice come first, and only after that comes the gesture\(^{261}\).

Certainly, there are also similarities between Zeami\(^*\)s writings and the theories of modern mime. For example, Zeami writes that when it comes to the highest level of accomplishment, the deeply beautiful posture is a pre-requisite for yūgen\(^{262}\). This evokes the importance laid on \textit{attitude} in modern mime\(^{263}\), as does Zeami\(^*\)s notion that an actor\(^*\)s concentration when apparently \textit{doing nothing} actually signifies that interval which exists between two physical actions. During this moment, the inner tension is never relaxed.\(^{264}\) Zeami also writes that no acting should \textit{firstly} use the body, secondly the hands, and thirdly the feet\(^{265}\). This

\(^{257}\) Bentley 1954, 189.

\(^{258}\) Zeami 1984, 27 (Fūshikaden).

\(^{259}\) Zeami 1984, 4 (Fūshikaden).

\(^{260}\) Zeami 1984, 89 (Kakyō).

\(^{261}\) Zeami 1984, 76 (Kakyō).

\(^{262}\) Zeami 1984, 94 (Kakyō).

\(^{263}\) Felner 1985, 59.

\(^{264}\) Zeami 1984, 96-97 (Kakyō).

\(^{265}\) Sekine 1985, 88. This is Sekine\(^*\)s translation from Fūshikaden. Rimer and Masakazu translate this sentence in a slightly more elliptical way: The most important aspect of movement concerns the use of actor\(^*\)s entire body. The second most important aspect concerns the use of his hands, and the third, the use of his feet\(^{2}\) (Zeami 1984, 27).
bears similarity to the priorities of modern mime, provided that the priority of the text, which is also behind this statement, is laid aside.

The three basic role types of nō are old person, woman and warrior. All the other roles grow out of these, and studying them is essential for the young actor. It is easy to draw parallels to Decroux’s four character types that he used in his teaching and training.

More than from individual techniques, though, the similarity can be sought from the religious devotion to the art. One who wishes to follow the nō must not engage in any other art, writes Zeami. If an actor really wishes to master the nō, he must set aside all other pursuits and truly give his whole soul to the art; then as his learning increases and his experience grows, he will gradually himself reach a level of awareness and to come to understand nō. Respect for the teacher and devotion to one’s master is also seen as a similarity between Decrouvian mime and not only nō but the Eastern theatre - and martial arts - training in general. There are numerous references to Decroux and his pupils as a religious holy order in which Decroux is the hidden master who reveals himself only to his disciples. In traditional Japanese theatre, the tradition is guarded by the schools or families, iemoto.

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266 Zeami 1984, 64 (Shikado).

267 Zeami 1984, 3 (Fushikaden). Zeami makes a slight concession in favour of poetry, though. Barba writes similarly about Decroux’s views (Barba 1997, 9).

268 Zeami 1984, 105 (Kakyō).

269 Zeami 1984, 106 (Kakyō).

270 Deshimaru 1982, 16.


272 Barba 1997, 11.
In the iemoto system, a personal teacher-disciple relationship is essential, and disciples do not communicate the artistic secrets to the outside world. The teaching method is not theoretical or abstract; instead it proceeds as the secret transmission from person to person of a private spiritual heritage through practical, experimental, and concrete training.  

The aspiration for building a coherent system - and non-tolerance for other systems - for actor art can also been seen as a similarity between Decroux and Zeami, and Oriental theatre forms in general:  

It is symptomatic that Étienne Decroux, perhaps the only European master to have elaborated a system of rules comparable to that of an Oriental tradition, seeks to transmit to his students the same rigorous closedness to theatre forms different from his own. In the case of Decroux, as that of the Oriental masters, it is not a question of narrow-mindedness nor of intolerance. It has to do with the awareness that the bases of an actor’s work, his points of departure, must be defended like his most precious possessions, even at the risk of isolation, otherwise they will be irremediably polluted and destroyed by synchretism.  

There are several areas in Zeami texts which are open to different readings: one can see either similarities or differences to modern mime in them. One of these areas is the relationship between text and gestures. With gestures one must project feelings that are in accord with words spoken. For example, when the idea of observing is suggested in the text, the actor performs a gesture of looking; if such matters as pointing and pulling are mentioned, then the appropriate gesture is made; when a sound is to be heard, the actor assumes an attitude of listening.  

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274 Leabhart 1997, 5.
275 Barba 1982, 6.
276 Zeami 1984, 27 (Fūshikaden).
Certainly, this can be read so that Zeami considers gestures important, but it can also be read as yet another example of the text's priority to the gesture. Especially in the case of symbolic gestures, the verbal expression should precede the gesture in order to create the most powerful effect. For example, the actor should say the word crying before the movement of weeping.\footnote{Sekine 1985, 96 (Sekine’s translation from Kakyō).}

The mask is another thought-provoking area. Actually, Zeami himself did not lay much importance on the masks in the training of the actor, and many of the masks used in no were developed and adopted to the form later.\footnote{Ortolani 1995, 149.} No doubt, for an untrained eye, there is an element of neutrality in the no masks (the mask of the young woman), which would tempt one to draw parallels with the neutral mask of the Decrouvian mime, but there are also masks with clear character traits in no (the masks of the old man and the devil). Ordinary persons are typically performed without a mask and that is why Zeami emphasizes the necessity to study the role and use the actor’s own natural expressions and not to try to imitate the facial expressions of the character. The characterisation should rather be constructed from the movements and general feeling of the person being portrayed.\footnote{Zeami 1984, 12 (Fūshikaden).}

It is clear that we can find both differences and similarities in Zeami’s and Decroux’s theories. Many similarities also depend on the reading of the texts. I would not go as far as Wylie in stating that there are an endless amount of similarities - many of the features listed by her can be read both ways, and many of them belong to areas that Decroux developed much later than in the 1930s. However, there are parallels to Zeami’s theories which make it justifiable to ponder where these would originate from, whether they were filtered to his work...
or were they perhaps, after all, expressions of the pre-expressive layer in the theatre.

3.3. The Martial Art of Modern Mime

There are no texts from Barrault from the 1930s. However, in Réflexions sur le théâtre, which was published in 1949, Barrault gives a good account on what he might have said on mime during that time.

Mime is the very art of Silence. It is the other of the two extremes of pure theatre - the opposite being pure diction. One should practice mime nude and the face covered with an impersonal mask. There should be no music or sound effects. The upper body, torso, is the source of expression. In Decroux’s words: the trunk of the body represents the truth - the arms are only extensions and explanations. All gestures originate from the spinal column - that is why the mime has to gain the control of the spinal column, joint by joint. Because from these joints originate the movement of the limbs.

All human gestures can be resumed to two essential movements: pulling and pushing. The focus is in the navel. Barrault lists nine points that are essential for the training of a mime:

1. The exercise for total relaxation which is equivalent to purification.
2. Consciousness of the muscles in isolation from each other. To learn to use a muscle without using any of the others.

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280 Barrault 1949, 35-36. Some caution, naturally, is needed since the text is written almost twenty years after the collaboration. It will be seen later that the text also shows clear influence from Antonin Artaud - but since these influences derive from the first half of the 1930s as well, the presentation of the article is relevant in this context.

3. Becoming aware of groups of muscles.
4. Acquiring the muscle tone.
5. Developing the stomach (or abdominal) muscles.
6. Scales around the spinal column.
7. Study of the spinal column as a whip.
8. Sincerity of emotion.
9. Developing both analytical and respirational concentration.

There are no direct references to any form of Eastern theatre or training in these texts by Barrault. However, several elements bring into mind, if not Japanese actor training, at least Japanese martial arts training, especially the importance given to the spinal column, concentration, relaxation, and breathing.

In practicing both Zen and the martial arts, it is essential to concentrate on breathing out. This draws energy down toward the lower part of the body and spinal column, removing tension elsewhere and giving fresh strength.

writes a Japanese martial arts teacher Deshimaru Taisen about the importance of breathing and the spinal column as the source of strength. The lower part of the trunk, hara, is important for the total control of breathing which Deshimaru, actually, considers the most important element in the martial arts. Breathing out is the moment of strength. Breathing in, for its part, is the moment of weakness, a stage when energy is at its lowest. Quite parallely, Eugenio Barba writes about Decroux's use of breathing:

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282 The martial arts are not necessarily that far-fetched as a point of comparison. Various kinds of sports were a strong inspiration to Decroux. An example of this enthusiasm is his writing about the boxer Georges Carpentier (Decroux 1977, 32).

283 Deshimaru 1982, 45.

284 Also in shamanism, the spinal column is considered the source of the latent powers (Wylie 1994, 104).

Contrary to generally accepted rules, the breathing out was the active phase where he (Decroux) forced and developed the action. The breathing was fast and he called it *spasme.*

Both Barrault and Deshimaru consider the technical training as a necessary phase but not the ultimate goal of the practice of the art. Barrault uses the expression "one should practice mime" which, again, brings into mind the spiritual way of practicing or following the way, *dō.* This practice is because of practice itself, not because of practicing for something.

Barrault is aware of the importance of the *hara* area. He requests the developing of the stomach muscles and states that the focus of the movements is in the navel. He is also using the term 'respirational concentration' which refers to breathing. A very interesting aspect in Deshimaru's text is seeing breathing as "a link between mind and body, spirit and posture". Eventually

> the correct posture, attitude of mind, and breathing fall into balance easily. In the beginning, the posture must be worked on consciously, patiently.

Furthermore,

> the posture creates perfect muscle tone with neither too much tension nor slackness, balances the nervous system, and creates harmony between ourselves and the universe.

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286 Barba 1997, 10.

287 Deshimaru 1982, 2.

288 Deshimaru 1982, 49.

On an advanced level, the balance can eventually be recreated in the four basic postures of ordinary life - standing, walking, sitting, and laying down. Deshimaru also makes an ironic comment on the Westeners having invented a fifth, *half-seated* posture by using the chair. This echoes interestingly Decroux's preference for standing rather than for *half-sitting*.

Decroux saw the world as divided between those who stood and those who sat. The standing ones were manual laborers, sculptors, dancers, and certain actors. The sitting ones were university professors, critics, office workers, and certain actors. In his article, Barrault does not refer to the concept of posture but, as seen before, it is one of the key concepts of modern mime.

The two essential movements, pulling and pushing, form a pair, a unity composed of two opposites that are necessary to each other. Other interesting expressions used by Barrault are 'consciousness', 'becoming aware', 'sincerity', and, of course 'silence', a concept reverred also by Deshimaru.

The text that we have compared to the text of Deshimaru was written by Barrault long after the collaboration between him and Decroux had ended, and it would not be legitimate to assume that Decroux held exactly the same views as Barrault, even in the 1930s. As a matter of fact, Kathryn Wylie does not see much similarity between the corporeal mime of Decroux and Eastern theatre training in general - regardless of the fact that she sees endless similarities between the corporeal mime and nō. The trunk, certainly, was for Decroux the...
most expressive area but its segments, the bust, the waist, and the pelvis, had a
different priority order: the bust was the most important of these three:

Unlike Eastern theatre where the movement radiates from the diaphragm and is
supported by the breath, corporeal mime movement tends to originate in the chest.
Breathing, which is an essential element of movement, is rarely, if ever, mentioned
by Decroux; and the abdomen, which is the true center of the body, is given little
emphasis and is nearly always flat and contained.\textsuperscript{294}

Yet, there are Eastern parallels in Decroux’s statements on the role of breathing
out and on the importance of the standing position. A closer look shows that
Wylie’s evaluation is actually based on the character type of the Man of the
Drawing Room, i.e. the Western aristocrat, which is only one of the four
character types that Decroux used. When she deals with the other character
types, the Man of Sport, the Man of Dreams or the Marionette, the impression is
different, and much closer to the Eastern training principles. For example:

The study of the Man of Sports entails the exploration of the techniques of the
counterweights - (which are) spasmodic movements of pushing and pulling -.
They involve an impulse from the stomach which passes from the center of the
body down through the legs and feet as the body both releases to and pulls away
from gravity.\textsuperscript{295}

The similarities between techniques used in the two remaining Decrouvian
character types and Eastern training methods will be returned in the chapter on
Japanese theatre forms and the role of mime in these.\textsuperscript{296} At this point, it is time to
look at potential influences from Charles Dullin and his \textit{l’Atelier} theatre, as well
as the actual performances and techniques that Decroux and Barrault developed
together in 1931-33.

\textsuperscript{294} Wylie 1994, 184.
\textsuperscript{295} Wylie 1994, 184-185.
\textsuperscript{296} Please see chapter V.
4. The Influences from *l’Atelier* and the Collaboration in 1931-33

Charles Dullin, whose enthusiasm about Japanese theatre and the *Nihon-Geki-Kyôkai* visit was touched upon earlier, provided a shelter for Decroux’s and Barrault’s experiments in the early 1930s. Both were members of Dullin’s company at the *Théâtre de l’Atelier*, and it was at this theatre that their first public demonstrations of modern mime took place. As far as Barrault is concerned, two of his 1930s productions, *Autour d’une mère* (1935) and *La Faim* (1939), were performed at *l’Atelier*. However, there seems to be ambivalence about Charles Dullin’s influence especially on Decroux and the development of modern mime. For example, Marco de Marinis does not mention Dullin in this context, and Jean Dorcy denies his contribution vehemently. Thomas Leabhart, for his part, finds several similarities between Dullin’s body language and modern mime. As far as acting style is concerned, Decroux himself was more consciously inspired by Louis Jouvet’s controlled, marionette-like style of acting than by Dullin's more emotional, melodrama-influenced expression which he, nevertheless, admired.

Decroux was a member of *l’Atelier* company from 1926 to 1934. He is occasionally mentioned in the reviews of *l’Atelier* performances, mostly favourably. For example, his characterisation of Captain Smith inspired a reviewer to an eulogy:

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297 Dorcy 1961, 38.

298 Leabhart 1989, 38.

299 Decroux 1973, 31-32. Interview by Thomas Leabhart. Before joining Dullin’s company Decroux was briefly a member of Jouvet’s company, and before that, he acted in productions of Georges Baty - whom Leabhart erroneously calls an actor and a student of Copeau.

300 Some reviews can be found from Collection Rondel (4 SW 6651) at the *Bibliothèque de*
M. Étienne Decroux a pu indiquer là de quelle puissance était son tempérament d'acteur: force, vie, autorité, ironie, feu, sensibilité, orageuse, art du mime et la caricature, intelligence aux profondes racines; tout cela qui est en lui, est révélé par ce saisissant dossin animé. Les directeurs de théâtre et producteurs de cinéma découvriront bientôt en lui - - un des plus puissants acteurs de ce temps.  

Also Barrault gives credit to Decroux's acting in the company, and describes it as stylised and compares it with dancing.

Whatever Dullin's influence was, at least he looked on approvingly on Decroux and Barrault experimentation. What is more, Leabhart thinks that l'Atelier was one of the few theatres in which this kind of experimentation would have been tolerated at all. And, according to Barrault, after considerable sceptical observation, Dullin was eventually impressed to the point that he admitted them to have reached the technical perfection of Japanese actors. Most likely, Dullin's point of reference here was the Nihon-Geki-Kyōkai group which inspired him in 1930.

L'Atelier also had a school which, among other subjects, taught improvisation and gymnastics. Even if Dullin was inspired by Japanese theatre, there is no indication of anything of the scale of the Kantan project having been developed there, nor is there any indication that the students of the school would have learned non-European theatre techniques in the course of their studies. The

l'Arsenal. Captain Smith was a play written by Jean Blanchon.

301 Darbois, A. Nouvel-Age 30.3.1938. His skills in this role are praised also by Fortunat Strowski, Paris-Midi 18.3.1938; Madeleine Paz, Le Populaire 23.3.1938; and Léo Sauvage, Le Peuple 4.4.1938.

302 Barrault 1972, 71.


304 Leabhart 1989, 42.

305 Barrault 1972, 72.
training was obviously quite practical and did not involve as much research as the training at the *Vieux-Colombier* school.

He devoted himself to teaching his students basic principles in diction, breathing exercises to free the actor, as well as gymnastic, rhythmic, and pantomimic studies. Above all he gave primary importance to studies on improvisation in the style of the commedia dell'arte.\(^{306}\)

Decroux taught at the school for a while,\(^ {307}\) and Barrault started there as a student before joining *l'Atelier* company proper. Later, Barrault recruited several actors for his productions from *l'Atelier*. Interestingly, it seems that Decroux did not hold the physical expression skills of Dullin's actors in particular esteem,\(^ {308}\) and recruited his collaborators from elsewhere. Decroux realised his first production with his wife. This was *La Vie primitive*, performed at the *Théâtre Lancry* in July 1931. Later the same year, Decroux performed *La Vie primitive* with Barrault at *l'Atelier*.

Jean Dorcy ponders how developed Decroux's mime was in 1931 when Barrault joined him. Dorcy had seen Decroux's first production of *La Vie primitive* and describes it as very rhythmical but still embryonic gymnastics. As far as Barrault's contribution is concerned, he writes:

> In 1931, Barrault also played *La Vie Primitive*. I did not see him in this, but he was no doubt faithful to the conception of Étienne Decroux. The opposite is unthinkable to anyone who knows the intolerance and the despotism of the master in this area -

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\(^{307}\) According to Lust (1974, 22) Decroux taught at *l'Atelier* as a professor of mime in 1944-46 but she also indicates that Decroux taught mime to his fellow actors at *l'Atelier* - which would have been in 1934 the latest. Leabhart also writes that Decroux was a mime teacher at *l'Atelier* at the same time as he was acting with the company (Leabhart 1989, 38).  

\(^{308}\) Decroux 1973, 31. Interview by Thomas Leabhart.
Decroux is less pliable than a steel bar. It should also be remembered that in 1931 Jean-Louis Barrault was only a student actor, with every restriction of corporal order that the profession entailed.\textsuperscript{309}

The division of labour between Decroux and Barrault was, according to Barrault, such that at first Decroux passed him the things that he had already learned by himself, and that after this, they started working on new concepts and ideas. Basically, they proceeded by complementing each other:

Nous nous complétions assez. Decroux par son sens analytique sûr et une intelligence créatrice exceptionnelle savait fixer les variations improvisées que j'exécutais plus spontanément.\textsuperscript{310}

So, Decroux analysed and Barrault improvised. Also Leabhart sees Barrault as more Dionysian and intuitive than Decroux, who was often Apollonian and cerebral in his modernism\textsuperscript{311}. Jean Dorcy is convinced that it was just this collaboration that created \textbf{the Mime}\textsuperscript{312}.

As far as Decroux's role as the instigator of modern mime is concerned, Barrault has willingly given credit to Decroux in his interviews and in his writings. However, in the chapter "Éducation Première" of his memoirs, Barrault does not make any difference between his own and Decroux's ideas. Most likely the difference could not be made, and it is justified to analyse their theories more or less intertwined, trying to focus in their thoughts and experiments in the early 1930s. Felner does much the same. She writes about "their work"\textsuperscript{313} without specifying which one of them was responsible for specific ideas and without

\textsuperscript{309} Dorcy 1961, 53.

\textsuperscript{310} Barrault 1972, 34.

\textsuperscript{311} Leabhart 1989, 66.

\textsuperscript{312} Dorcy 1961, 54.

\textsuperscript{313} Felner 1985, 56.
defining when exactly the discoveries took place. Leabhart merely maintains the idea of Decroux as the rational and analytical half, and gives Barrault the mystical and intuitive role\textsuperscript{314}.

Jean Dorcy is convinced that the theory of modern mime did not yet exist in 1931 when Barrault started working with Decroux\textsuperscript{315}. It was developed during the 1930s, and it was developed through practice, like many other modernist inventions. It has actually been said that modernism, first of all, was practice\textsuperscript{316}.

Decroux and Barrault did not create long performances, their work was mostly research and experimentation\textsuperscript{317}. The short pieces that were created, were also constantly modified. For example, Decroux kept on developing his first piece \textit{La Vie primitive} until 1940\textsuperscript{318}. Hébertism with its idealisation of unrestricted movement was one of the influences behind \textit{La Vie primitive}. Most interestingly, Mira Felner finds correspondences between the contents of Hébert\textsuperscript{s} book and the structures of both \textit{La Vie primitive} and its sequel, \textit{La Vie médiévale}, which Decroux and Barrault also worked on together.\textsuperscript{319} The themes of primitive life and medieval life can also be tied to a wider modernist interest in primitive, exotic and past cultures\textsuperscript{320}. In \textit{La Vie primitive}, Decroux presented a happy savage indulging such activities as climbing a tree, picking a coconut, and rowing on a river, altogether enjoying his muscles and not being restricted by clothes and social conventions. In \textit{La Vie médiévale}, the occupational gestures of medieval

\textsuperscript{314} Leabhart 1989, 41.

\textsuperscript{315} Dorcy 1961, 53.

\textsuperscript{316} Chefdor 1986, 105.

\textsuperscript{317} Barrault 1979. Interview by William Weiss.

\textsuperscript{318} Lust 1974, 16.

\textsuperscript{319} Felner 1985, 182.

\textsuperscript{320} Crunden 1993, xxii.
artisans were the materials which were worked on. In addition to modernism, comparisons to the ideas of Jean-Jacques Rousseau are not inaccurate.

Combat scenes were natural material for displaying physical performance skills. They provide some allusions to traditional Japanese theatre, especially to kabuki, where combat scenes contain plenty of mimed elements. We have also seen, that the kabuki of Tsutsui Tokujirō used flashy fighting scenes, which appealed to the audience. La Vie primitive included a combat scene, and during their collaboration in 1931-33, Decroux and Barrault created also a full combat piece, Le Combat antique. It seems that it was just this piece that inspired Dullin to praise the technical skills of Decroux and Barrault as comparable to the skills of Japanese actors. Le Combat antique was originally performed as an independent number after two years of collaboration and, later, as a part of Shakespeare's Anthony and Cleopatra at the Comédie Française in 1945. Later in the 1930s, Decroux worked on Le Combat antique with his son and students, completing it to perfection. The piece stayed in Decroux's repertory for several decades. For example, Eric Bentley saw it in the 1950s, and considered it the most impressive of Decroux's compositions, in which he presented all possible shades of corporeal expression.

When it comes to individual techniques, these emerged in shorter time. For example, Barrault writes that developing the stock-of-the-trade technique of 20th century mimes, the walk on the spot, took three weeks. Again, it would be too

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321 Lust, 1974, 16. According to Maximilien Decroux, his father and Barrault created yet another piece, named La Vie industrielle, together (Decroux M. 1997, 45. Interview by Thomas Leabhart.).

322 Lust 1974, 16-17.

323 Leabhart 1989, 41.

324 Bentley 1953, 176.

325 Barrault 1949, 33. This would later develop into the piece Marches de personnages sur place.
far-fetched to see direct Oriental influences in this technique. However, it is worth noting that in Japanese theatre, the walk is one of the most important techniques that the actor learns.\textsuperscript{326} This can be seen in \textit{nō} and its gliding walk or later, for example, in the emphasis that Suzuki Tadashi lays on the walk and the grammar of feet in the actor’s expression.\textsuperscript{327} Perhaps even more clearly the importance of the walk shows in \textit{butō}, in which the actor-dancer moves on the stage unnoticeably with small and controlled steps.

When the collaboration with Barrault ended in 1933, Decroux was again left alone to experiment with his ideas. Felner writes that many techniques that Decroux developed, were expansion from the research conducted with Barrault, even if his interest shifted from creating the illusion to more abstract forms\textsuperscript{328}. Using the terminology of modern mime, it can be said that Decroux’s interest shifted from objective to subjective mime.

As a summary of the influences from the \textit{Vieux-Colombier} and \textit{Atelier}, the parallels with traditional Japanese theatre and martial arts, evoked by Decroux and Barrault texts from the 1930s, as well as information on the practical work on mime by them, it is interesting to try out whether Pavis’s hourglass could illuminate any influences of traditional Japanese theatre, in this case \textit{nō}, to modern mime. The production of \textit{Kantan} is used as a central element in this hourglass, because there is no evidence that Decroux and Barrault saw authentic \textit{nō} performances in the early 1930s.

\textsuperscript{326} Please see Chapter V. for more detailed description on the techniques of traditional Japanese theatre forms.

\textsuperscript{327} Suzuki 1987, 6-7.

\textsuperscript{328} Felner 1985, 57.
SOURCE CULTURE: Japanese traditional theatre

cultural modelling: available literature; Craig \textsuperscript{a}
inspiration

artistic modelling: selected play, Kantan, and the work on it

perspective of the adapters: vision about physical, serious theatre

work of adaptation: by Suzanne Bing

preparatory work by actors: physical training and study at the school;
choice of theatrical form: the modified nō

theatrical representation of culture: the performance of Kantan

reception-adapters: selected audience, among it

Decroux

readability: open to creative interpretations

artistic modelling: applied in the development

sociological and anthropological modelling: Dullin\textsuperscript{a} encouragement at l'Atelier

cultural modelling: search for new means of expression

given and anticipated consequences: silent, serious, corporeal theatre

TARGET CULTURE: modern mime
In the upper part of the hourglass, we can place all the literature that was used in preparation of the Kantan project, as well as the influence of Gordon Craig that was indicated in the sources. These were combined into artistic vision of the group and the actual adaptation work by Suzanne Bing. Decroux’s presence in the audience, Dullin’s encouragement with references to the skills of Japanese actors and a certain freedom in the interpretation, acted as filters. Eventually, the lower part of the hourglass was filled with grains that helped in the search for new means of expression and emphasized silent, serious and corporeal theatre, i.e. modern mime.

The model seems to illuminate the case, especially since there is a fair amount of information on the background of the Kantan project but, of course, it cannot give any definite proof of Decroux or Barrault having absorbed the influences.

In Carlson’s model, Kantan as a performance seems to get close to the category in which an entire performance from another culture is recreated with no attempt to accommodate it to the familiar (degree 7), but the influence on modern mime would remain in the category where the foreign and the familiar create a new blend, becoming familiar (degree 4). The order of the categories seems logical. Whether this was the case is another question.

5. Decroux après Barrault: the Laboratory of Corporeal Mime

It seems that the rest of the 1930s, after 1933, Decroux worked on those pieces that emerged in 1940 when he opened his own mime school. This is a justifiable assumption since Decroux did have a tendency to chisel his numbers

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329 Please see Chapter III.1.1.2.

330 According to Veinstein (1963, 9) and Perret (In: Lecoq 1987, 65) the school was opened in 1940. According to Leabhart (1989, 43), in 1941.
over a long period of time. In the 1930s, these works were not tested in public performances, but in hundreds of private ones, mostly in his living-room. The 1937 piece, *Le Bec dans l'eau*, performed in connection with World Exhibition, is a curiosity, but it should be remembered that, even if Decroux's public mime performances were limited, he did have an extensive career as a stage, radio, and film actor throughout the 1930s. *Le Bec dans l'eau* clearly belongs to this category of Decroux's activities.

The following pieces were performed in 1940: *Le Menuisier* (The Carpenter), *La Lessive* (The Washer), *La Machine* (The Machine), *La Vie primitive* (Primitive Life), *Le Professeur de boxe* (The Boxing Teacher), *L'Haltérophile* (The Weightlifter), and *Marches de personnages sur place* (People walking on a spot). The focus was in short compositions, although some of these were later extended to longer performances. For example, *La Machine* was originally a solo work, which was later adapted for three actors. In 1941, Decroux and his students performed his first mimodrama, *Camping*, at *la Comédie des Champs Elysées*, and in 1942, he and his students gave more than sixty performances consisting of both solo and longer pieces. As far as Japanese influences or allusions are concerned, these compositions did not venture any further than to those allusions and parallels that were discovered earlier in the pieces developed

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331 Decroux, M. 1997. Interview by Thomas Leabhart, 49.
332 Leabhart 1989, 43.
333 For more details, see Lust 1974, 22. It must be said, however, that neither Decroux nor Barrault seem to feature in the most artistically merited French films of the 1930s introduced by John Martin in *Golden Age of French Cinema 1929-39* (1983).
334 Lust 1974, 23. Veinstein also lists most, if not all, of these (Veinstein 1963, 9). This list included in a typewritten *Note autobiographique* which Decroux addressed to André Veinstein (RO 11.579).
335 Lust 1974, 16.
336 Lust 1974, 23. Among those sixty were *La Chirurgie esthétique*, *La Dernière conquête*, *Le Passage des hommes sur la terre*, and *Le Feu*. Also these were private performances (Leabhart 1989, 43).
together with Barrault, *La Vie primitive, La Vie médiévale, Le Combat antique* or *Marches sur place*. Occupational gestures and sport themes are prominent in the repertoire. The feature closest to the Oriental was the concentrated and nearly religious work in perfecting these pieces.

6. The Oriental in Contemporary Mime?

Charles Aubert’s *L’Art mimique. Suivi d’un traité de la pantomime* (1901) shows that Decroux and Barrault were not the first ones to rebel against 19th century pantomime tradition nor the only ones to build new systems aspiring for total corporeal training of the actor. Elisabeth Harwood’s *How we train the body. The Mechanics of Pantomime Technique* (1933) is another, more contemporary, example of the same trend. However, it is hard to find from these works as close parallels to Oriental theatre than what were discovered from the theories of Decroux and Barrault.

When it comes to the actual practice of mime, it must be remembered that Decroux and Barrault were not the only performers of modern mime in the 1930s. Were there features in the other mimes work that could be considered close to or inspired by traditional Japanese theatre during that time?

In his book, *The Mime*, Jean Dorcy introduces some French mimes and mime companies that were active during the same time as Decroux and Barrault. Dorcy’s own group *Proscenium* was one of them. *Proscenium* was a political theatre group and used extensively the talking chorus technique but, at the same time, the group also aimed to theatricalize the theatre. The mask exercises - which had their roots at the École du Vieux-Colombier - were used. Eventually,

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Dorcy wrote his book in the late 1950s from his own first-hand experiences.
writes Dorcy, they discovered a growing conflict between text and gesture. They ended up performing poems, which were recited by one group of actors and mimed, either alternately or at the same time, by the others.\footnote{Dorcy 1961, 28-30.} The use of chorus and the combination of recital and non-verbal expression reminds of the conventions of traditional Japanese theatre forms, especially nō and bunraku, but also brings into mind the ancient Roman pantomime.

The other performers that Dorcy mentions were les Comédiens-Routiers of Léon Chancerel, specializing on masked improvisations; Gilles and Julien, two actors who combined music and mime; and the Compagnie des Quinze.\footnote{Dorcy 1961, 15-17, 23.} Jean Dasté was involved in both les Comédiens-Routiers and the Compagnie des Quinze - and he would also perform in Barrault’s first production in 1935. Dorcy devotes a whole chapter for him - and a part of this chapter deals with the 1947 production of the nō play, Sumida, which Dasté realised with Suzanne Bing and Marie-Hélène Dasté.\footnote{Dorcy 1961, 19-22.}

Dorcy’s report shows that there was a varied amount of modern mime activity in France in the 1930s, and that some interest in and allusions to Japanese theatre tradition can be observed in it. However, with the exception of the Compagnie des Quinze and Jean Dasté, none of them can be said to show any more Oriental traits than Decroux and Barrault’s work.

Since all groups presented by Dorcy actually derive from the tradition of the Vieux-Colombier, it is also interesting to have a look at some other contemporary representatives of mime, and examine if there was anything close to Eastern approaches in their work. Of the contemporary non-French mimes,\footnote{Dorcy 1961, 19-22. Interesting itself is that this play, as well as the other nō adaptations of Dastés A - s’inspirant, consciemment ou non, davantage du kabuki que du nō (Sieffert 1960, 10).}
British mimes and the American Angna Enters are interesting examples. Also modern dance, especially styles with clear theatrical aspirations, deserve to be looked at. For reasons elaborated below, I have chosen Kurt Jooss's *The Green Table* as an example and a point of reference in this area.

6.1. British Mime in the 1930s

Most activists of the British mime movement in the 1930s were women who, in addition to teaching and performing, wrote mime manuals. They did not always advocate mime as a remedy for the actor's art, but had a strong desire to train and educate young students. In this pursuit, they were on a parallel course with Jacques Copeau who, cherishing the idea of starting theatrical training from an early age, established a section for children at the *Vieux-Colombier* school. Of course, in their desire to educate and train children from an early age, they also resemble the ideals outlined by Zeami in *nō* training.

In a way, the British mime enthusiasts achieved more than their French counterparts. They organised an annual Mime Festival in London from 1935 to 1939, and published a special magazine, *The Mime Review*. The Mime Festivals were a one day event, and did not receive any extensive publicity, leaving *The Mime Review* as the main source of information. Most of the festival performers were amateurs, but at least in 1936 and 1937 there were special categories for professionals. As an allusion to Japanese theatre, one could

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341 Chisman-Wiles 1934; Ginner 1933; Mawer 1933; Pepler 1932; Pickersgill 1935; Newman 1934.

342 Copeau himself was influenced by the Montessori method.

343 Two to four issues were published annually in 1935-38. In 1939, *The Mime Review* was merged to *School Drama* magazine.
mention that competitions for both professional and amateur actors are actually an integral part of the no training and performance culture even today.

In 1935, the objective of the Mime Festival was first and foremost to encourage practice of mime in schools and to consolidate the work of those already teaching the subject in different parts of the country\textsuperscript{344}. During the following years, the goals became more specified, and were eventually formulated as follows:

1. To promote the study and practice of the Art of Mime.
2. To foster and guide the creative instinct.
3. To speak the knowledge that mime is the basis of all dramatic art.
4. To encourage the practice of mime amongst those suffering from physical disabilities.
5. To encourage the study and practice of the Art of Mime in educational and social institutions.\textsuperscript{345}

In addition to its educational value, mime was thus seen as a basis of all dramatic art. Many children's mimes seen at the festivals were based on nursery rhymes and fairy tales. Adults used such themes as audition, boxing match and swimming.\textsuperscript{346} Demonstrations of occupational gestures were also popular, but often there was a false tendency to regard perfectly reproduced occupational gesture as the whole art of mime\textsuperscript{347}. Actually, the repertoire bears similarity to Decroux's early work in which occupational gestures and sports were used.

In addition to the annual festivals, mime shows were organised by the two mime schools operating in London, The London School of Mime and Dramatic Acting, which was a subdivision of The London School of Dramatic Art, and Ginner -


\textsuperscript{345} \textit{The Mime Review}, April 1939.

\textsuperscript{346} \textit{The Mime Review}, July 1935, Vol 1, No 1.

\textsuperscript{347} Chisman 1938.
The Ginner - Mawer School organised a show named Mime Parade in London on June 13, 1937. The programme of the show gives an indication on the themes that were of interest for British mime professionals and enthusiasts in the 1930s:

1. The first act of *Le Enfant prodigue* (a famous 19th century Pierrot pantomime)
2. A contemporary satire named *Radio Breakfast*
3. People that walked in Darkness
4. The Idyll of Theocritus (a spectacle)
5. The Flood (based on a Chester Miracle Play)
6. Harlequin’s Child (based on *commedia dell’arte*)

World War II ended the festivals, and, unfortunately, there is no indication of their continuation after the war. There is no evidence on anything related to traditional Japanese theatre forms in the articles published in the *Mime Review*, the festival programmes or in the special shows, whereas the *commedia dell’arte* tradition is clearly present, as are the Biblical and Greco-Roman themes.

6.2. The Compositions of Angna Enters

In the United States, Angna Enters created her own line of performances, in which costumes, music and light, not the muscular work of a nearly nude body, conveyed the unspoken message. Most of her 250 pieces were composed between the late 1920s and the first half of the 1930s. She called them 'compositions in dance form' in the beginning of her career and 'the theatre of Angna Enters' later. In her book *First Person Plural* (1937), she still used the term 'mime' slightly ambivalently, whereas in her 1965 book, *On Mime*, she finally opted unconditionally for 'mime' and 'pantomime'. In the 1930s, the critics

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348 Cooke 1935.
did use such terms as 'mime portraits' or 'dance in prose' performed by an Über-marionette or 'theater making equal use of costuming, lighting, movement and drama'. Enters' performing career spanned for forty years, but three quarters of her pieces were composed between 1924 and 1936. She made her debuts in London and Paris at the end of 1920s and remained a regular visitor to European cities during the 1930s.

Enters' performance pieces were short, approximately four to eight minutes each. In most of them she portrayed a single character, usually a woman of a certain period, in her own reverie or interacting with other, imaginary, characters. She did not take several roles in the sketch. Evoking the period with a minutiuous historical accuracy was one of her guiding principles, which does not mean that she shunned away from satirical and political themes. In the late 1920s and the early 1930s, the popular Orientalism, the Delsartians and the German modern dance got their share of her irony, and in Mid-1930s she composed pieces related to the rise of fascism in Germany and Spain, commenting also the developments in the Far East.

A fascinating twist in Enters' performance career is that she actually started it with the Japanese dancer Ito Michiō who, after his years in Europe, had landed


350 Love 1931.

351 Terry, N.Y. Herald Tribune 17.12.1939. In this article, Terry also compares Enters' compositions to the Japanese haiku poems.

352 Cocuzza 1980, 102.

353 Cocuzza 1980, 102.

354 The Yellow Peril (1928); Delsarte - With a Not Too Classic Nod to the Greeks (1929); Oh, The Pain of It! (1930).

355 Among them Spain Says "Salud!" (1936) and Modern Totalitarian Hero (1937).

356 Japan 'Defends' Itself (1937).
to New York. Ito had originally come to Germany to study architecture and, subsequently, gotten interested in Jacques-Dalcroze's teachings. He had studied *kabuki* in Japan, and did see similarities between this form and Dalcroze's method.\(^{357}\) Eventually he ended up performing. W. B. Yeats' *nō*-inspired dance play *At the Hawk's Well* was composed for Ito in 1916. In addition to playing the role of the Hawk guarding the well, he had the opportunity to create his own, realistic and modernist dances for the play. As scholars have pointed out, these were clearly different from *nō* dances\(^{358}\). This is not particularly surprising since Ito had not seen a *nō* play since his childhood and did not know neither the form nor the texts. It seems that he used some of his *kabuki* training in creating the role, combining it with *Egyptian* hand movements.\(^{359}\)

Another amusing twist is that Enters wished to study with Ito, because she mistakenly thought that he was a mime teacher\(^{360}\). Eventually, she ended up performing briefly as 'a dancer of Japanese forms'\(^{361}\) but soon realised that it was not in alignment with her aspirations and, even if she used some Japanese and other Oriental themes in her compositions, she clearly was more at home with the European sources.\(^{362}\)

Unlike Decroux, Enters was not interested in creating a theory or a coherent methodology for her work. She worked alone and saw no way of reducing her

\(^{357}\) Caldwell 1977, 38.

\(^{358}\) Taylor 1976, 113.

\(^{359}\) Caldwell 1977, 45.

\(^{360}\) Enters 1937, 22. Interestingly, also Martha Graham performed with Ito in the beginning of her career.

\(^{361}\) Enters 1937, 22. She also mentions two Japanese, Tomashi Komori and Yasuchi Wuriu, as the teachers of these forms without specifying their style more closely.

\(^{362}\) Terry, *N.Y. Herald Tribune* 18.12.1939
free method into a communicable format. Like Barrault, she was more interested in performing than nurturing students - for which she actually consented as late as in the 1960s.

6.3. *The Green Table* of Kurt Jooss

It can be argued that in its sheer physicality or corporeality and level of abstraction, the work of Decroux and Barrault was 'more modern' than the work of the British mimes or Enters, and thus deserves to be canonised. But it should not be forgotten that, in the field of physical and abstract expression, contemporary German and North American modern dance channelled plenty of mime talent in its work. Angna Enters did not trust that her performances could be subsumed into a coherent methodology and did not express a desire to transfer her art to a disciple. German choreographer Kurt Jooss is a good example of the opposite and, for several reasons, it is useful to have a look at Jooss' choreography *The Green Table (Der Grüne Tisch)* from 1932. The same year, this piece won the first price at the International Congress of the Dance in Paris and was subsequently performed in Europe and in the United States

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363 Enters 1965, 7.

364 *On Mime* was a result from a training course and does show that she did have method and vision in her art, and not much patience with average students.

365 Of the North American dancers, Charles Weidman, was often praised for his talent for mime. Curiously enough, it is the male dancers who are usually noted for their accomplishment in this area! The women performers that were noted in this respect were not as much the legendary pioneers of the modern dance but those who, from a dance background, created their careers in cabaret with their clownish characters. In the 1930's, Austrian Cilli Wang and originally German Lotte Goslar, who emigrated to United States, are the most prominent examples.

366 In spite of this, there have been some revivals of her pieces. In 1981 and in 1986, Laura Segal held an evening of some of Enters' episodes using the original costumes and her descriptions of the movements (Mandel 1986, 341).
throughout the 1930s\textsuperscript{367}, making it one of the most prominent (Western) performances of the decade and an interesting point of reference in the development of mime during the period.

It is also fascinating that Jooss\textsuperscript{367}s art impressed Étienne Decroux. In the foreword of the English translation of \textit{Paroles sur le mime}, he regrets that, in the original French version of the book, he had not paid tribute to Jooss, who, although a dancer like Noverre, was a brother\textsuperscript{368}.

Joss, also an dancer, placed himself outside dance and old-style pantomime, and created a ballet known as \textit{The Green Table}. This play without words moves from satire to tragedy. Its success was great, and long-lived throughout the world; and it belongs to the period immediately after the First World War.\textsuperscript{368}

If Enters had taken up the political themes of the 1930s in her pieces, so did Kurt Jooss in his modern version of medieval death dance, "stemming from the \textit{danses macabres} of the past age and providing vividly realistic commentary on the destructive forces of war"\textsuperscript{369}. \textit{The Green Table} is named 'dance drama in 8 scenes' reflecting Jooss' mission which was clearly oriented towards dance theatre.

We believe in the Dance as an independent art of the Theatre, an art which cannot be expressed in words, but whose language is movement built up of forms and penetrated by the emotions.

\textsuperscript{367} John Martin mentions in his 1941 \textit{N.Y. Times} review that in its tenth year, \textit{The Green Table} had been performed more than 1750 times (Martin, \textit{N.Y.T} 23.9.1941).

\textsuperscript{368} Decroux 1985, 154.

\textsuperscript{369} Jooss 1937, \textit{Souvenir Book of the third American tour}. 
We desire to serve the Dance of the Theatre, which we look upon as the most intensely significant synthesis of living dramatic expression with the Dance properly so called.\textsuperscript{370}

And, indeed, this element did not go unobserved by the contemporary critics. It was considered that the Jooss Ballet was more closely allied with drama than many other forms of "theater dance" and that "the total effect of the average Jooss production is that of drama unfolded through action rather than told in words"\textsuperscript{371}. Clearly, we are moving in the thin demarcation line between mime and dance, which got even thinner when modern dance developed systematically towards dance theatre and modern mime absorbed more abstract ways of presentation\textsuperscript{372}.

The theatrical style that is closest to \textit{The Green Table} is expressionism with its sentiments of anger, fears and ironies stemming from World War I\textsuperscript{373}. The dreamlike atmosphere, structure based on episodes, incidents and tableaux, stylised and puppet-like characterisation and movements which were typical for expressionistic theatre\textsuperscript{374} are easily recognisable in it. The expressionistic acting in its stylisation approached dance in many cases, and, in the alternation of tension and relaxation in different parts of the body, could also resemble the work of the mimes\textsuperscript{375}. Even if expressionism in theatre was predominantly a

\textsuperscript{370} Jooss 1937, \textit{Souvenir Book of the third American tour.}

\textsuperscript{371} Terry, \textit{N.Y. Herald Tribune} 28.9.1941.

\textsuperscript{372} Jooss also used themes that were common with the 19th century pantomime. For example, The Prodigal Son or \textit{L'Enfant prodigue}, written by Michel Carre fils, was a popular mimodrama. The main character of Pierrot was originally created by Jane May in 1891. In the beginning of the 20th century many female mimes, such as Felicia Mallet, mentor of Georges Wague, and the British mime Irene Mawer excelled in it. The play was also filmed in 1906 and 1916, and one of the stage revivals took place in Paris in 1928.

\textsuperscript{373} Siegel 1989, 15.

\textsuperscript{374} Styan 1981, 4-5.

\textsuperscript{375} Aslan 1974, 128.
1920s phenomenon, Jooss' choreography and anti-war message retained their relevance in the 1930s, the more so when the decade drifted towards a new "vain war that leaves things unsettled"\(^{376}\). There were also other influences than expressionism. Oskar Schlemmer sees in *The Green Table* elements in common with the Bauhausian "gesture dance" and thinks that the basic steps by the dancers might be identified with the Bauhausian "spatial dance"\(^{377}\). The performing history of *The Green Table* extends to the present\(^{378}\). Certainly, and unfortunately, the themes of war, death, profiteering, and empty words of politicians have not lost any of their relevance in our times. Relevance of the style of *The Green Table* is a different matter. As Marcia B. Siegel points out, in the late 20th century no one is dancing quite like it\(^{379}\). The reason why *The Green Table* has been revived several times lies in Jooss' detailed original choreography and the copious work of notation that it was subjected to during the following decades - but this is also the reason why it does not give the dancers much opportunity for their own contemporary expressive choices. Jooss was a pupil of Rudolf von Laban whose first book on labanotation was published in 1926, and whose work, in its goal for universality and emphasis on the close relationship between movement and emotion, are in alignment, not only with Jooss but also with the work of many other representatives of the expressionist dance\(^{380}\). The first labanotation of *The Green Table* was done in 1938.

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\(^{376}\) Martin 1941, *N.Y.Times* 23.9.41.

\(^{377}\) Schlemmer, Letter to Otto Mayer, 26.8.1932. In Schlemmer 1972, 298. In this same letter, Schlemmer refers to, unidentified, sources which suggested that the work of Jooss and his company would not have been possible without their visit to Bauhaus. Schlemmer's *Triadic Ballet* was revived and performed at the same competition in which *The Green Table* won the first price and Schlemmer himself was surprised and mystified about the quality and strength of Jooss's work. *Triadic Ballet* was actually revived for several occasions outside Germany in the 1930s even if Schlemmer himself expresses certain reluctance to the revivals (Letters to Otto Mayer 31.1.1930, to Gunda Stötzel 2.6.1932, Julius Schottländer 3.11.1935, and Ida Bienert 25.10.1937. In Schlemmer 1972, 255, 292, 342, 365, respectively.)

\(^{378}\) I had an opportunity to see the reconstruction by the Joffrey Ballet of Chicago in Chicago on March 13, 1998. The original Joffrey Ballet reconstruction dates from 1967.

\(^{379}\) Siegel 1989, 15.

\(^{380}\) Siegel 1989, 15.
Notation in modern mime is an intriguing question. The key concepts of labanotation - space, time, weight and body - would seem to fit perfectly for modern mime and help in its preservation and interpretation. However, even Decroux, who worked on his short pieces minutely for decades, did not leave behind notated versions of his work or seemed interested in notation.\textsuperscript{381} Was this because it might have meant a too close liaison with music, an alien art. The idea behind notation is, indeed, to approximate the exactitude of musical composition\textsuperscript{382}. Or could we see yet another parallel to the Oriental masters in this. Perhaps Decroux just preferred to transmit his secret tradition of corporeal mime to his devoted students in person. In theatre, the idea of notation arose much later than in dance, even if the most eloquent of the 1930s theatrical visionaries, Antonin Artaud, queried for a notation system, which would transcribe everything which goes beyond the spoken word, thus postulating a way of notating body, facial expression, and stage\textsuperscript{383}.

Like in the cases of British mimes or Angna Enters, it is difficult to trace obvious Oriental features in Jooss' work, even if the character of Death in \textit{The Green Table}, in its harness-like costume and forceful, earthbound and military-drill-like movements can, momentarily, evoke a picture of a Japanese samurai. The comparisons would be too far-fetched, even if expressionism, which influenced Jooss, might, in some scholars' minds, evoke similarity with the suggestive and chargedly interrupted gestures of the nō theatre\textsuperscript{384}.

\textsuperscript{381} Jean-Louis Barrault seems even less inclined to notation which would preserve his \textit{mises en scènes} - at least according to Pavis's comment on Barrault's \textit{Mise en scène de Phèdre} which he finds more full of notes with metaphysical, musical and psychological remarks than the concrete production (Pavis 1982, 117).

\textsuperscript{382} And, \textit{vice versa}, the modern composition can be said to give a graphic dimension to acoustic matter (Pavis 1982, 126).

\textsuperscript{383} Pavis 1982, 125.

\textsuperscript{384} Aslan 1974, 128.
7. Infiltration, Misunderstanding or Return to the Pre-Expressive?

After a careful examination of the practice, theories and contemporary influences, it does not seem that there was any strong, conscious influence of traditional Japanese theatre on the work of Étienne Decroux in the 1930s. Nor can such elements be found from the work of other contemporary mimes. Decroux’s mime of the period builds mostly on sports, occupational gesture and themes of machinery. Decroux’s texts from the same period have hardly any references to Japanese theatre, which in its totality seems also quite opposite to his early views against mixing the elements in a theatre performance. Yet, theoretically, the 1920s and the 1930s performances by the Japanese artists, Hanako, Udagawa and Kawamura (Vengeange), and the Nihon-Geki-Kyōkai group could have inspired him, as could Gémier’s Le Masque and the Vieux-Colombier’s Kantan.

The same performances could also have influenced Jean-Louis Barrault who, however, does not refer to these in his writings either. It is difficult to find confirmation for any form of direct infiltration. Certainly, we can try to use the hourglass, for example to look at the Nihon-Geki-Kyōkai group’s influence on modern mime but the treatment has to remain cautiously speculative:
SOURCE CULTURE: the Japanese traditional theatre

cultural modelling: plays based on kabuki repertory suitable for Western audience, continuation of the visit tradition

artistic modelling: the selected plays, work on those with traditional techniques

perspective of the adapters: traditional theatre modified and made readable for Western audiences, commercial success

work of adaptation: by Tsutsui & Company

preparatory work by actors: combination of training techniques

choice of theatrical form: modified kabuki

theatrical representation of culture: the performances in Paris

reception-adapters: publicity, wide audience, among it Dullin, his comments, their possible effect on Decroux and Barrault

readability: high, yet open to interpretations

artistic modelling: physical expression, fighting scenes of modern mime

sociological and anthropological modelling: the work with Barrault at l'Atelier

cultural modelling: the theory of corporeal mime

given and anticipated consequences: silent, serious, corporeal theatre

TARGET CULTURE: modern mime
If Carlson’s classification is applied on Nihon-Geki-Kyōkai and the other Japanese visits, we would possibly move in the areas where foreign elements remain foreign but are, to some extent, used in familiar structures (degree 6) and in a situation in which an entire performance from another culture is imported or recreated (degree 7). In the case of the performances of modern mime, we could cautiously say that some foreign elements were assimilated into the tradition and absorbed by it (level 2), but not much more.

Yet, there are some interesting parallels to the Japanese martial arts and Zeami’s writings on nō theatre which can be found when Decroux’s and Barrault’s central concepts of modern mime are analysed. After locating the similarities between nō and Decroux’s theories, at least Wylie seems to be inclined to believing in Barba’s pre-expressive explanation. In Decroux, we can also find traits of the master teacher who like many Japanese sensei, would devote himself for developing and perfecting his system and expect total obedience and devotion from his students.

8. Barrault après Decroux: Towards Total Theatre

When it comes to approaching the total theatrical expression typical for Eastern theatre, the lead was taken by Barrault. His three productions in 1935-39 discarded the principles of pure mime and combined it with alien arts. From the very first one, they used music and contained words spoken by actors. The texts were free adaptations of novels. Like many Barrault’s contemporaries, Charles Aubert would have been pleased: in these productions acting was enriched by mime. In this process, Barrault also ended up leaving his master, Decroux, and

385 Wylie 1993, 112.
following new mentors, namely Antonin Artaud and Paul Claudel, both of whom were, in very different ways, strongly influenced by Eastern theatre forms.

In search for the influence of traditional Japanese theatre on development of modern mime we have thus far looked at the visits of Japanese performers and their performances, which were tailored for Western audiences and Western performances which were inspired by traditional Japanese theatre. In order to make Japanese performances accessible, the visitors emphasised dance, acrobatics and physical expression. Had these performances been more authentic, what would have been the role of mime in them?

The next chapter concentrates on the role of mime in nōgaku, kabuki and bunraku, and examines whether any of these forms is especially close to modern mime. Jean-Louis Barrault’s impressions during his trip to Japan in the 1950s are used as a sounding board. Of course, they can not explain the development of mime in the 1930s, but they might help to understand the parallels that were found between the theories of Decroux and Zeami and the writings of Barrault and the principles of Japanese martial arts. The information presented in the next chapter helps also to analyse Barrault’s productions in the 1930s.

Before proceeding to analyse Barrault’s productions, it is also important to have a look at the literature on traditional Japanese theatre that was available in France in the 1930s. This will be done in Chapter VI.
V. MIME IN TRADITIONAL JAPANESE THEATRE AND PARALLELS WITH MODERN MIME

There are several references to mime or pantomime\(^{386}\) in the history of traditional Japanese theatre forms. Interesting in itself is a myth about the pantomime of Umisachi, godly fisherman and first professional actor. Legend tells that, after losing a fight, Umisachi was forced to perform a pantomime describing a struggle against quickly raising waters\(^{387}\). It is also assumed that there were pantomimic sections in *gigaku*\(^{388}\), the music and entertainment part of religious services of the early seventh century A.D. The *Heian* period (794-1185 A.D.) theatre form named *shin-sarugaku*, which anticipated *nō* theatre and was performed from mid-1000th century until 13th century, contained mime and comic scetches\(^{389}\). Comic pantomime, *wazaogi*, is actually considered one of the major antecedents of *nō*\(^{390}\) theatre. Mime was also an essential building block of the early *kabuki*\(^{391}\).

Non-verbal presentation and representation in Japanese theatre can be traced back to *shintō* and Buddhist rituals. These influences extend also to modern variations of ritual theatre, such as *Edo Kagura*.

In the Edo Kagura, the god is silent. He performs his acts as pantomime, no doubt, because human words are too poor a vehicle to express his essence or revelation.

\(^{386}\) The terms *mime* and *pantomime* are used interchangeably in this context. Differentiating between them does not seem essential for the scholars of Japanese theatre forms.

\(^{387}\) Ortolani 1995, 8.


\(^{389}\) Inoura-Kawatake 1981, 42-44. These scetches resemble strongly the *lazzi* of *la commedia dell’arte*.

\(^{390}\) Ortolani 1995, 58.

\(^{391}\) Ortolani 1995, 175.
Silently he acts out his myth.  

Like most Eastern theatre forms, fully-formed nōgaku and kabuki combine dance, mime, music and dialogue into an entity. The performances are total theatre at its purest form. For Western audience, the thin line between mime and dance seems often blurred. It is also worth noting, that the earliest examples of Japanese theatre that French and other Western spectators saw, did not contain much speech and that, for this reason, they were labeled as dance or "Japanese pantomime". Those individuals who were more informed than average spectators, such as A. Iacovleff and S. Elisseev, felt necessary to clarify the difference between those forms that used mostly dance and those that relied also on text and other performance elements:

Parmi les œuvres dramatiques, une place spéciale était faite aux ballets et aux pantomimes. Les Japonais distinguent les jikyōgen, pièces où le parlé est le plus important, et les shosagoto où la coreographié est l'élément dominant.

According to Japanese scholars, kabuki can be best characterized as a quasi-musical dramatic composite art form, consisting of visual beauty that lays great emphasis on sensual use of colour and pictorial composition and the complicated and versatile musicality of the samisen. Dance and music are a part of all, even the most realistic, kabuki performances.

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392 Immoos 1983, 304.
393 This perception still lives. Fischer-Lichte writes about Ariadne Mnouchkine's Shakespeare productions: the Japanese elements further signified very specific situations; the entrance of court was marked by Japanese music, the court ceremonies by mime-like Japanese gestures, the uprising of the nobles against Henry, in contrast, by pantomimic Japanese gestures (Fisher-Lichte 1990, 282).
394 Iacovleff-Elisseev 1933, 85. Shosagoto refers to kabuki plays which consist primarily of dancing.
Kabuki actors themselves emphasize the role of dancing in their work and training:\(^{396}\):

At the heart of Kabuki acting is classical Japanese dance; so that 80\% of the training is physical and 20\% is vocal. Even in a realistic Kabuki play, the most trivial gestures are frequently more closely related to dance than to acting. Nearly every gesture is accompanied by music.\(^{397}\)

However, it is interesting that, in many cases, a Western viewer would not classify a kabuki dance as a dance. Leonard Pronko has interesting notions on it:

- - Kabuki dance, except for its sense of rhythm and control, does not resemble Western dance in any way. Whereas Western dance tends to pull away from the ground, to rise in the air, and to become abstract, Kabuki dance in harmony with gravity is tied quite firmly to the earth, and takes its point of departure the natural movements of everyday life. Its very essence lies in its gestures, each of which holds a specific meaning. By nature a dance drama, Kabuki converts words into gestures, each of which holds a specific meaning. Rather than emphasizing movement, it stresses the grace and the dynamic tension of poses; Kabuki has been described as moving from pose to pose.\(^{398}\)

It is striking how accurately this description fits to modern, Decrouvian mime. Unlike Western dance, Decroux\textregistered\s mime is earthbound. The traditional figure of the dancer is free and soaring; the typical figure of mime is struggling and earthbound.\(^{399}\) The movements are sudden and irregular and earthbound like those of life, observes also Eric Bentley.\(^{400}\)

\(^{396}\) Baiko 1982, 100-101.

\(^{397}\) Baiko 1982, 95.

\(^{398}\) Pronko 1969, 146.

\(^{399}\) Decroux 1978, 63. Interview by Vernice Klier. It should be said, though, that Decroux valued the classical ballet as a system.

\(^{400}\) Bentley 1953, 188. The dance critic Raoul Gelabert writes that of all the dance...
Meaningless gesticulation is as alien in traditional Japanese theatre as in modern mime. Use of gesture is based on intensity and concentration, tension and its eventual bursting out to expressive gestures. The principle of jo-ha-kyū, applies both in kabuki and in nō. Jo-ha-kyū can be interpreted as a tempo and an energy concept. In terms of tempo, it can be translated as "slow, gradually accelerating, and fast", and in terms of energy as "starting, building up, and climaxing".401

There is no naturalistic imitation of movement and gestures in traditional Japanese theatre, which gives the actor wider possibilities to use, for example, his feet and legs402. Neither is there any need to display the actor's body: the body and its muscles are not exposed, but covered with layers of clothes.

A closer look on how mime is used and what kinds of gesture and body movement are typical for nōgaku and kabuki, will help to clarify the role of mime in traditional Japanese theatre. It is also useful to have a look on some connections between modern mime and bunraku.

1. Kabuki: mie and dan-mari

There are two typical uses of mime in kabuki plays, mie and dan-mari. Mie is a bout of intense movement which culminates into a sort of tableau vivant, in which the actor or a group of actors freeze and stand still, creating a beauty of kinetic formation®.

forms, Decroux prefers the oriental, as being less affected, despite its stylization.® (Gelabert 1959).

401 Berberich 1984, 212.
402 Pronko 1969, 147.
Les acteurs jouent au ralenti: tous les muscles hypertendus, ils détaillent le moindre mouvement et finissent par arrêter une attitude en respiration tenue, les yeux louchant et la bouche grande ouverte.\textsuperscript{404}

\textit{Mie} is an integral part of the \textit{aragoto kabuki}, in which brave heroes and their adversaries play a central role. However, \textit{mie} is used also in the softer \textit{wagoto kabuki}, and even in realistic \textit{sewamono} plays. It was a technique which, like many \textit{kabuki} techniques, \textit{was} used also in \textit{shimpa}\textsuperscript{405}. Heroes of \textit{aragoto kabuki} could also exercise their mime skills in such scenes as uprooting the stalks of bamboo\textsuperscript{406}.

\textit{Dan-mari} are even closer to Western mime than \textit{mie}. These are sections that, like \textit{mie}, are used as a punctuation of a scene, even if they usually are longer than \textit{mie}. A.C. Scott defines \textit{dan-mari} as pantomime or dumb show, which is closely connected to fighting scenes and techniques.\textsuperscript{407} Ohashi writes along same lines, yet adding a note about scenes that are assumed to take place in darkness:

\begin{quote}
Les \textit{dan-maris} (bouche close) sont d'autres moments mimés qui ponctuent le spectacle. Ils durent plus longtemps que les miés et marquent un changement important dans le destin du héros. Sur scène, plusieurs personnes miment un combat ou semblent se chercher comme s'il faisait nuit. Pendant ce temps, sur place, d'un seul coup, le héros change de coutume, et le public comprend que sa vie a changé de cours.\textsuperscript{408}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{404} Ohashi 1987, 134.
\textsuperscript{405} Nygren 1993, 36.
\textsuperscript{406} Komintz 1997, 75.
\textsuperscript{407} Scott 1956/1972, 111.
\textsuperscript{408} Ohashi 1987, 134.
Kabuki battle scenes were highly stylised: the protagonist would fight a group of attackers using only a fan and not touching anybody. The whole act of tachimawari, the stage fighting, is actually closer to to choreography than to realistic fight.\(^{409}\) A modern kabuki actor Nakamura Matazo gives an example of a tachimawari scene in the kabuki play Benten Kozo:

The star playing Benten mimes his blows and poses dramatically while the other actors do the acrobatics.\(^{410}\)

The fan is an indispensable and versatile prop for a kabuki actor:

In Kabuki, a samurai is returning from the battlefield. In his impressive and heavy warrior's attire, he is like a big dragonfly which has not yet shed its cocoon. He has two swords hanging from his belt. He tells about his recent fight. In a while he will perform it. But he will perform it sitting down, and in this great mime he will not draw his sword. He will act the battle using only his fan. - - In Kabuki the fan mime is realistic; the fan deals and repels blows, enters the body, slides over the throat. - - With the help of a fan one can represent everything which is not a fan.\(^{411}\)

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\(^{409}\) Leims 1990, 111.

\(^{410}\) Nakamura 1990, 41.

\(^{411}\) Kott 1984, 121.
In kabuki, these two types of mime, mie and dan-mari are used in the culmination points of the performances. However, also individual character portrayals contain opportunities for mimed expression. Mime is an integral part of acting technique of kabuki onnagata, the female impersonator. Gestures and expressions of a "woman" are presented in their ideal, stylised form to the extent that the actor creates an illusion of being a woman. In nô, the actor can be said to symbolise a woman by wearing a certain mask, costume and wig. In kabuki, he goes further, by using not only a costume and elaborate make-up, but also gestures and voice of a woman. As a matter of fact, training of onnagata begins with learning to walk, stand and sit appropriately. After this initial training, he has to learn to move hands and head and get accustomed to using the costumes and wigs.

One opportunity for onnagata to express emotions with gestures, is the often-occurring act of weeping or suppressing tears. The actor may dab his eyes with his sleeve or a hand-towel, slowly moving his head from side to side, or put a paper or edge of a hand-towel between his teeth and bite on it. Gestures vary depending on the age of the character and are codified differently for young, middle-aged and old women. Smoking kiseru (a long-stemmed pipe), which is typical for the courtesan and old woman characters, offers several possibilities for interesting movements and gestures with a power to express a wide range of emotions.

It is sometimes questioned whether women could create convincing onnagata characters. Many Japanese traditionalists still consider this impossible, and Decroux writes about his experience with female impersonation in one of his productions along same lines:

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When we produced Little Soldiers we didn’t have any girls in the troupe. So my son played the role of a young lady who crosses the courtyard of the barracks. Then one day we had a girl in the troupe. But she couldn’t play the role. We had my son continue to play it. She was a woman, but she didn’t see what a woman was because she was a woman!  

A kabuki actor’s face is not covered with a mask, but elaborate make-up is applied on both female and male characters. A special make-up, kumadori, is used for heroic and divine characters. Mimicry is used skilfully. The kabuki actors have a large variety of eye, eyebrow and lip movements to express a wide range of emotions, much in the same way as Indian and South-East Asian performers. Surely, Decroux’s preference for neutral mask is a total opposite to this.

2. Nō and kyōgen: Technical Perfection in Silence

While gestures of kabuki are often exaggerated and expressionistic, the expression of nō is characterised by its restraint and slowness. For Paul Claudel, slowness was one of the two features which Europeans usually found surprising in nō. The other surprising element was the use of chorus. The chorus in nō never represents an opinion or a character of its own. Its task is to build up tension and create atmosphere and to add explanations or insights.

The amount of gestures in nō is limited. The gestures used are mostly highly

415 Decroux 1978. Interview by Thomas Leabhart.

416 Claudel 1966b, 144-45, 151.

417 Sekine 1985, 102.
stylised, far from their realistic origins.

Les gestes du nô sont limités au nombre de cinquante environ; ils sont abstraits à part quelques exceptions telles que: indiquer le ciel et la terre avec un éventail fermé dans la main droite; contempler la lune ou le paysage avec la main levée au front; embrasser le monde en joignant les mains devant soi ou, plus simplement, pleurer en cachant ses yeux avec la main.418

Yet, even if the symbolism of gestures is marked, one can actually find realistic, symbolic and abstract elements intertwined in the movement patterns of nô.

As Noh developed from a kind of mimetic art, the patterns with concrete signifigance are far more numerous, yet many of those movements are used symbolically. Therefore the Noh patterns can be classified as realistic (descriptive), symbolic, or abstract.419 The realistic patterns generally correspond to the text; the symbolic patterns are typified by the weeping pattern, and the abstract patterns in the main are characteristic of the long instrumental dances.420

Like in kabuki, fan is an essential means of expression in nô. In this theatrical writing system, movements of fan are signs of an alphabet. If a fan is open and covers the face, it means sleep. A fans folded, open, raised above the head, held horizontally or moved forward, resting on the left or right arm, mean respectively - listening, brooding, looking at the moon, at the water, at the mountains, at flowers.421 Here we can actually find similarity to the conventional gestures of 19th century European pantomime, in which admiration of a beauty could be expressed by a half-circular hand movement in front of one’s face and love by

418 Ohashi 1987, 134.
419 Komparu 1983, 217.
421 Kott 1984, 112.
placing crossed palms on one’s heart.

Shamanistic or ritualistic influence behind the slowness of nō expression is clear. Speech is not meant to be direct communication, but rather lyrical evocation of thoughts. Drums accompany the speech. As in Zen meditation, psychic concentration results from somatic arrest. The numbness of players mesmerises the audience. The themes of nō often deal with supernatural things.

--- conclusion est toujours la vanité des joies et des douleurs humaines, et le tout se termine par une pantomime rituelle ---

Komparu Kunio interprets nō for Western viewers, emphasising the importance of movement as an expressive language:

Rather than comparing Noh to opera or drama or ballet, we must classify it as musical dance-drama, in which mime is a major element.

Usually, the importance of words recedes towards the end of the play when the weight of the action is more and more taken over by dance. Finally, the play ends in silence. Like in kabuki, a dance is the culmination of a scene. The music, the beauty of form and voice all come to climax in pantomimic dance. Wrote also William Butler Yeats in his introduction to The Classic Noh Theatre of Japan.
Some nō actors describe their art as a dance of walking. And, indeed, one of the most interesting features of nō acting is the walk.

Slowly, Waki comes to the stage in the garb of a Buddhist monk. He walks but at the same time does not move, as in Zeno's famous paradox of the arrow. All Noh actors walk, or rather glide, like this. They wear buskin sandals with one strap between the toes. In this stiff yet steady walk they never lift their heels off the ground.

This gliding walk (suriashi), like all movement in nō, is founded on a single basic posture. Correct posture comes from proper placement of pelvis. The stomach and buttock muscles are held inward, the knees bent slightly, and the whole pelvis is tilted forward and down. The torso, as well as the neck and the head, are held straight, which gives the upper body a stiffened look. On his visit to Japan in 1960, Barrault learned that the posture has its roots in the posture of greeting.

J'apris ainsi que cette attitude pliée vient de la position de salut. Pour prendre l'attitude, on s'incline comme pour saluer à la japonaise, le plat des mains sur les cuisses. Puis le haut du buste se relève, mais pas le bas. Et l'on se met à glisser. Soulever le pied, par appui du talon, sans bouger un seul orteil, c'est très difficile.

Walk on a spot was already presented as one of the basic techniques of modern mime. We have also touched on the importance that modern Japanese performance, namely the training method of Suzuki Tadashi, lays on the walk. When Barrault visited Japan, nō and kyōgen performances were arranged for him. An unnamed actor of the Kanze school and Barrault traded technical secrets of walking.

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427 Berberich 1984, 211.
428 Kott 1984, 111.
430 Barrault 1961a, 88.
Je demandai à mon ami de m’apprendre à marcher comme lui. Il accepta, à la condition que je lui apprenne la marche sur place que je faisais dans Baptiste; car il avait été voir notre représentation le même soir.  

Decroux’s work on walking techniques bears similarities to nō expression. Kathryn Wylie writes interestingly about one of the character types, l’homme du songe (man of dreams), that Decroux used in his training. L’homme du songe refers to a poetic figure who moves in a dream-like, slow-motion manner, and whose body is inclined backwards with the bust projected towards the sky:

The most characteristic feature of this figure is the walk, which is similar to the gliding motions of the No. The body moves evenly and slowly across the floor, always maintaining the same level.

The masks affect to movement as well. It has been pointed out that the actor’s vision in the small-eyeholed nō mask is very limited, thus forcing him to move cautiously on the stage.

- - the eyes look straight forward without staring at any fixed point in space - in other words, space is grasped as a whole. - - this not only gives the actor a wider range of vision, but also allows the actor to use a focused gaze to accentuate and strengthen a particular gesture.

Physical requirements for a nō actor are considerable. In that perspective, it is extraordinary that there are no separate exercises for developing the body in the

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431 Barrault 1961a, 87.
432 Wylie 1994, 185. The other three characters that Decroux used were l’homme du salon, l’homme du sport, and marionette. There is no indication that Decroux would have used these already in the 1930s.
434 Berberich 1984, 209.
training of a nō actor, but that the focus of training is predominantly in mental and psychological aspects. Body is trained and developed entirely by learning the essential movement patterns from the masters.  

Dance and mime elements caught Jean-Louis Barrault's eye in kyōgen:

- - les intermèdes comiques, ou Kyogen, sont comparables à nos farces et à nos soties du Moyen Age. Mais ce qui caractérise les uns comme les autres, c'est qu'ils sont surtout de la danse, du chant et de la mimique.  

Barrault saw in the short kyōgen farces some similarity to the lazzì of la commedia dell'arte which, of course, were not purely mime or dance either. In both forms, fun is made of lazy servants, arrogant masters, and vain gods.

The word kyōgen is usually translated "wild words" which seems to stress the importance of dialogue. Nevertheless, in actual performances, mime skills are in high demand. Actors perform pure pantomime, without props, as in case of miming the opening of an imaginary sliding door. Facial expressions are important, since masks are used only in a limited number of roles. Also acrobatic skills are essential, especially in performing animal roles.

A form named Mibu kyōgen, performed at the Mibu temple in Kyoto, is a totally different style. In spite of the name kyōgen, these performances are Buddhist mystery plays, not comical acts, and one example of ritualistic use of silence. Speech is not important since the gods would find human words inadequate.

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435 Emmert 1987, 132.

436 Barrault 1961a, 75.

437 Barrault 1961a, 75.


anyway\textsuperscript{440}. These masked pantomimes influenced also \textit{Edo kagura} and its distinctive mime elements\textsuperscript{441}.

3. \textit{Bunraku}: the Puppets' Influence on Acting

As seen earlier, modern mime had potential in providing Western theatre an ideal actor, the Über-marionette.

Of all the arts, mime seems closest to the manipulated puppet. For a mime, his own body is apart from him, more so than an actor; - - a mime moves his body as a manipulator moves a puppet. A mime is a body, a puppet manipulated, as in \textit{Bunraku}, in the sight of the audience\textsuperscript{442}.

\textit{Bunraku}, the best known of Japanese puppet theatre forms, influenced deeply both \textit{kabuki} repertory and acting techniques already in 17th century. Many \textit{kabuki} plays are based on \textit{bunraku repertoire}. Especially, the so-called double-suicide plays use a narrator and a \textit{samisen} player, which is otherwise unusual in \textit{kabuki}.\textsuperscript{443} In some respects this practice resembles the use of chorus in \textit{nō}\textsuperscript{444}. In these kinds of \textit{kabuki} plays, the actors also speak, and the narrator provides only additional information on the surroundings and the psychological state of the characters\textsuperscript{445}. Another special technique is \textit{kudoki}, which can be found in many \textit{kabuki} plays of puppet theatre origin. \textit{Kudoki} is a passage in which

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{440} Immoos 1983, 305.
\item \textsuperscript{441} Ortolani 1995, 26.
\item \textsuperscript{442} Kott 1984, 122.
\item \textsuperscript{443} Nakamura 1990, 13-14.
\item \textsuperscript{444} Sekine 1985, 102; Inoura-Kawatake 1981, 112.
\item \textsuperscript{445} Inoura-Kawatake 1981, 187.
\end{itemize}
onnagata, accompanied by samisen music and narration, moves about the stage expressing with gestures the sadness of her situation. The actor matches his dance-like movements to the musical and narrative accompaniment.

Rather than puppet theatre, Barrault prefers to call *bunraku* theatre with puppets. He further compares the manipulators of puppets to God and Destiny and the puppet to the man. A reference to such entities as God and Destiny, of course, is a thoroughly Western projection and reflects Barrault’s lack of knowledge of Japanese religion and philosophy in which these concepts do not have the same meaning as in Western religion.

On his visit to Japan in 1960, Barrault had a chance to see the same play as both *kabuki* and *bunraku* versions. He preferred the *bunraku* version, even if he was impressed by the virtuosity of the *kabuki* actor using the techniques of puppet theatre.

In the beginning of the 20th century, the proportion of those *kabuki* plays in which the actors played the roles of the marionettes was as high as 35%. It may be that *bunraku* is the only puppet theatre in the world that has employed techniques advanced enough to exert a serious influence on live acting. Without this influence, *kabuki* could have become a theatre of illusion, like the Western

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446 Laderrière 1981, 34.
447 Barrault 1961a, 92.
449 Barrault 1961a, 100.
theatre from 19th century on, speculates Ando Tsuruo\textsuperscript{450}. Whereas bunraku and nō with their thoroughly representational nature created by the intermediary level (the chorus in nō, the storyteller in bunraku) between the actor and the audience and the de-humanized form of the principal characters (the masked performer, the puppet), could never have done this.

Especially puppets used to portray the main characters of the play, are elaborate constructions, in which each finger and parts of face can be manipulated individually. Puppets are manipulated by three puppeteers whose faces are usually covered\textsuperscript{451}. The most important character in a bunraku performance is, nevertheless, a storyteller who recites the story to music played by a samisen player. Bunraku is also called ningyō-jōruri, which means the combination of puppets and storytelling.

Concept of a technically accomplished mime performing a story read by a storyteller is not alien to Western theatre. According to a legend of the pantomimus Livius Andronicus, this type of a performance was the origin of ancient Roman pantomime. Clearly, this was also the concept behind Craig’s ideal actor, Über-marionette. Marionette was also one of the training characters that Decroux used, especially to point out the interdependence and articulation of each segment of the body\textsuperscript{452}. However, it must be kept in mind that, even if Decroux got very close to Craig’s ideas, he did not unconditionally accept Craig’s concept of non-human marionette, but wanted to emphasize the role and possibilities of human body.\textsuperscript{453} Decroux also pondered the question of puppets and marionettes in his interviews. For him, hand puppets belonged to same category as 19th century pantomime. Nevertheless, he seemed cautiously accept

\textsuperscript{450} Ando 1967, 29.

\textsuperscript{451} An exception is so called dezukai style in which the face of the master puppeteer is not covered, and the spectator can see his facial expressions.

\textsuperscript{452} Wylie 1994, 185.
marionettes which would be bigger than an average man.

- - the marionette has possibilities that the human body does not. It not only has facilities but possibilities. There is no doubt that it can move in ways the human body would find difficult. Marionettes know no impossibility of articulation. - - My idea of the marionette is an elevated one. I've been told that in Far Eastern countries where marionette theatres exist, marionettes were made to do things before actors performed them.454

Interestingly, this comment shows that Decroux did not seem to have any first hand experience of bunraku - or any other form of Far Eastern puppet or marionette theatre - even as late as in the 1970s. Whereas Barrault had his first exposure to nō in the late 1950s and an opportunity to visit Japan in 1960 when he, as seen, was able to see examples of all traditional theatre forms. The first performance of authentic kabuki in France took place as late as in 1965.455

The endless similarities between nō and, especially, Decroux's visions and training methods have inspired scholars to comparisons, even if they have to admit that Decroux himself never explicitly said that nō would have influenced him.457 Kathryn Wylie sees similarities especially in the performer's acquisition of impersonality and in techniques that approach the expression of a puppet or a marionette:

Corporeal mime also reveals many parallels to the techniques of the No and indirectly parallels techniques of shamanistic ecstasy, the most important of which

453 Sklar 1985, 71.
454 Decroux 1978. Interview by Thomas Leabhart.
455 Pronko 1967, 130.
456 Wylie 1993, 111.
457 Wylie 1994, 177.
are the acquisition of impersonality and of techniques that permit the performer to manipulate his or her body like a marionette.\textsuperscript{458}

However, in paralleling the techniques of \textit{nō} and modern mime, I would rather emphasize the walk and the ritual importance of silence than impersonality and resemblance to puppets. Strictly speaking, the influence of puppet is not particularly essential in \textit{nō} acting, it is more obvious in \textit{kabuki}. Even if Decroux did not particularly like the puppet theatre, it might be more accurate to trace the puppet\textsuperscript{=\textsuperscript{influence} on his work to European puppet or marionette theatre forms and the discussion provoked by Gordon Craig\textsuperscript{=\textsuperscript{=concept of Über-marionette.}

\textit{Kyōgen} might have been a less likely form to appeal to Decroux, who resented the comical element in 19th century pantomime, and strived for the serious art of mime.

\begin{quote}
- - my father never succeeded in his life in creating a single comic piece. That annoyed him a lot, since he liked to laugh. He liked comedy, and he couldn\textsuperscript{=} succeed in creating it. Everything he made was not comic. Unfortunately, it was beautiful, tragic, noble, grand.\textsuperscript{459}
\end{quote}

It is difficult to say how Decroux would have reacted to an authentic \textit{nō} performance - he was notoriously impatient with most theatrical experiments and would walk out of the performance if it did not appeal to him\textsuperscript{460}. It is true that there is evidence on Decroux having seen \textit{Kantan} in his youth, and that he possibly heard some lectures on \textit{nō} at the \textit{Vieux-Colombier}. Strictly speaking, \textit{Kantan} was no more authentic \textit{nō} than the \textit{kabuki} of \textit{Nihon-Geki-Kyōkai}

\textsuperscript{458} Wylie 1994, 179.

\textsuperscript{459} Decroux, M. 1997, 47. Interview by Thomas Leabhart.

\textsuperscript{460} Barba 1997, 8.
performance, which used some *kabuki* techniques, was authentic *kabuki*.

Surprisingly, *kabuki* has not been taken up as often as *nô* as a potential influence on modern mime. One reason for this might be that in the beginning of 20th century, Western interest increasingly shifted from the earlier preoccupation with *kabuki* to an interest in the more spiritual *nô*. A closer study of the nature of *kabuki* was ignored.

Yet, in *kabuki*, we can find elements that would be in alignment with modern mime, especially the earthbound dancing style and the importance of classical Japanese dance training for the *kabuki* actor. Expressive poses (*mie*), scenes without dialogue (*dan-mari*), the highly pantomimic fighting scenes (*tachimawari*) and, also, stylised and constructed performing techniques of *onnagata*, evoke interesting points of comparison. *Mie* bears resemblance to *l'attitude*: both are highly condensed poses, results of an intense movement which ends in freezing.\(^{462}\) Of mime scholars, Annette Lust has taken up this parallel:

> The mime, a sculptor of air becomes a statue when he stops moving. Although he emphatically denies any debt to Oriental theatre, his approach recalls the Japanese theatre when, at the end of a lively dance, the Japanese mime-actor freezes like a

\(^{461}\) Shionoya 1986, 31.

\(^{462}\) The idea of freezing applied also to other theatrical renovators of the period. Norbert Mannheimer sees similarities between Brecht’s concept of *Durchkältung* for which he found sounding board from the Chinese theatre. (Mannheimer 1990, 27).
statue and conveys the impression of crystallized action. Decroux’s art attains similar effects ending in intense stillness, the statue seen as a distillation of the beauty that has gone before, a suggestion of what might follow.463

Fighting scenes, which would be more realistic than fighting in nō, would appear in Decroux’s work throughout his career. And the whole process of constructing a character through physical expression resembles the construction of onnagata.

Again, we are faced with the question whether these parallels reflect just the Barbaric pre-expressive taking multiple forms. Wylie, in her search for the shamanistic element, seems to incline in this direction in her analysis of similarities between nō and Decroux’s corporeal mime. Could there still be a source that could have filtered into the experiments of Decroux and Barrault? What literature on traditional Japanese theatre was available before and during the 1930s?

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VI. 1930s LITERATURE AND EXPERIENCE ON TRADITIONAL JAPANESE THEATRE

1. Literature as a Source of Inspiration

Une seule soirée au théâtre nippon révérbera mieux le Japon et son tempérament que toute une littérature.464

wrote Yamata Kikou about the visit of the Nihon-Geki-Kyōkai group in Le Figaro. However, the importance of literature as a source of understanding and misunderstanding a foreign culture has been emphasized by scholars of orientalism and interculturalism.465

The Orient studied was a textual universe by and large; the impact of Orient was made through books and manuscripts.466
Almost from earliest times in Europe the Orient was something more than was empirically known about.467

In the 1930s France, possibilities for first-hand experience on traditional, or even approximately traditional, Japanese theatre forms were limited. It is thus logical to assume that interested individuals would turn to literature for information and inspiration. We have already seen how important role the study of literature played in producing the nō play Kantan at the École du Vieux-Colombier. The whole production was basically built on Suzanne Bing’s study on the translations

464 Yamata. Le Figaro 4.5.1930.

465 Savarese 1990, 47; Said 1991, 94.

466 Said 1991, 52.

of nō plays to French by Nöel Péri and to English by Arthur Waley, and the introductory chapters that both translators wrote to the respective collections.

Both Noël Péri's *Cinq Nô* and Arthur Waley's *The Noh Plays of Japan* were published in 1921. In addition to twenty nō texts, Waley's book contains sixty pages of general introduction and a separate introduction to each play. As the title indicates, Péri's book contains only five translations. The French had to wait some years to catch up with the amount of English translations: fourteen new nō translations to French by M.G. Renondeau were published from 1926 to 1933 in the *Bulletin de l'École française de l'Extrême-Orient*.

The 77 pages long introduction to Péri's book is diligently written and describes the elements of different types of nō clearly and scholarly. In addition to this, there is a separate introduction and a set of notes to each play. This background information actually takes more space than the playtexts. According to René Sieffert, Péri was not the first foreigner who was interested and who wrote about nō, but he was the one who inaugurated the scientific study of this art form.

Even if Péri was not the first French writer interested in Japanese theatre, it cannot be said that there was an enormous amount of literature on the topic before his book. The first report on Japanese theatre was published in France by Georges Bousquet in 1874. It was followed by A. Lequeux's study *Le Théâtre au Japon*, published in the *Revue d'art dramatique* in 1888. In this article, Lequeux emphasised the role of pantomime in Japanese theatre and also evaluated Japanese actors as the best mimes in the world. He went as far as denouncing Western mimes as vulgar tricksters, and their art as a series of

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468 Sieffert 1960, 7.

469 Sieffert 1960, 7.

470 Shionoya 1986, 23. The article was published in the *Revue des Deux mondes* 15.8.1874.
conventional gestures with grimaces.⁴⁷¹ This was something that Decroux would certainly have agreed with. There were also aggressive and condescending views, as those of Jules Lemaître, which described Japanese theatre as violent, bloody, animalistic, sensual, stagnated and infantile.⁴⁷²

Both Bousquet and Lequeux wrote about kabuki, which is logical, since kabuki was the theatre form that Japanese themselves chose to represent the Western-oriented Japan of Meiji period. Lequeux's study also included a translation of a kabuki play, *Le Printemps sanglant aux fleurs de prunier*⁴⁷³. Nō, and bunraku became objects of scholarly interest later. It should be remembered that Zeami’s writings on the art of nō were published in Japan only in 1909. Coincidentally, Nöel Péri's own studies on nō originate from 1909 when he published a series of articles in the *Bulletin de l'École française de l'Extrême-Orient*.⁴⁷⁴

All these works were published in a scholarly series, and were not accessible to general audience in same extent as Péri’s 1921 monograph *Le Cinq Nô*. Four years later, in 1925, Albert Maybon's, even more accessible, *Le Théâtre Japonais* was published. It is a more popular and wider presentation of various traditional and modern theatre and entertainment forms than Péri's work. It does not contain any playtexts nor analyses of Zeami’s theories like Péri’s book, but is rather a description of the writer's studies and observations during his five year stay in Japan. Nevertheless, Maybon gives outlines of shosagoto and describes some modern plays. It was Maybon who adapted one of those, *Le Masque*, for Firmin Gémier in 1927. There are plenty of illustrations, such as photographs on masks,

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⁴⁷¹ Lequeux 1888.


⁴⁷³ The play was written by Mokuami (*Ume no haru tate-shino gosho zome*).

⁴⁷⁴ The nō plays that are included in this collection are *Oimatsu* (Le Vieux Pin) Zeami, *Atsumori* Zeami, *Sotoba-Komachi* (Komachi au Stûpa) Kanami, *Ohara go kô* (La Visite Imperiale à Ohara) Zeami, and *Aya no Tsuzumi* (Le Tambourin de Damas) attr.to Zeami.
actors, scenes, woodblock prints, and drawings.

Maybon also included a chapter, in which he deals with the comic spirit in Japanese theatre, in his book. After reading it, the reader would definitely not remain under the impression that all Japanese theatre were as sacred and serious as nō. The role of kyōgen, the comic interlude of nō, is emphasized as well.

Après les danses, les lazzi, les pantomimes, et tous les tours des bateleurs, l'esprit comique, inhérent au tempérament japonais, s'est exprimé dans des saynetès mises sur la scène du nō et qui prirent le nom de kyōgen ("paroles folles"). Point de décors, d'accessoires. La distribution les lieux est indiquée par les acteurs, au nombre généralement de deux. L'action va vite; elle s'achève d'un coup, et, comme il n'y a pas de rideaux, les personnages s'enfuient, l'un poursuivant l'autre. Le kyōgen est l'intermède obligatoire d'une représentation de nō.\(^{475}\)

*Chefs d'œuvre de Tchikaimatsou, le grand dramaturge Japonais*\(^ {476}\), a collection of translations of Chikamatsu Monzaemon's playtexts was published in 1929. The book, a translation from English translation, contains six major works of this playwright, who wrote at the turn of 17th and 18th centuries. Chikamatsu is best known as a *bunraku* writer, although he wrote also for *kabuki* and, of course, many of his *bunraku* pieces were later adapted for *kabuki*.

The English translation was done by Miyamori Asatarō, who also wrote a 76-page introduction in which he describes not only Monzaemon's work but also the other traditional theatre forms. The book also contains more than 70 illustrations, both photographs of contemporary actors and historical materials.

In 1928, Ichikawa Sadanji’s *kabuki* group visited Moscow. A strange fruit of this visit filtered to France as an impressive folio of 500 copies created by A.

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\(^{475}\) Maybon 1925, 40.

\(^{476}\) Tchikaimatsou 1929.
Iacovleff and S. Elisseev. The book, published in Paris 1933, does not directly mention that the authors would have seen the Moscow performance - although there is a reference to it\textsuperscript{477}. Neither does it give any information on the authors themselves, or reveal where they could have obtained their, obviously very good, knowledge on \textit{kabuki}. They seem to know a lot of its history, and also of modern \textit{kabuki} companies and performers. Neither does it give any information on the source of the vivid illustrations, which seem to be drawn of live models. There is no introduction or bibliography.

Iacovleff\textsuperscript{=I} and Eliseev\textsuperscript{=E} attitude towards unprofessional imitators of \textit{kabuki}, such as Sadayakko, is critical. The writers describe these performances with a word 'caricature' even if

Les spectateurs parisiens, pour qui le théâtre japonais était une chose inconnue, admirèrent les scènes de \textit{harakiri}, les pantomimes jouées dans de beaux kimonos, et la troupe connut une ère de gloire.\textsuperscript{478}

Interestingly enough, they do not mention the \textit{Nihon-Geki-Kyōkai} company by name, but it can be assumed that it would have been classified as unprofessional imitators as well.

One more book deserves attention: the translation of Basil Hall Chamberlain's \textit{Moeurs et coutumes du Japon}, from 1931. In this book Chamberlain deals, among other things, with theatre, and clarifies especially the difference between \textit{nō} and \textit{kabuki}.\textsuperscript{479} Interestingly, Chamberlain finds similarities between \textit{nō} and \textit{kabuki}.

\textsuperscript{477} Iacovleff-Eliseev 1933, 44. Shionoya (1986, 57) mentions Serge Elisseev as an author of a 1926 article on Chikamatsu Monzaemon and the effect of puppets to Japanese acting.

\textsuperscript{478} Iacovleff-Eliseev 1933, 38.

\textsuperscript{479} According to Shionoya, Chamberlain=book was the first of the 19th century works (it was published in English in 1873) that managed to clarify the differences between traditional theatre forms (Shionoya 1986, 30). It should be said, though, that Alexandre Benazet published a thesis in which he compared \textit{nō} and \textit{kabuki} in 1901.
ancient Greek theatre, and thinks that, for this reason, nō would be more accessible for Western audiences than kabuki⁴⁸⁰. Similar ideas are presented also in Miyamori's introduction to Chikamatsu translations:

- aujourd'hui, elles (nō plays) sont hautement appréciées par les Européens cultivés, probablement parce qu'elles flattent un goût qui discerne en ces productions certaines ressemblances curieuses avec la tragédie grecque.⁴⁸¹

The most obvious similarities between nō and ancient Greek drama are metric singing, religious element, use of masks on the principal actors, chorus, and the dignified and reserved style of playing.

It can be concluded, that by the beginning of 1930s, all forms of traditional Japanese theatre were introduced in France in literature which consisted of travel reports, playtexts, and theoretical analyses that grew increasinly sophisticated through the years. Thus basic materials were available for the possibly interested. What is even more interesting, is that there was an influental figure in French theatrical life, who was well-acquainted with traditional Japanese theatre forms.

2. Paul Claudel - un rapporteur par excellence

The French writer, poet, playwright and diplomat Paul Claudel spent several years in Japan in the 1920s. He left there as the French ambassador in 1921, and stayed in this position until the beginning of 1927. One outcome of this period was his book L'Oiseau noir dans le soleil levant, published in 1929. Among impressions on culture and contemporary events, Claudel deals with all the traditional Japanese dance and theatre forms, bugaku, bunraku, nō, and kabuki,

⁴⁸⁰ Shionoya 1986, 30-31.

⁴⁸¹ Miyamori 1929, 16.
which he had a chance to see there and which he also arduously studied.

Claudel’s book is not a systematic presentation of the art. It is strongly influenced by his preferences: for example, nō gets considerably more space and more thorough treatment than the other forms. Interestingly, nō is also presented without kyōgen. Bunraku seems to have inspired him, but kabuki left him more or less mystified. In both nō and bunraku sections, he makes several references to gestures and movements of puppets and actors, describing them as ghostlike, evoking impressions of dream, trance and hypnosis. The gliding walk of shite captures his imagination, as well as the statuesque quality of acting.

Considering Claudel’s own inclination to spiritual and religious, his desire to understand Japanese nature, which he characterised as possessing a sense of mystery and acceptance of the unknown, is not surprising. Living with the nature, patriotism, and religious sentiment were also typical for it. Claudel also paid attention to the keen interest that educated Japanese had in nō and that, in addition to having artistic and religious value, this theatre form also had educational value: it taught both artist and spectator the value of gesture and the importance of controlling one’s thoughts, utterances, and movements.

Claudel’s book received a fair amount of publicity and was a valuable contribution to the knowledge of Japanese culture in France. Claudel also contributed in introduction of modern Japanese drama to French readers. In 1927, he wrote a short foreword to a bi-lingual book of two modern Japanese

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482 Claudel 1929a, 87, 94, 97.
483 Claudel 1929a, 97-98.
484 Claudel 1929a, 21.
485 Claudel 1929a, 22-29.
486 Claudel 1929a, 98-99.
487 There are several reviews in Collection Rondel (Rf 54963). Most of them mention the theatre chapters of the book. Comœdia 11.5.1929 published the entire chapter on nō (Claudel 1929b).
plays translated into French by Maryama Juntarō.\textsuperscript{488}

So inspired was Claudel by traditional Japanese theatre that he tried the style himself. His play \textit{La Femme et son ombre} was performed at the Imperial Theatre of Tokyo already in 1923. The French could read a mention to it from \textit{L'Œuvre} of the season 1923-24:

\begin{quote}
Son nouveau ballet intitulé \textit{La Femme et son ombre} a été représenté en pur style japonais\shortbar en mars dernier par le Hagorono-Kai, groupe de jeunes artistes \textit{Kabuki} réputés.\textsuperscript{489}
\end{quote}

The second version of \textit{La Femme et son ombre} was completed in 1926 and performed also at the Imperial Theatre in Tokyo.

The story in both of these versions is the same. The place of action is a solitary place in the frontier of two worlds. There is a big screen on the stage. The characters are an ancient warrior and two women, one of them a shadow of the other. After chasing her/them on stage, in an action which resembles dance, the warrior kills the shadow with his sword, and ends up killing the real woman at the same time. The second version contains more written dialogue and instructions and songs for the warrior and the woman - or rather for the choir - than the first version.\textsuperscript{490}

It is not totally surprising that in France, the work was referred as a ballet, since some years earlier, in 1917, Claudel had written a dance play, \textit{L'Homme et son désir}, which was inspired by Nijinsky. He was also interested in Jacques-Dalcroze's techniques, and aware of the importance of gestures and the body in

\textsuperscript{488} Kikuchi 1927. The plays are named \textit{L'Amour est une maladie} and \textit{La Providence du moment}. Claudel's foreword is dated 14.2.1927 in Tokyo.

\textsuperscript{489} O'Hashi, \textit{L'Œuvre} 1923-24.

\textsuperscript{490} Claudel 1965, 647-648. The 1926 version (ibid. 651-653).
the actor's work:

Quant au geste, aucun acteur moderne ne paraît y attacher la moindre importance. Ça ira toujours. La plupart du temps, le débit est accompagné d'un geste nerveux et court des avant-bras et d'une espèce de trémolo des mains plus ou moins rapide, suivant l'émotion que le personnage est censé éprouver. Aucun n'a la moindre idée des resources immenses et multiples d'expression que le corps humain, je dis le corps humain tout entier, depuis la tête et le visage jusqu'aux doigts de pied, recèle pour le drame.

The style of *La Femme et son ombre* is, indeed, an interesting question. It was not dance, even if the writer of *L'Œuvre* so thought. It was not *nô*, at least not in its first version. It was played by young actors who had *kabuki* training. Even Claudel himself had difficulties categorising it:

*Car La Femme et son ombre, surtout dans sa première version, ne saurait être considéré comme un véritable nô. Par son importante mise en scène, par le recours à plusieurs orchestres et l'introduction de ballets, cette œuvre apparaît comme une pièce de Kabuki moderne. Claudel a hésité lui-même: il l'appellera un mimodrame, un ballet "une sorte de nô une pièce relevant du Kabuki, "forme plus moderne" du nô.*

There is no doubt that the period spent in Far East influenced Claudel's entire work on many levels:

- - c'est justice de reconnaître que la fréquentation de l'Orient sa donné au poète

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491 Claudel 1966b, 151.
492 In Claudel's collected works it is called *scénario pour une mimodrame* (Claudel 1965, 647).
493 Hue, 320.
494 In addition to Japan, Claudel had also lived in China in 1895-1905. He had first visited Japan already in 1901.
une conscience plus claire de sa mission artistique. Je pense notamment que l'exemple du Nô japonais a pu inspirer à Claudel certains détails de la mise en scène du Soulier de satin.495

John Gillespie is convinced that acquaintance with Japanese theatre forms confirmed Claudel's ideas on theatre and refined his style, and that the influence of nô in his playwriting is evident in most of his plays written during and after the stay in Japan.496 The impact arises mainly from three aspects of this theatre form: the peculiar use of dream, the figure of the shite and the retrospective dimension.497 Claudel himself seems to have been most impressed about the slowness of nô:

L’élément essentiel est un élément de lenteur: C'est l’art au ralenti. Les personnages restent immobiles pendant des heures - - . Les gestes des acteurs se réduisent aux changements absolument significatifs, mais ils les développent sur toute une période. En Occident l'acteur fait toujours des gestes trop rapides. 498

It should be said that in the 1920s, Claudel's attitude toward Western nô productions was cautious. There was a good reason to admire nô, he wrote,

Mais il est très difficile de s'en faire une idée en France. Il y manquera toujours la musique, la mimique et cette espèce d'atmosphère sombre et surnaturelle.499

495 Madaule, La Vie intellectuelle 10.11.1929. Le Soulier de satin would be the first of the series of Claudel’s plays that Barrault directed at la Comédie Francaise in the 1940s.

496 Especially the third act of Le Soulier de satin (1924); the second version of La Femme et son ombre (1926); Le Livre de Christophe Colomb (1927); Jeanne d’Arc au bûcher (1935); Le Festin de la Sagesse (1935); L'Histoire de Tobie et de Sara (1938) (Gillespie1983).

497 Gillespie1983.

498 Claudel 1925. Interview by Lefèvre.

499 Claudel 1966a, 150.
However, this attitude, expressed in the 1920s, did not prevent him from trying nō style in the 1930s. In 1934, Ida Rubinstein, the undisputed mistress of movement and attitude, commissioned a scenario for a biblical play from him, and at that time he felt comfortable trying nō style in it. The result was *Le Festin de la Sagesse* which was performed in 1935. The play is based on the biblical legend, a parable from the Gospels, in which the king invites the guests to celebrate his son’s nuptials. For Rubinstein, Claudel created a role of *La Sagesse* (Wisdom), the equivalent of the king. An essai d'adaptation du nō japonais is written around the same time as the play. In this article, Claudel, again, writes appreciatively about nō, referring to its aristocratic and esoteric character and comparing it to Spanish autos.

The play, which has four parts, can for several reasons be called a mimodrama. When writing the play, Claudel entertained himself with several, strongly visual stage images, which seem to have been inspired by American silent film comedies. These were omitted from the final version, but he gives a lot of instructions on stage movements and groupings of characters.

The play did not receive as good reviews as the two other biblical productions which Claudel created in the 1930s, *Jeanne d'Arc au bûcher* (1935) and *L'Histoire de Tobie et de Sara* (1938). These were not consciously created in nō.

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500 Claudel 1966a, 156.


503 Claudel 1966b, 144.

504 Claudel 1966b, 143.

505 Claudel 1966b, 148, 150.

506 Claudel 1965, 1199-1213.
style even though they did use the chorus, music, choreography, and mime. It seems that Claudel's intuition proved right: it was not easy to realise nō in France. According to Gillespie even Le Festin de la Sagesse "falls short of the delicate flower of the Noh", and that Claudel's borrowings from nō are random rather than systematic.

Nevertheless, the power of slow gesture raises up over and over in Claudel's writings during the 1930s. Even banal movements take deeper meaning when movement is slow and precise. The sign and the gesture of making a cross, is the key to Jeanne d'Arc au bûcher. In L'Histoire de Tobie et Sara, there is a slowly mimed scene, in which angel Raphael descends to the stage. Claudel gives detailed instructions for his hand and arm movements. In Jeanne d'Arc, he marches in a bunch of animal characters - comparisons to the Compagnie des Quinze's Noé of 1931, are tempting.

In 1938, he wrote a draft for Le Jet de pierre, a suite plastique, a series of poems of movement. Petit and Kempf consider this the furthest point of Claudel's research on gesture - and again Claudel seems to have had in mind the slow movement of nō. He never finished this work, the dozen parts of which contain such intriguing titles as 'The Conquest of the Right Hand from the Left' or 'The Arrow' or 'The Bunch of Grapes'.

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507 Claudel 1966b, 163-164.
508 Gillespie 1983.
509 Claudel 1966b, 87.
510 Claudel 1966b, 156.
511 Claudel 1966b, 164.
512 Claudel 1965, 1217-1242.
513 See Chapter VII.1.
514 Claudel 1966b, 161.
It is clear that Claudel’s impact went far beyond his books. He was influential in the 1930s French cultural and theatrical life, and it can be assumed that the knowledge on Japanese theatre that he had, was directly and indirectly transmitted to quite a wide circle of individuals. Among the young theatre practitioners who came into contact with him in the 1930s, was Jean-Louis Barrault.

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515 During his stay in Japan Claudel corresponded with several French artists and intellectuals, among them Jacques Copeau.
VII. JEAN-LOUIS BARRAULT’S PRODUCTIONS IN THE 1930s

1. Autour d’une mère

*Autour d’une mère* was Jean-Louis Barrault’s first independent theatre production. It was performed four times at the Théâtre de l’Atelier on June 4-7, 1935. At that point, he was ready to sum up the theatrical ideas and impressions he had accumulated during the first half of the decade. The production was an eclectic mixture of influences from Dullin’s *L’Atelier* and, at the same time, a break from those, since Barrault, with youthful fervour, accumulated impressions from different directions and people that he came in contact with. Both his experimentation on mime with Étienne Decroux and deep influence of modern American literature can also be seen in it.

Barrault dramatised *Autour d’une mère* from William Faulkner’s *As I Lay Dying*. The French name of the novel is *Tandis que j’agonise*, but the publisher did not give him permission to use the title. Faulkner’s novel, originally from 1930, is a story of

> a mother who, having fallen ill, wants her coffin to be made in her presence by one of her children, and her remains to be taken on the family cart, attended by all her family, to the town - Jefferson - where her parents lie buried. To this central subject the father and the five children react in accordance with their own individual natures and passion. The action takes place in our own time, among the peasants of the Mississippi. Season of hot weather and rains. Life is hard, they are poor. In the family there is a ‘living lie’: Jewel, the natural son of the mother and the village priest. Remorse.\(^{518}\)

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516 Barrault 1972, 84.

517 Barrault read the translation of the novel by Maurice Coindreau (Barrault 1972, 84).

518 Barrault 1974, 67 (translation by Jonathan Griffin); Barrault 1972, 85.
The novel consists of monologues of the Bundren family members, their neighbours, and the people they meet on their journey. The amount of dialogue is sparse, and it is hidden in the monologues. The published playscript shows that the first part of Barrault’s adaptation of the novel into *action dramatique* takes place in the village, the second part describes the voyage to Jefferson, and the third part happens in the town.

Jean Dorcy calls *Autour d’une mère* a spoken drama with mime insertions. He uses the same description also for the production of *Numance* (1937), whereas *La Faim* (1939) is a drama where speech and the mime are closely mingled.

Thomas Leabhart describes Barrault’s early work, i.e. these three 1930s productions, as vocal mime combined with spoken text:

Vocal mime which began in the improvisations at the Vieux-Colombier, continued in Decroux’s teaching and performance, quite naturally found an important place in Barrault’s first performance piece, and later figured importantly in Jean and Marie-Hélène Dasté’s *Sumida*.

Barrault himself writes that the production of *Autour d’une mère* was *un* transposition du roman en mimodrame and could, to some extent, be understood as a manifest for revival of the art of mime, but essentially it was

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519 Faulkner 1930/1964.

520 Frank-Astre 1954, 56-57. This document is the closest to a manuscript of the play. It includes Barrault’s original notes and comments by the authors, of whom the journalist André Frank was closely involved with management of the production.

521 Dorcy 1961, 45.


523 Barrault 1949, 74.

524 Barrault 1953.
silent theatre, in which the actors do not say anything even if they could speak:

Ils ne parlent pas. Ils agissent. Mais ils ne sont pas muets. Le silence n’est pas la surdité. Chaque bruit prend son importance. Personne n’a retiré le son de l’image. C’est du théâtre parlant où les gens ne disent rien.\(^\text{525}\)

Barrault was fascinated by the silent behavior of the simple, primitive\(^\text{526}\) characters who spoke only to themselves. This description reminds of a trend in French theatre called *le théâtre du silence* - or *l’école du nudisme verbal* ou, plus exactement *l’école du mutisme*\(^\text{527}\) in the 1920s. One exponent of this genre was Jean-Jacques Bernard’s play *Martine*, which is a story of a simple servant who suffers in silence for not being able to articulate her feelings towards her socially superior master.\(^\text{528}\) It should be said, that Barrault was not as influenced by psychoanalysis as representatives of *le théâtre du silence*, and that in actual performance, the major difference between the theatre of silence and Barrault’s production, was the demand for physical expression of the actor, which went as far as requiring the actor to be able to portray both characters and environment. Approximately dozen actors were involved\(^\text{529}\), many of whom played five or six

\(^{525}\) Barrault 1972, 85.

\(^{526}\) Barrault 1972, 84.

\(^{527}\) Brisson 1943, 41.

\(^{528}\) It should be said that not all plays of this genre described rural, inarticulate people. For example, the characters of Henri Lenormand’s plays, also considered to be examples of the *théâtre du silence*, were mostly from the middle-class.

\(^{529}\) Barrault had far from a coherent ensemble at his disposal. The actors changed during the rehearsal period, and some of them did not even want to use their real names in the cast list (Barrault 1972, 86-87). Among the most experienced of them was Jean Dasté, a former Copitau (and a son-in-law of Copeau) and a founding member of *la Compagnie des Quinze*. André Frank (Frank 1954, 45) lists following actors, in addition to Dasté and Barrault himself: Georges Lenoir, Paul Higonenc, Baby Guy, Yves Gladine, Marthe Herlin, Genica Athanasiou, Leblanc, Michel François, Regis, Arsène Arcadelt, and Dina German.
roles.\textsuperscript{530}

Les acteurs assument à la fois les personnages et ce qui les entoure: la rivière, l'incendie, le crissement d'une scie qui effrite le bois. L'acteur: un instrument total.\textsuperscript{531}

For example, the play includes a scene in which the funeral procession has to cross an overflowing river. In this case the actors, in addition to playing the characters, mimed the movement of the water by dancing with extended arms and making wave-like movements.\textsuperscript{532}

Barrault himself played the role of Jewel, the bastard son. One of his ambitions was to combine the man and the animal in a process of total acting.

Encore une fois je voulais que l'acteur fût un instrument complet, capable de suggérer et la bête et le cavalier et les deux traversant un gué ou poursuivis par des busards. Interpréter à la fois l'Etre et l'Espace.\textsuperscript{533}

The human-animal theme keeps on repeating in the first part of the play: actors are instructed to become human animals, and also, they are said to sense the approach of death like animals.\textsuperscript{534} The theme of flood, differences between the brothers, carpentry, and animal imagery, remind of \textit{la Compagnie des Quinze} \textsuperscript{537} 1931 production of \textit{Noé}, the story of Noah, the great flood, and the construction of the ark, and, indeed, Barrault admits having admired \textit{Noé}, as well as the other

\textsuperscript{530} Labisse 1954, 26.

\textsuperscript{531} Barrault 1972, 85.

\textsuperscript{532} Stern, \textit{Variety} 19 June 1935.

\textsuperscript{533} Barrault 1972, 86.

\textsuperscript{534} Frank - Astre 1954.
Quinze productions\textsuperscript{535}. In Noé, mimed animal figures are made to enter in the beginning and they appear also later in the play. However, there is no attempt in Noé to create metaphysical human-animals, as Barrault would aim to do. They would remain as amusing animal figures. As far as the acting style of Noé is concerned, it is, nevertheless, interesting, that Pierre Fresnay, who played the role of Noah, was compared to a giant marionette, and one of the villagers was said to wear a semi-Japanese mask\textsuperscript{536}. An occasional reviewer saw similarity with Greek tragedies,\textsuperscript{537} but for most critics, the tone of Noé seemed much lighter, reminding one of children\textsuperscript{538} play. The flood theme was repeated yet in another la Compagnie des Quinze production, La Loire (1933), in which plenty of mimed expression was also used.\textsuperscript{539}

The use of mime in les Quinze productions is not surprising. Their work was built on training which originated from l'École du Vieux-Colombier and les Copiaus, same sources which strongly influenced Étienne Decroux\textsuperscript{539} work. In Michel Saint-Denis\textsuperscript{539} words:

\textsuperscript{535} Barrault 1974, 63. La Compagnie des Quinze had broken up in 1935 after approximately ten productions which were mostly based on the texts of André Obey and directed by Michel Saint-Denis (Saint-Denis 1960, 44). In Noé, Jean Dasté, who performed also in Barrault\textsuperscript{539} production, played the role of one of Noah\textsuperscript{539} sons. Susan Bing played the role of Noah\textsuperscript{539} wife and Marie-Hélène Dasté one of the daughter-in-laws (Noé: hand programme, Rondel Rt 3732/Compagnie des Quinze Vol.1) It is also interesting that Barrault refers to numerous discussions with Marie-Hélène Dasté during the six month period while he was preparing L'Autour d'une mère (Barrault 1972, 87).

\textsuperscript{536} Boissy, Comœdia 21.1.1931.

\textsuperscript{537} Rengeard, Revue Française 25.1.1931.

\textsuperscript{538} Many reviewers make references to children\textsuperscript{538} play or operetta (Boissy, Comœdia 21.1.1931; Agate, Sunday Times 12.6.1931; J.G.B. The Evening News 13.6.1931)

\textsuperscript{539} A - in André Obey\textsuperscript{539} Loire - - realism was in war with symbolism. This was a subject for musical treatment or even a ballet. The author seems to have gasped this, for he has employed sound to help his idea; he has also made his Loire and her daughters act in styled manner. He introduces an owl (a fine conception), a fox and an old oak tree. The daughters of the Loire wear masks and speak staccato nonsense, and the waters of the Loire are grotesque pantomimic figures.\textsuperscript{539} writes a critic (Baughan, News Chronicle 1933) about the groups London performance at Wyndham\textsuperscript{539} Theatre.
We had worked ten years together. We had developed a lot of possibilities as a company: we were mimes, we were acrobats; some of us could play musical instruments and sing. We could invent characters and improvise. In fact we were a chorus with a few personalities sticking out rather than actors ready to act the usual repertory, classical or modern.\footnote{Saint-Denis 1960, 43.}

However, it seems that Barrault went further in the use of silence, gesture and mime than les Quinze in any of their productions: the whole performance of \textit{Autour d'une mère} lasted two hours, but there was merely thirty minutes of text in it.\footnote{Barrault 1972, 85.} The scene with horse - Barrault's mime at its purest - lasted ten minutes. In it

The horse was represented by a painted wooden head fastened to Barrault's belt. With the lower half of his body, Barrault played the prancing, butting, kicking animal, struggling to rid itself of its rider; with the upper half he was Jewel, the man, beating the wild beast into submission.\footnote{Felner 1986, 90.}

A French critic gives a detailed description of the scene and the construction of the human-animal on the stage:

\begin{quote}
\textit{dans son Acheval@on le voyait peu à peu s'intégrer à la nature même de l'animal en liberté. Cela commençait par le regard qui suivait le rythme de l'animal en liberté, puis ce rythme commençait à gagner le corps entier, une course échevelée donnait l'homme élan et énergie. Et puis, soudain, la lutte s'engageait, l'homme des pieds à la tête subissait le flux indompté et lorsqu'elle réussissait à maintenir l'animal sous sa volonté. On le sentait faisant corps avec lui, vivant minotaure, cheval par la moitié du corps, et guide par le seul buste.}\footnote{Delarue, \textit{Paris Soir} 13.12.1947.}
\end{quote}
The mother's dying scene is another interesting example of abstract, mimed expression. Jean Dorcy has made observations on this particular part:

Another of Barrault's contributions (to the mime) is the nature of his images. One might call them images of substitution; i.e., images not derived from the rhythms, movements or forms of a situation or of a given type. - - this is how he composes Death:
- Suddenly the bust draws itself up, the right arm desperately extended toward the sky;
- A second of absolute immobility;
- The extended arm is lowered, palm turned toward the ground, slowly, very, very slowly;
- The arm passes before the head, before the neck, before the bust, thus blotting out life...
Sublime vertical death! This sublimity arises, I believe, not from the tragic element inherent in the theme of death, but from the nature of the images found by the poet Jean-Louis Barrault.544

A third, powerfully mimed scene is the one in which the daughter of the family makes love to a farmer and grows pregnant in front of the audience:

After her lover goes, she rises, takes a deep breath, and then relaxes into a state of animal happiness. - - She feels twice around the fulness of her breasts; her hands descend to her stomach, then to her buttocks, undulating her dress. In a surge of femininity, she fixes her hair and her clothes. She stops suddenly. Surprised, she stares at her navel. Her body gets heavier as she slowly takes on the walk of a pregnant woman.545

544 Dorcy 1961, 56. Étienne-Bertrand Weill photo of Jean-Louis Barrault in the process of this vertical death is often reproduced. It is included also in Dorcy’s book (Dorcy 1961). The picture shows Barrault half-naked, eyes closed, sitting in a semi-lotus position holding his right arm up and the palm horizontally above his head. Meditation or yoga come easily to mind. In this picture Barrault is not wearing the mother’s original costume, a long skirt, nor the mask and the wig.

545 Felner 1986, 92. Felner is strongly of the opinion that this kind of a scene could
There is no indication in Barrault’s memoirs or in other documents, that he would have actively studied anything related to traditional Japanese theatre during the preparation of Autour d’une mère. However, such elements as use of chorus and extended silence, domain between life and death, funeral rituals, journey to the city, madness of one of the brothers, and revelation of the past relationship of the mother and the village priest, evoke allusions to spiritual themes and atmosphere of nō.

As I Lay Dying — c’est un mythe, célébrant le mystère de l’homme vivant et mourant; c’est la merveilleuse histoire, assez redoutable, de son difficile avènement parmi la confuse Création - bref, de l’Art complet, mais résolument situé dans une perspective sacrée.\(^{546}\)

Thus it can not be a coincidence, that André Frank wrote that the performance of Autour d’une mère evoked his desire to reread Claudel’s L’Oiseau noir dans le soleil levant:

J’ai voulu relire, après la représentation, ce livre admirable où Paul Claudel donne ses impressions et ces notes sur le Japon. Deux chapitres montèrent les Nô japonais, tels qu’ils demeurent après les siècles d’études des attitudes et des gestes. On y devine le drame qui se livre, sur d’étroits tréteaux, entre les deux personnages, l’expression des forces surhumaines, l’autre de la faiblesse de l’homme. - - Il est presque incroyable que, par intuition, Jean-Louis Barrault ait retrouvé les lois d’un art séculaire.\(^{547}\)

Frank also writes that it seems that Barrault, indeed, had not seen nor read about nō, even if his study of movements, the groupings, and the lighting were brought

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\(^{546}\) Frank - Astre 1954, 59.

\(^{547}\) Frank 1954, 45. The text was originally published in L’Intransigeant in June 1935.
close to sublime.\footnote{Frank 1954, 46.}

One of the scenes which reminds of nō, is the dialogue between the dead mother and the village priest. Dramaturgically interesting is, that Barrault created this remorseful dialogue from monologues of the mother and the village priest, the father of Jewel\footnote{Frank - Astre 1954, 60-61. This was the ninth scene of the total of twenty two.}. In the novel, the mother has only one monologue which is followed by the monologue of the priest\footnote{Faulkner 1930/1964, 161-171. Barrault dramatised two monologues for the mother (Barrault 1949, 49).}. Also extremely interesting is, that the mother started speaking only after her death. She speaks beyond the grave, like ghosts haunting in the nō plays.

After a last minute turn of the events, Barrault ended up playing also the part of the mother, and solved the problem by making the mother into a sort of a totem with an impersonal mask made of cheesecloth, with steel buttons as eyes, and with an enormous black wig coming down to her tights. When the character was needed on the stage, Barrault put this outfit on. This is another strong evocation of a nō character, an unsusceptible old woman suddenly transformed into a demoness.

It must be admitted that there is no direct proof of nō influences. Rather, when it comes, for example, to the character of the mother, Barrault’s own reminiscences evoke more Mexican than Japanese themes\footnote{Barrault 1949, 47.}. The Mexican composer Tata Nacho composed the choral songs for the performance and might have had some influence here, especially since he was well-acquainted with Mexican folklore\footnote{Barrault 1949, 42}. Yet, Barrault also writes that he was under the influence of esoterism of the
This Eastern esoterism filtered to Barrault predominantly through Antonin Artaud, whom he got to know during that time. Artaud was even more open to influences from non-European cultures than Barrault. Artaud’s Eastern esoteric influences were gathered from a wide range of works, among them the *Egyptian Book of the Dead*, *The Upanishads*, *The Bhagavad-Gita*, Tantric Yoga, the *Kabbalah* and Chinese Acupuncture. On non-literal level, the Balinese actor-dancers, whom Artaud saw at the Colonial Exhibition in Paris in July 1931, were a ground-breaking experience and an affirmation for his previously literature-based search for a remedy for the ailments of Western theatre.

The Balinese in one performance revealed what he had been dimly seeking in the Japanese Noh drama, in the Eastern and Medieval mystics, in his work with the Théâtre Alfred Jarry.

1.1. Eastern Esotericism *via* Antonin Artaud

After 1931, Artaud’s interest in Oriental theatre became an intense preoccupation paralleling a concern with the ideogram and the pictogram as opposed to the devitalized word-symbols of the post-Egyptian occident.

The scholars have debated how well Artaud actually understood, or wanted to understand, Balinese performance. Patricia A. Clancy considers, that even if

553 Barrault 1974, 64.

554 Rose 1986, 3. Certainly, Artaud was also deeply interested in the Mexican culture: he left for his journey to Mexico in January 1936.

555 Clancy 1985, 397.

556 Sellin 1968, 18.
Artaud made mistakes in interpretation, his response and analysis were remarkably close to the spirit and origin of the Balinese theatre. It seems that of the pieces that he saw, he was most inspired by the one named *Arjuna Vivaha*, which was performed in masculine *baris* style, and which combined adventure, love-story and clouting, performed in dance-pantomime with incidental dialogue and singing, accompanied by a gamelan of flutes and percussion. Against this background, it is not surprising that Mark V. Rose sees parallels in Artaud’s writings to another masculine dance style *kathakali*. Artaud never mentions Indian *kathakali* in his writings, but Rose is convinced that its influences can be traced especially in breathing patterns, movement rhythms, facial expressions, and even in costumes.

However deep Artaud’s enthusiasm for the Balinese performance was, scholars have also pointed out that Artaud’s proposed repertory for Theatre of Cruelty is conspicuously devoid of productions which could be derived from legends and myths of the pre-literate cultures he admired. His selection is drawn largely from ancient, Renaissance or nineteenth century Western sources, on which ritual gestures and primitive influences should be applied. Artaud never even sought to bring Oriental mystique intact on Western stage.

Considering Artaud’s voracious reading habits and the fair amount of literature that was available on traditional Japanese theatre, it is interesting that there are

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557 Clancy 1985, 399.

558 Clancy 1985, 403. The female dancers (the *legong* dance style) do not seem to have impressed Artaud hardly at all (ibid. 404), nor does he write much about the masks, monsters, demons and the dragon, i.e. the most spectacular elements of the show (ibid. 405).

559 Rose 1986, 31-32.

560 Rose 1986, 34.

561 Sellin 1968, 53.

562 By comparison, the amount of literature on the Balinese theatre was very limited.
hardly any references to Japanese sources in *Le Théâtre et son double*, a collection of his essays written during the 1930s and published in 1938. The only reference is a note on Japanese stage assistants, a convention about which he had learned at Dullin’s *l’Atelier*.

It could be said that Artaud was Barrault’s second - or third, if Dullin is included - master. Barrault actually writes that he worked on mime first with Decroux, then with Artaud, and only after that on his own. However, Barrault does not want to separate the influences that he got from Decroux, Dullin, and Artaud, but sees, that they all worked in him simultaneously. The previously presented article, in which Barrault presents what he might have said about mime during that time is already clearly influenced by Artaud’s theories, especially in the importance laid on breathing and the tertiary pattern. The grammar of gesture fits beautifully into the tertiary pattern, which traces back to cabbalistic division into three, the cabbalistic ternary. In his memoirs, Barrault writes how intrigued and magnetised he was by this approach, and he has also clearly stated that it was Artaud who introduced the theory to him. The key concepts of Artaud’s cabbalistic theory are:

<table>
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<th>subject</th>
<th>verb</th>
<th>object</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>attitude</td>
<td>movement</td>
<td>indication</td>
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564 Rose 1986, 12, 47.
566 Barrault 1974, 83.
In each individual, these elements are intertwined, and they can be combined into different formations. The concepts of *yin* and *yang*, of which also Zeami writes profoundly in his treatises\(^{568}\), appealed to Artaud, as they did to Barrault.

Artaud’s Theatre of Cruelty accommodated Eastern elements and emphasised the non-verbal. However, when it comes to total elimination of speech from the theatre, Artaud’s vision is not nearly as radical as Decroux’s early vision for renovation of the actor’s art. Artaud did not banish text from the theatre, but wished to give it a new status in relation to gestures. Scholars have seen a connection to Eastern theatre in this:

> Artaud - - n’jamais éliminé le texte dans un spectacle, il a voulu établir une autre hiérarchie. - - Dans la même ligne que Craig, Appia, Piscator ou Meyerhold, il donne à la mise en scène une importance primordiale. - - Pour créer ce langage dans l’espace et en mouvement, il cherche des gestes indépendents du sens des mots, gestes-signes à l’instar du théâtre oriental.\(^{569}\)

Yet in Theatre of Cruelty, movement, mime, dance and gesture can be seen to dominate the speech element, which was not, however, meant to be interpreted lexically, but rather as a secondary sonic accompagniment to physical action\(^{570}\).

According to Artaud, the human body has two languages: the language of breathing and the language of gesture. Breathing is the basis for gestural

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\(^{568}\) Zeami 1984, 19 (*Fūshikaden*).

\(^{569}\) Aslan 1974, 249.

\(^{570}\) Rose 1986, 28.
language. All this brings in mind yoga\textsuperscript{571}, even if strong resemblance to the previously mentioned Japanese martial arts training can also be seen in it.

Artaud’s technique resembles an ancient Taoist curative breathing method that is somewhat simpler and more direct than that of yoga. To treat an internal pain or illness, a patient inhales, swallows his breath and sustains it while meditating on an affected region. - - Artauds notes on Taikyoku (a Japanese version of T\textsuperscript{6}ai Chi), Yin and Yang concepts, and acupuncture suggest that he may have been familiar with the procedure.\textsuperscript{572}

Further resemblance to Japanese martial arts can be found in the division of body into four centres of energy: head, belly, sex, and nerves, of which one in turn tends to dominate. It seems possible that this explains the similarities with Japanese martial arts theories, which were discerned from Barrault\textsuperscript{573} article on mime. He, indeed, was under the influence of the Artaudian East during that time.

For Artaud, Barrault's \textit{Autour d’une mère} was a source of great inspiration. Immediately after the performance, Artaud proceeded to write an article, which was first published in \textit{La Nouvelle Revue Française}\textsuperscript{573} and, later, included in \textit{Le Théâtre et son double}\textsuperscript{574}.

In his writings, Artaud expressed his liking of animal movement, and requested that actors should create animal characters, whose movement could amuse and astonish the public\textsuperscript{575}. Thus it is not surprising that Barrault's "centaur-horse

\textsuperscript{571} Rose 1986, 3, 30.
\textsuperscript{572} Rose 1986, 47.
\textsuperscript{573} No. 220, July 1, 1935.
\textsuperscript{574} Artaud 1938/1964, 213-216.
\textsuperscript{575} Rose 1986, 9.
show" impressed him considerably. He starts the article with a reference to it, and returns to the horse imagery also later, stating that

surtout cette espèce d'homme-cheval qui circule à travers la pièce, comme si l'esprit même de la Fable était redescendu parmi nous. Seul jusqu'ici le théâtre Balinais semblait avoir gardé une trace de cet esprit perdu.  

According to Artaud, the movement in the performance was rigorous and the gestures were stylised and mathematical. General atmosphere was magical and religious, even if Barrault, in his opinion, had used profane and descriptive means in creating it. Artaud also has some criticism on the nature of gestures. There are no symbols in this play, it does not extend beyond itself because it is descriptive, he writes. The production does not share the deep drama, mystery deeper than souls, the conflict between souls to where gesture is only a road. Ritualistic movements and puppet-like gestures which can be compared to the Über-marionette, did exist in Barrault’s production, but they were still imperfect.

1.2. Les Cenci

In his article, Artaud also gives Barrault credit for disarming an initially hostile audience - Barrault’s own account on Ahe taming of the audience is similar. Artaud had a personal reason for sensitivity to hostile audiences: his Les Cenci

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577 Artaud 1964, 216.
578 Rose 1986, 8-9, 22.
579 Artaud 1964, 213.
580 Barrault 1972, 89.
had been performed only a few weeks before at the Théâtre des Folies-Wagram. The audience and the critics reactions to this incestous and bloody tragedy had been at its worst confused, indifferent, and outright hostile, although there was also encouragement and desire to understand his intentions. Artaud’s Les Cenci was a grand-scale spectacle, Barrault’s production as minimalistic as could be. Yet, there are some similarities between these productions. Both of them were creations of one auteur, who also had a central role in the performance. Themes of both of these plays deal with family and death, even if the social contexts could not be further apart, and certainly Barrault did not want to attack the social superstition of the family as Artaud did.

Les Cenci, based on the texts of Shelley and Stendhal, is a tragic story of the 16th century family of count Francesco Cenci, who in his defiance of the heavenly and worldly authorities rapes his daughter, Beatrice, and eventually gets himself murdered by assassins hired by her. At the end, Beatrice is sentenced to a spectacular death in Pope’s torture chambers. In this Aragi-fantasmagorie visuelle et auditive Cenci was played by Artaud and Beatrice by lady Iya Abdy, an amateur actress who avec sa pâleur fatale, ses attitudes de sylphide qui évoquent en même temps Isadora Duncan, Ida Rubinstein et Greta Garbo had obvious stage presence. As a matter of fact, Artaud preferred amateur actors, since the professional actors who had kept themselves pure were rare. Interestingly, it seems that Artaud used Barrault, who attended many of the rehearsals of Les Cenci, to rehearse the actors until he realised that their methods were so opposed

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581 The premier was on May 6, and it was followed by seventeen performances.

582 Artaud 1935/1972, 92.

583 Prudhomme, Le Matin 6.5.1935. The more conservative critics referred also to melodrama (Interim, Action Française 17.5.1935; Audiat, Paris-Soir 9.5.1935).

584 Audiat, Paris-Soir 9.5.1935.

585 Anonyme, Le Petit Parisien 14.4. 1935
that his design was in danger\textsuperscript{586}.

There certainly was cruelty in \textit{Les Cenci}, but it seems questionable how well the theories of theatre and movement and Eastern esoterism that Artaud strongly propagated, were reflected in this particular production. The play was built on regular dialogue, even if great part of it remained undecipherable for the audience because of Iya Abdy\textsuperscript{586}’s strong accent and Artaud\textsuperscript{586}’s own declamatory shouting and monotonous staccato articulation. In several scenes, Artaud used text which was combined with rhythmical movement\textsuperscript{587} and mimed expression, and it were actually these scenes that reviewers treated most favourably. In the first act there is a banquet scene, in which Artaud used \textsuperscript{588} pantomimed gestures\textsuperscript{588} for the party guests. In addition to actors, he used dummies with whom the characters danced and interacted. According to Artaud, the dummies were there to enable the characters to say what was disturbing them and what was impossible to express in ordinary speech\textsuperscript{589}. Many critics refer to the symbolic nature of the gestures\textsuperscript{590}, some talk about a resemblance to marionettes\textsuperscript{591}, and, indeed, it was symbolic gesture and gesture\textsuperscript{592} equality to written word that Artaud attempted to find\textsuperscript{592}. Roger Blin, Artaud’s assistant in the production.\textsuperscript{593}, remembers:

\textsuperscript{586}Nes Kirby 1972, 103. I have not found more references on this from other sources.

\textsuperscript{587}Bidou, \textit{Le Temps} 13.5.1935.

\textsuperscript{588}Roger Blin preserved the blocking diagrams and production notes for the posterity Notes for this particular scene were first published in \textit{Cahiers Renaud-Barrault} (n. 51, nov. 1965). The English translation of the same section appeared in \textit{The Drama Review} (Vol. 16 Nr 2, June 1972).

\textsuperscript{589}Artaud 1935/1972, 104. The use of the dummies had interested Artaud for some years before \textit{Les Cenci}. In 1932, he tried to convince Louis Jouvet to use five metres\textsuperscript{594} tall dummies in a production (Thévenin1986, 45.)

\textsuperscript{590}Barlatier, \textit{Comœdia} 6.5.1935 Anonyme, \textit{Comœdia} 13.5.1935.

\textsuperscript{591}Reboux, \textit{Le Petit Parisien} 7.5.1935.

\textsuperscript{592}Artaud, \textit{Le Figaro} 5.5.1935.

\textsuperscript{593}Aslan 1987, 14. Also Blin defines his role as an assistant (Blin 1972, 108. Interview by Charles Marowitz).
He wanted the actors in the Banquet Scene of Les Cenci to act in a stylized manner. He wanted each of the princes to resemble an animal. But this was extremely difficult because none of the actors had any idea about this kind of acting.\footnote{Blin 1972, 110. Interview by Charles Marowitz.}

Eventually, Blin ended up on stage himself. He played a banquet guest and one of the two assassins who, at first, did not dare to kill Cenci. In addition to the banquet scene, another scene in which mime was used, was the assassination of Cenci. Especially, the two mute murderers were praised\footnote{A.M. Roger Blin et Henry Chauvet, dans la scène muette des assassins, sont parfaitement horrifiques et montrent là bien du talent.@Armory, \textit{Comœdia} 8.5.1935.}, as well as the mimic talents of Iya Abdy\footnote{Colette, \textit{Le Journal} 12.5.1935; Armory, \textit{Comœdia} 8.5.1935.}.

If any references to Eastern influences were made by the critics, they were more reserved than applauding. An anonymous critic refers to

\begin{quote}
- - - Une maladroite imitation des drames japonais où des sons de battoir et des coups de tambour, d'abord espacés, puis qui vont se précipitant annoncent les situations pathétiques.\footnote{Anonyme, \textit{Comœdia} 13.5.1935.}
\end{quote}

Some Eastern symbolism can also be seen in the wheel in which the tortured Beatrice is tied to at the end of the play\footnote{Jouve, \textit{La Nouvelle Revue Française} 1.6.1935.}.

A piece of most interesting criticism on \textit{Les Cenci} is an article by René Daumal. It, actually, deals with both Artaud\footnote{A.M. Roger Blin et Henry Chauvet, dans la scène muette des assassins, sont parfaitement horrifiques et montrent là bien du talent.@Armory, \textit{Comœdia} 8.5.1935.} and Barrault\footnote{Colette, \textit{Le Journal} 12.5.1935; Armory, \textit{Comœdia} 8.5.1935.} productions, and strongly from the point of view which makes a difference between Oriental and Occidental.
culture and theatre, calling the latter *an accident particulier dans l’histoire humaine*.[599]

Pour les Chinois, Hindous, Australiens, Peaux-Rouges, Juifs, pour tous les peuples sauf les nôtres, le théâtre est action avant d’être spectacle; action sacrée, c’est-à-dire de connaissance réelle, de prise de contact avec l’instant présent.[600]

In spite of this praise, Daumal does not wish to admire Oriental actors uncritically. They can be as degenerated as Occidental actors even if they, unlike their Western counterparts, have behind them a long tradition.

When it comes to Artaud’s *Les Cenci*, Daumal has plenty of sympathy for Artaud’s aspirations, but has to admit that Artaud did not quite achieve his goals. Mostly this was because of an untrained ensemble:

- - il a tenté, sur la scène, avec des acteurs mal entrainés, des mouvements d’ensemble qui auraient exigé un long travail et une profonde interconnaissance organique de toute la troupe. - - il leur était plus difficile de balayer de leurs corps les toiles d’araignée de la psychologie larvo-littéraire. - - Malheureusement, si leurs corps mécaniquement se mouvaient et faisaient les gestes, évolutions et gestes étaient copiés, non pas faits.[601]

Barrault’s *Autour d’une mère* was, for this critic, a totally different matter. He describes Barrault’s *horse show* with great enthusiasm and gives credit also to the other actors:

Sans aucun accessoire, sans changement de décor - - on voit le fils aîné scier les planches du cercueil, et on entend, tandis que la mère agonise. On voit - - Joël qui plonge à la recherche du cercueil, les mains dans la vase, les jambes flottant sous

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quatre mètres d'eau (sans eau, sans machinerie, sans rien); - - J'ai bien regardé chacun des acteurs: à chacun, J-L. Barrault a su demander exactement ce qu'il pouvait faire, et cela aussi est extraordinaire.  

Daumal finds it remarkable, that these two performances were played only two weeks apart and that the auteurs showed mutual respect to each other, in spite of the strong differences in their approaches. At the end of his review, he returns to the theme of the Oriental:

Si tous deux offrent des analogies avec les théâtres orientaux, ce n'est pas imitation: c'est qu'ils cherchent tous deux leurs fondements dans la nature humaine. 603

Daumal does not analyse the Oriental in more detailed way than this. Of Oriental theatre forms, he mentions only the Chinese, and the common tradition of combining grotesque with tragic, in which Barrault succeeded. It is, nevertheless, interesting that Daumal examines these productions both together and with references to the Oriental.

1.3. La Compagnie des Quinze: Le Viol de Lucrèce

Yet another 1930s theatrical production can be taken up as a point of comparison for Barrault's first production, namely Le Viol de Lucrèce by la Compagnie des Quinze. The play, which André Obey dramatised into a four act play from a poem by Shakespeare, was premiered a couple of months after Noé, in March 1931. The text traces back to the Roman historian Titus Livius and his

603 Daumal 1935, 203.
account on Lucretia, the faithful wife of a Roman soldier, Brutus. Brutus praises his wife’s virtues and indirectly incites an envious fellow soldier, Tarquinius, to rape Lucretia. The violent theme is remarkably close to Artaud’s *Les Cenci*.

Interestingly, the theme of rape occurs in all three productions: Barrault’s *Autour d’une mère* also has a rape scene. When seeking an abortion, Dewey Dell, the daughter of the family, gets raped by a pharmacist assistant in Jefferson.

*Les Quinze* had chosen to present the story along the lines of ancient Roman pantomime, or *à la bunraku*, if we envision the actors as puppets: the text was recited by two narrators while rest of the actors mostly mimed the story. As *Noé*, *Le Viol de Lucrèce* was received fairly well by critics, although there were complaints about the actors being reduced to the role of simple mimes, and even fear, that replacing action by commentary reflected a desire to see the death of the theatre. As in *Noé*, the mimic skills of the actors were praised and, occasionally, acting was compared to dancing or ballet. Pictures of the production show that mime techniques were used to portray actions. For example, Lucrèce is shown to spin without any props. According to French critics, the role of Lucrèce was a personal triumph for Marie-Hélène Dasté, and the British critics joined the praises in June 1931, when the play was presented in London.

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604 Suzanne Bing performed the role of the female narrator, Auguste Boverio was the male narrator. Marie-Hélène Dasté was Lucrèce and Aman Maistre Tarquinius. Brutus was played by Michel Saint-Denis.


606 Crémieux, 21.3.1931.


609 Anonyme, *Le Théâtre* avril 1931. This article contains several pictures of the production.

Mlle Dasté’s Lucrèce is infinitely appealing. The little scene of her sewing with her maids - of course with imaginary thread - is magical. Her death scene - she stabs herself behind a veil and just drops at her husband’s feet - reminds one of the deftness of Sada Yacco, the Japanese actress, in exactly the same predicament. 611

The reference to Sada Yacco is naturally fascinating. Especially since Marie-Hélène Dasté would later, in 1947, gain acclaim in a nō play Ce que murmure la Sumida (Sumida gawa). 612 Nevertheless, it must be admitted that in case of Le Viol de Lucrèce, like in the case of Autour d’une mère, Les Cenci, and Noé, direct allusions to Japanese influences are sparse, almost accidental.

On basis of the reports on the four 1930s French theatrical productions, the Compagnie des Quinze’s Noé and Le Viol de Lucrèce, Antonin Artaud’s Les Cenci, which all searched for new theatrical expression which would be based strongly on the non-verbal and physical acting, Barrault’s Autour d’une mère was definitely strongest in its mime content, even if Noé and Lucrèce contained a considerable amount of mime as well. In a way, Barrault’s work can be seen to have taken the Copeau-derived tradition to a new level. It combined two traditions which originated from the Vieux-Colombier: Decroux’s pure mime and les Quinze’s theatre, in which mime was an essential element. Also, it should be pointed out that when preparing Autour d’une mère, Barrault was in close contact with Marie-Hélène and Jean Dasté who had been very central in la Compagnie des Quinze. As far as Artaud is concerned, it can only be speculated

611 S.R.L., Morning Post 18.6.1931. The same reviewer also refers to the play as a blend of mime-ballet and drama very much along the same lines as the French critics.

612 Jean Dorcy sees this play as a culmination of Jean and Marie-Hélène Dasté’s work and considers it, not so much a nō play, even if the Dastés were familiar with the style and the tradition, but as a first and important example of vocal mime. Also, in Sumida for the first time, the actor - by means of various highly stylized and rhythmic gaits - carried out a kind of transposition comparable to that of the dancer (Dorcy 1961, 20). Suzanne Bing was instrumental in preparing this production, as she had been in Kantan and would yet be in another nō production of the Dastés, Kakegiyo, in 1951.
what the result would have been, if Barrault’s skills as a performer and director and Artaud’s vision could have been combined in a single production. *Les Quinze* had already broken up in the beginning of 1935. Artaud’s mental health deteriorated in the next two years after *Les Cenci*, which remained his last theatrical production. Barrault, however, proceeded to work on two other productions during the decade. And it seems that the search for inspiration from the ancient Rome continued. It might be said that *Numance* (1937) actually combined Artaudian vision with Decroux’s and Barrault’s technique of modern mime.

2. *Numance* - Barrault’s Theatre of Cruelty

Spanish civil war and Cervantes’s *Numance (La Numancia)* provided elements for Barrault’s next production in 1937.

> Sur le plan de la société, j’apportais ma contribution aux républicains espagnols, l’individu était respecté, la liberté glorifiée. Sur le plan de la métaphysique du théâtre, je pénétrerais dans le fantastique, la mort, le sang, la famine, la fureur, la rage. Chant, mime, danse, réalité, surréalité.\(^{613}\)

At this time, he was involved with a loose circle of surrealist and marxist artists, *le Grenier des Grands-Augustins*. Barrault’s attraction to Eastern learnings was combined to political alertness. The mime was not forgotten either: in *le Grenier* he did occasional mime improvisations to poems and to modern music.\(^{614}\)

*Numance* was a romantic retelling of the conquest of Numantia by the Romans,

\(^{613}\) Barrault 1972, 113.

\(^{614}\) Barrault 1974, 79. The Eastern sources Barrault mentions in this context were Bhagavad-Gita, Tantric Yoga, Hatha Yoga, the Upanishads and Milarepa. Some of these are the same sources that were seen to have inspired Artaud.
who had so starved the citizens during a fifteen month siege, that upon taking possession of the city, they found only one child alive. The others killed each other off to avoid suffering, and the last surviving child chose to commit suicide, marking the Roman conquest in futile tragedy.\(^{5}\)

It seems possible that Artaud's theories of Theatre of Cruelty influenced Barrault: the production did not close eyes from the atrocities and absurd violence of war. It was obviously important for Barrault that this play had certain classical element, which, nevertheless, had some distance to the French classical canon.\(^{6}\)

It is also easy to hear Artaudian overtones in Barrault's definition of theatre as a bath for the psyche and, even more interestingly, as a bath for forgetting (bain d'oubli). The latter expression Barrault derives from what he believes to be a Japanese term for actor, an verseur d'oubli \(^{7}\).

According to Felner, contemporary critics still had difficulties accepting the extensive use of corporeal expression of Numance.\(^{6}\) Of the structure of the play, a critic writes that it is "a series of disjointed incidents linked together by the almost oracular discourses of allegorical figures."\(^{6}\) Felner herself uses such terms as "a series of poetic episodes" and "visual tableaux". The allegorical characters, War, Hunger, and such, were masked, giving one critic a reason to

\(^{5}\) Felner 1986, 95.

\(^{6}\) Barrault 1949, 74.

\(^{7}\) Barrault 1949, 79. There is a twelve years difference between these ponderings and the performance of Numance and thus it cannot be directly assumed that Barrault was thinking all this during that time even if he writes about them in context of Numance. The common Japanese terms for actor are haiyû (outcast combined with excellence) or danyû (man combined with excellence) or yakusha (performer of a role) which have nothing to do with forgetting.

\(^{6}\) Felner 1986, 97.

\(^{6}\) Carr, N.Y.Times 13.6.1937.

\(^{6}\) Felner 1986, 95.
describe the production as "a masked ballet". The allegorical character of Death reminds one of a Roman soldier, but also some Mexican god with its prominent head piece and high boots and the figure of a scorpio on the chest. There are actually strong resemblances to the characters of *The Green Table* of Kurt Jooss.

Barrault used a fair amount of music and sound elements, even loudspeakers. Again, this reminds one of Artaud who laid great emphasis on mechanical sound. Like in *Les Cenci*, mime was a way to express extreme violence. In *Numance*, this meant cannibalism and mass massacre which would have been impossible to stage with naturalistic means. Barrault had clearly more stage technique at his disposal than in his first production. Not surprisingly, he calls this his first real *mise en scène*. Especially, the collaboration between Barrault and his stage, costume and mask designer André Masson worked perfectly. It was actually Masson who had suggested the staging of *Numance* to Barrault.

When discussing this production, Felner raises an interesting point, which is obviously prompted by the political nature of the play:

> Although Barrault was a confrère of Brecht and Piscator, he relied less on mechanical devices and much more than they on muscular plasticity, on the new mime as an element of the production.

Felner continues with a reference to Meyerhold. The reference to Barrault

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621 Altman, *Le Peuple* 4.5.1937. The description brings into mind the war scenes and allegorical characters of Jooss = *The Green Table*.

622 Picture (no page number) in *Cahiers de la Compagnie Renaud - Barrault* 1954.

623 Barrault 1949, 74.

624 Felner 1986, 97.

625 Meyerhold was also interested in nō, and also used Japanese teachers in his theatre (Fischer-Lichte 1990, 13).
political nature might be slightly too far-fetched. In his case, the political element was more intuitive than in case of Brecht, Piscator or Meyerhold. Actually, aversion from mechanical devices in favour of corporeal expression brings into mind theories of the Japanese director Suzuki Tadashi, particularly his emphasis on human energy, as opposed to energy created by mechanical means, expended on the stage. Suzuki, of course, considers no as a perfect example of theatre which uses human energy. And, indeed, Numance resembles Suzuki’s production of The Trojan Women. The common elements are a rigorously trained corps of actors, the themes of inhumanity and futility of war, Greco-Roman material, and the cutting use of music.

Like in Autour d’une mère, Barrault played several roles himself, mainly because he did not have anybody else who could have played them. Actors in this production were partly same as in Autour d’une mère. Roger Blin was one of the new members in the cast. Blin and Barrault had met already in 1932, but Blin did not appear in Barrault’s first production - most likely because he was heavily involved with Artaud’s Les Cenci in May 1935. Blin was also involved in political theatre and must have felt ideologically at home with the message of Numance. In this production, he played a dead solder who revived slowly, almost imperceptibly, in order to prophesy. According to Odette Aslan, Blin had a natural gift for mime and was subsequently trained in mime by Barrault.

Barrault also employed a group of six gymnasts to play the Roman soldiers. Movements of these soldiers were executed as some sort of collective movement, which caused the group look bigger.

627 It is actually intriguing that Suzuki’s first visit to France, in 1972, took place after an invitation by Barrault, and that it was Barrault who inspired Suzuki to set up his own company in Toga (Rimer 1986, viii). An hourglass reversed?
628 Barrault 1949, 75.
629 Aslan 1987, 14, 17.
J'avais donné aux soldats romains une gesticulation non pas individuelle, mais tirée de la gesticulation globale d'une troupe en marche, si bien qu'à six, les romains donnaient l'impression d'une troupe entière.  

Particularly pleased Barrault was with those movement experiments which went beyond the objective mime:

\[ \text{Rien ne me satisfait plus que ces trouvailles qui n'ont plus aucune ressemblance directe avec l'objet; qui deviennent de objets isolés, vivant par eux-mêmes et qui expriment plus réellement l'objet que l'objet lui-même.} \]

*Numance* was a success. It was performed for two weeks, a total of fifteen times, for a full house at the Théâtre Antoine, and it attracted such eminent spectators as Paul Claudel, who saw the play several times and also invited his friends to the performances. With help of the composer Darius Milhaud, also a brief encounter between Claudel and Barrault took place. Before that, Claudel was practically unknown to Barrault, although he was probably aware of Artaud's iconoclastic insults on Claudel's expense.

Claudel did not necessarily share the political values of Barrault and his *copains*, but it is obvious, that he saw in *Numance* an example of total theatre which went beyond other contemporary experiments and even his own works. At their first meeting, Claudel and Barrault spoke about the value of gesture, resources of the body and the art of breathing, as well as matters pertaining to diction. Barrault writes about this first encounter with Claudel as follows:

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630 Barrault 1949, 82.

631 Barrault 1949, 82.

632 Barrault 1974, 96. It also seems that after *Autour d'une mère*, there had been an attempt by Milhaud to introduce Barrault to Claudel.
A propos de Numance, nous nous rencontrâmes sur la vertu du geste, sur les
resources du corps, sur la plastique du verbe, sur l'importance des consonnes, sur
la méfiance des voyelles qu'on étire toujours trop, sur la prosodie du langage parlé,
sur les longues et les brèves, sur l'iambe et l'anapeste, sur l'art de la respiration. Il
me parla du théâtre japonais, m'encouragea... 633

So, Claudel did speak to him, among other things, about Japanese theatre.
However, Barrault does not indicate any clear influence of these discussions in
his later writings. On the contrary, on his travel report of the trip to Japan in
1960, he gives Dullin the credit of arousing his interest in Japanese theatre.634

During their first encounter, Claudel wished that they had met forty years
earlier.635 However, it turned out that the encounter was not too late. In the
1940s, it led to the famous stagings of Claudel's plays by Barrault, but before
that Barrault realised yet another independent production, La Faim (Hunger), in
1939.

3. La Faim - Approaching Paul Claudel

Jean Dorcy sees La Faim as the fulfilment of both Decroux's and Barrault's
experimentation. Naturally, Decroux did not have anything to do with the actual
production. Barrault writes, however, that he liked it, whereas Autour d'une
mère and Numance had not pleased him at all.636 Dorcy writes:

633 Barrault 1972, 122.
634 Barrault 1961a, 69-70.
635 Barrault 1974, 97.
636 Barrault 1949, 92.
This play is his third outstanding work - -. In the drama of La Faim, primacy is
given to the gestures. - - More important still, the idiom, this time, is truly that of
Mime. - -
In that period of the history of the Mime, it is difficult to say exactly where Étienne
Decroux ends, and where Jean-Louis Barrault begins. 637

La Faim is the last of Barrault's 1930s mime productions or, according to
Leabhart, the last of his plays which did not primarily exist as a text638. It is,
again, based on a novel, this time on Knut Hamsun's novel of the same title.639
Felner writes that the mise en scène enables the audience to see life through the
eyes of the starving young man, in a series of subjective tableaux, and refers to
an expressionistic element of the piece.640 Barrault himself writes about the
theme:

La Faim traitait un sujet qui devait sans doute trouver en moi des correspondances
profondes puisqu'on le retrouve dans le Procès de Kafka: la solitude de l'homme
dans la société. Et aussi un autre problème qui me bouleverse toujours: le
problème du double. - - Un seul homme et son double, se débattant au milieu d'une
collectivité cruellement organisée. 641

Hallucinations and nightmares of the hungry protagonist, Tangen, play a central
part in this hallucinante symphonie dramatique642. An important element is the

637 Dorcy 1961, 54-55.

638 Leabhart 1989,70.

639 For some reason, Felner gives the authorship to Jules Laforgue (Felner 1986, 98),
perhaps mixing this production with another production of the same season, Laforgue≠
Hamlet which was directed by Georges Granval and also performed at lAtelier.


641 Barrault 1949, 90.

642 Méré, Excelsior 21.4.1939.
starving writer’s interaction with his double who alternately understands and reproaches him. Tangen was played by Barrault, the double with whom he interacted in his hallucinations, by Roger Blin. The theme of the double seems to derive directly from Artaud, but also Claudel had used it in *La Femme et son ombre*.

The production was by no means pure mimodrama, even if many critics refer to pantomime and ballet\(^{643}\). The playtext\(^{644}\) contains dialogue and monologues by Tangen. Barrault also used a chorus consisting of seventeen members, which commented on the stage action. Sounds and music had a crucial role in the production. The music was composed by Marcel Delannoy, who used fragments of songs, jazz tunes, tango melodies - and, also, utilised Martenot, electronic organ invented by Maurice Martenot in 1928. Artaud had also used this instrument in *Les Cenci*. The sound of a beating heart accompanied the events.\(^{645}\)

This piece of total theatre - according to Barrault, his first one - was again a challenge for the involved actors, a total of 25 this time. The skills which were required

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\text{posait le problème d'une formation nouvelle d'acteurs entraînés à cette technique-là.}
\]

\[\text{Or cette technique-là, aucune école ne l'enseigne et aucun acteur de notre pays n'y est véritablement entraîné. Le problème du théâtre total pose donc tout simplement le problème de l'enseignement et de la rééducation de l'acteur occidental.}\]


\(^{644}\) Barrault 1939. The entire script was published in *La Nouvelle Saison* in June 1939.

\(^{645}\) Barrault 1939.

\(^{646}\) Barrault 1949, 93-94.
This criticism of Occidental actor - which Barrault repeats twice in this context - echoes Artaud's ideas, and it is possible, that also Claudel had some influence in it. Certainly, some of the actors were more skilled in physical expression than others, and Barrault would use their skills to enrich the production. For example, Aslan writes that while Barrault was preoccupied with the problem of the double, Blin recited a kind of nightmare poem in which he used his mime skills and invented language. According to Barrault, corporeal means of expression proved most useful for the dramatic structure of the play, changing the locations and establishing the atmosphere:

J'avais appliqué à l'action dramatique toute une méthode de jeux plastiques qui élargissaient considérablement les possibilités de changement de lieu, l'installation rapide d'une atmosphère, des raccourcis frappants. Mais ce matériel plastique je le considérais comme un moyen, comme une manière plus libre et plus étendue de locomotion dramatique.

According to Barrault, the audience had difficulties to accept the plastical means of expression. Felner writes about the mixed reception that the production got from contemporary critics. Surely, there was appreciation and acceptance of this new kind of a theatre. For example, Gustave de Fréjavelle considers La Faim:

un spectacle ingénieux qui tient plutôt du ballet ou de la pantomime que de l'art dramatique traditionnel. Mais des images hallucinantes restent dans la mémoire. Les ensembles sont réglés avec beaucoup d'art et les mouvements de la figuration sont d'une discipline et d'une précision parfaite.

But again, there were critics who thought that Barrault should put his talent

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647 Aslan 1987, 17.
648 Barrault 1949, 93.
649 Barrault 1949, 93.
650 de Fréjavelle, Débat 21.4.1939.
rather into serving a text, written for theatre by a real author, than into this kind of mixture of literature and ballet.\textsuperscript{651}

There were some elements that the audience particularly enjoyed, such as a mimed scene in which Tangen, the protagonist, climbs up the stairs. Climbing the stairs\textsuperscript{651} was actually one of the techniques that Decroux and Barrault had developed in 1931-33.\textsuperscript{652} At this point, Barrault considered the acceptance of this kind of an isolated element as accepting a trick, and he was not overwhelmingly enthusiastic about its popularity.\textsuperscript{653} From the point of view of mime, however, this scene is interesting:

\begin{quote}
Tanguen climbs the six flights to his garret room in a sequence of mimed ascent. The slides projected as a backdrop show different perspectives of the stairway, heightening the illusion of the climb. Here Barrault has combined the Decroux technique (simulation of walking up stairs) with an element of Piscatorian stage technology.\textsuperscript{654}
\end{quote}

In Aslan's book on Roger Blin, there is a picture which shows Blin in this production at the Théâtre de l'Atelier.\textsuperscript{655} He is a slender figure, not unlike Barrault, standing on steps which, obviously, are located 'outdoors'. There are three lamp posts, behind them some sort of an inner stage and three figures, at least two of them in costume, who seem to be examining it. This picture does in no way indicate that there would have been excessive amount of scenic decoration in the production. On the contrary, the set seems relatively bare. Yet

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{651} Brisson, \textit{Le Figaro} 23.4.1939.
\textsuperscript{652} Leabhart 1989, 62.
\textsuperscript{653} Barrault 1949, 93.
\textsuperscript{654} Felner 1986, 99. Barrault himself was surprised about the critics\textsuperscript{651} references to Piscator since he had never seen a performance by Piscator or any other forms of German theatre (Barrault 1949, 91).
\textsuperscript{655} Aslan 1987, 16.
\end{footnotesize}
it seems, that Barrault was criticised for his use of scenic elements. His answer to the criticism was that the more trained and skilled the actors are in playing the character and simultaneously representing the situation, the easier it is to limit the scenic elements into bare essentials. It all depends on the skills of the actors who, to Barrault’s opinion, obviously were not impeccable in this case. There is no reason to empty the stage, if one cannot offer anything for replacement, he writes.656

The closest elements to traditional Japanese theatre, especially nō, that can be found in La Faim are the use of chorus with its poetic recitals and comments, and the dreamlike atmosphere. Also the use of music and sound as an integral and interactive part of the play, bears some resemblance to the use of music in nō: the sound of beating heart brings into mind the drums of nō and the mechanical sound of Martenot, the shrill sound of the nō flute. The paired characters of Tangen and his double can be seen as shite and waki of nō, even if their roles do not exactly fit the pattern. The double, rather than Tangen, is the shite. However, like in nō Ahe drama proper does not develop between the leading actor, the shite, and the waki in a dream play, but through the revelation of the leading actor’s inner conflicts.657 Like shite, Tangen’s double was also masked - only at the end, while fighting physically with Tangen, he loses the mask and his power over Tangen.658 In this respect, the double reminds of those nō characters, which reveal themselves as demons at the culmination point of a play.

La Faim was performed more than fifty times659 at l’Atelier. Clearly, Barrault had

656 Barrault 1949, 94.

657 Sekine 1985, 103.

658 Barrault 1939, 359.

659 Barrault 1949, 91. In Barrault’s later texts, the number of performances has increased to more than seventy (Barrault 1974, 99).
established himself as a credible auteur des mises en scène. It was at this time that Claudel sent Barrault his first letter and encouragements.\textsuperscript{660} In his letter, Claudel wrote:

\begin{quote}
Vous êtes un acteur étonnant, celui que j'ai toujours désiré! Qui comprend que l'on doit jouer non seulement avec la langue et les yeux, mais avec tout le corps, se servir des resources infinies d'expression que fournit le corps humain.\textsuperscript{661}
\end{quote}

Eventually, it turned out that Barrault was not only the actor that Claudel had been looking forward to, but also a perfect director for Claudel's drama: Barrault's acclaimed productions of Claudel's plays at the Comédie-Française commenced with \textit{Le Soulier de satin} in 1942.

It seems clear that, in the 1930s, Barrault proceeded through four 'masters', four major influences: Dullin, Decroux, Artaud and Claudel, who helped him to formulate his views towards total theatre. Of these four, Artaud and Claudel expressed explicitly their fascination with Oriental theatre, Dullin's comments, as seen, were enthusiastic but sparse and Decroux's most fragmentary. In Claudel's case, Oriental theatre was first of all traditional Japanese theatre, especially nô, of which he also had some first hand experience. Both \textit{Numance} and \textit{La Faim} appealed strongly to Claudel, and it can be assumed that some of Claudel's knowledge passed on to Barrault - even if Barrault admits that his knowledge of nô remained "livresque ou imaginaire" for a long time.

\begin{quote}
Nous croyions que le Nô était un théâtre rituel religieux; que les acteurs étaient masqués; que le mouvement était très lent; que les conventions n'étaient perceptibles que pour les initiés. Nous étions subjugués par le côté ésotérique de cet art. Nous envions la haute poésie de ce genre de théâtre, la richesse des costumes, la préciosité des accessoires, la religiosité enfin qui se dégageait de cette
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{660} Barrault 1949, 92.

\textsuperscript{661} Claudel 1974, 78. The letter was written on 25.4.1939.
It is interesting how close this description sounds to Claudel's main points on nō, which were discussed earlier.

It is evident that, like Claudel, Barrault sensed the possibility of seeking from nō a contrast to the superficiality of Western theatre. However, his first experience of a nō play at Théâtre des nations festival in Paris in 1957, was a mixture of confusion and amusement:

C'est donc par hasard que j'avais vu un Nô, il y a trois ou quatre ans. A mon grand étonnement, je n'avais pas été pris. Le dispositif de la scène m'avait produit moins d'effet que celle des acteurs de l'opéra chinois. J'avais admiré la présence et le comportement des servants. Mais j'avais ri à la façon extravagante d'utiliser la parole et de se placer la voix pour le chant. J'avais même fini par rire nerveusement, tellement ma sensibilité refusait d'absorber ces cris gutturaux, comme quelqu'un ferait des efforts pour se faire vomir.

Fortunately, only a few years later, in Japan, he had a totally different experience. He saw a nō play and a kyōgen piece performed by actors of Kanze school, and was thoroughly impressed:

- - je n'avais rien vu de si beau, de si interne, de si magique. Il me semblait avoir vécu physiquement à l'intérieur d'une âme.

He also associates nō with the ancient Greek theatre, like Claudel and many

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662 Barrault 1961a, 70.
663 Barrault 1961a, 71.
664 Barrault 1961a, 87. He had also read René Sieffert's book before his trip and was more familiar with the traditions.
665 Barrault 1961a, 76.
others before him. In his travel report, Barrault refers to Claudel twice, mentioning Claudel’s interest in bunraku and the Japanese influences in Claudel’s play Christophe Colomb, which Barrault’s group performed in Japan:

Pour Christophe Colomb de Claudel, il y a eu non seulement succès, mais étonnement. Claudel a été très influencé par le théâtre japonais. Dans cette œuvre cela se sent: mélange de chant, de danse, de pantomime.

Barrault seems to have been impressed by all the performances that he saw in Japan, seeing them as examples of complete art which combine dance, song and mime into a whole. It is interesting that the division into masculin, feminin and neutre, which he got from Artaud, prevails in his thought: he defines Japanese spirit as feminine. Admittedly, there are echoes of Orientalism in this opinion.

It is easy to see progress towards total theatre in Barrault’s work in the 1930s. This theatre combines other theatrical elements with the corporeal and emotional skills of the actor. It is also possible to see, that the Oriental, in a broad sense, filtered to Barrault through his contact with Artaud and, especially, with Claudel, who was a direct link to traditional Japanese theatre during the period. The process was most likely intuitive, not conscious search for any specific information. For example, judging from the lack of references, the available literature on traditional Japanese theatre seems not have had much influence on Barrault in the 1930s. As seen, he mentions having read René Sieffert’s book only before he was going to visit Japan in 1960.

Should we wish to illustrate the process with an hourglass, the influence of

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666 Barrault 1961a, 88.
667 Barrault 1961a, 49. In addition to Christophe Colomb, Barrault’s group performed a pantomime piece from Les Enfants du paradis.
668 Barrault 1961a, 75-76.
Barrault's four masters with their respective Japanese and other Oriental influences would be in the upper part of it. Barrault's productions were the filter, and in the bottom part of the hourglass emerges an interesting new area: the serious art of subjective mime, which in Carlson's model is closest to degree 4, i.e. the foreign and familiar have created a new blend.

Also some misunderstanding of foreign cultures was involved, at least in Artaud's case, but certainly no blatant exploitation of exotic elements. The pre-expressive model does not seem particularly fruitful for analysing Barrault's case, even if the total theatre that emerged, tempts one to speculate whether Barrault just happened to discover theatre that holds all essential elements of the performance. However, as we have seen, there are clear and traceable influences and a line of development behind Barrault's work on theatre that clearly gives the art of the actor - or perhaps in this case: the art of the actor-manager - the most central status.

4. The Serious Art of Subjective Mime

Decroux and Barrault made a difference between objective and subjective mime and emphasised that the essence of modern mime was first of all in the field of subjective mime. The mime that Barrault wanted in *La Faim* was subjective mime, i.e. mime which deals with mental states of the soul translated into corporeal expression. The subjective mime brings in a religious level and an interesting notion:

> En poursuivant nos recherches dans le mime subjectif, notamment, nous nous sentions nous rapprocher des acteurs orientaux; nous avions l'impression que nous

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670 Barrault 1950a, 16. Felner actually sees *La Faim* as an example of objective and subjective mime working simultaneously (Felner 1986, 99).
retrouvions la plastique de la tragédie grecque.  

Subjective mime was to be serious art, not tricks and amusement. From the very beginning of his work, Decroux was resolutely against the old-fashioned pantomime, which was supposed to amuse people. If mime was to be developed into a real, independent art form, it had to be serious.

First we have something serious. - - An art is first of all serious and adds the comic aspect later. And this pantomime seemed to me to be systematically comic, even before one knew what the subject was.  

This statement was made when Decroux was in his eighties and was reminiscing about pantomime performances of his childhood. However, his repulsion from amusing the audience, or actually even particularly caring for acceptance of the audience, stayed throughout his career. In his desire to assault the audience, Decroux actually fits very well in the modernist movement, for which the mass audience and consumer art were definite adversaries. According to Felner, Decroux moved mime from popular culture to art for the intellectual elite. Nevertheless, she also finds that although Decroux reviled the gratuituous comic effect of the old pantomime, he never fully explored the relationship between mime and tragedy. He dealt more with the pure physical level of gesture.  

More aesthetically conscious statements on seriousness can be found from

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671 Barrault 1949, 39.

672 Decroux 1974, 28. Interview by Thomas Leabhart.


674 Felner 1985, 52. Considering the history of mime, this is a simplification. Le Cercle Funambulesque can be seen having done the same in the 19th century.

675 Felner 1985, 80
Barrault. He was convinced that mime was an art which could become as noble and majestic as all arts, and that there could be 'tragic pantomime' which the Oriental artists know so well. Most interesting is, that Barrault actually makes a connection between Oriental mime and modern (Western) mime which, unlike historical pantomime, can reach up to tragedy. Leabhart extends this statement to cover also Decroux views, and writes that both of them wished to return to the sacred source of drama. This evokes Pavis concept of ultracultural theatre, which involves the mythic quest for the lost purity of the theatre.

In modern mime, the discussion on seriousness brings us back to the definition of the concepts 'mime' and 'pantomime'. Both Decroux and Barrault use the two terms to indicate the degree of seriousness of the performer and performance, even though it must be admitted that there are discrepancies in the use of these terms in their writings and interviews.

The term favoured by Decroux is 'mime corporel', corporeal mime. In his writings and interviews, 'pantomime blanche' or 'pantomime ancienne' refer to 19th century Pierrot pantomime. For Jean-Louis Barrault, both 'mime' and 'pantomime' are examples of corporeal expression which excludes speech. According to him, 'pantomime' is dramatic art, which uses gestures as language, whereas 'mime' is dramatic art which lives in silence, and is by its nature, action, not language. Admittedly, Barrault uses terms like 'tragic pantomime' to correspond with 'pure pantomime' - clearly meaning something else than

676 Felner 1985, 79.

677 Barrault 1953. In this article Barrault indicates that the only connection to the Oriental mime is the noble character and the degree of dignity, not exactly the style.

678 Leabhart 1989, 64.

679 Decroux 1963, 17.

680 Decroux 1963, 87.

681 Barrault 1979, 4. Interview by Willam Weiss.
historical pantomime with its charming and slightly obsolete gestural language\textsuperscript{682}. It must be said that Barrault is not very clear and consistent in his definitions\textsuperscript{683}. One example of the elusiveness of his language is the article entitled 'Tragic Mime',\textsuperscript{684} which seems to tie the tragic in mime to man's existentialist struggle with universe, i.e. the conflict between inner self and outer world. He is convinced that all this is evident in an individual's countenance - even if the key to tragic mime has been lost.

These scattered statements clearly reflect a need to see the art of mime from a new and different angle. It has actually been said that "virtually all modernists had in common a wish to take things apart and start over, to make things new in a radical way"\textsuperscript{685}. For some scholars of mime, they also reflect a simplified view that mime throughout the centuries has been clearly isolated from the so-called serious theater of each era\textsuperscript{686}. However it is clear that, throughout its history, mime has combined elements of the sacred and the profane. Decroux and Barrault's desire to define modern mime as serious art is not new in the history of mime and pantomime, but an integral part of all periods of renovation of this art form.\textsuperscript{687} In this case, a more interesting aspect is that the elements related to the Oriental, and often to traditional Japanese theatre, fulfilled the need for tragic or serious, and provided evidence that tragic mime was possible also in the West.

\textsuperscript{682} Barrault 1979, 4-5. Interview by Willam Weiss.

\textsuperscript{683} In this context in also the interviewer (Weiss) is using the words mime and pantomime interchangeably, and the translators (Sally & Thomas Leabhart) have followed this practice.

\textsuperscript{684} Barrault 1961b, 91-100.

\textsuperscript{685} Crunden 1993, 335-336.

\textsuperscript{686} Felner 1986, 176.

\textsuperscript{687} Please see Appendix 1.
VIII. CONCLUSION

The objective of this study has been to bring a contribution to the history of modern mime by specifying what exactly were the often-mentioned influences of Oriental theatre behind the development of this art form in France in the 1930s. The practical work and writings of Étienne Decroux and Jean-Louis Barrault are in the focus of this study. The scholarship has not thus far provided answers to this question. On the contrary, it seems that the statement of Oriental influences is often made matter-of-factly, without any specifications which forms of Oriental theatre could be in question, and whether Decroux and Barrault were exposed to these in the 1930s either on visits to Eastern countries or by seeing performances in France or, possibly, by gathering information from the available literature. Parallels with Oriental theatre and modern French mime are sought by analysing Decroux’s and Barrault’s writings, experimentation and performances in the 1930s. Grasping the Spectre of the Orient is important, because often the statements are repeated and re-cited without questioning the validity of their origins.

Since Oriental theatre is a wide concept, this study focuses only on the possible influence of traditional Japanese theatre, nōgaku, kabuki, and kyōgen on modern French mime. In addition to being the most referred to Oriental influence on modern mime, Japanese traditional theatre - or at least something that was approximating it - had the most solid visit tradition in France before and during the 1930s. The theoretical approaches tried out in clarifying the influence are different methods of theatrical interculturalism, i.e. models that try to trace the influence flows between different cultures in specific theatre performances. It should be said that these methods are not yet very sophisticated and that they do not seem to be quite sufficient for analysing non-contemporary performances, like the ones dealt with in this study. However, intercultural approaches have been used as tools to clarify the processes and to give structure to the findings. I
have classified the methods or approaches into three basic categories: the pre-expressive model, the degreeable or infiltration models, and the misunderstanding models, and chosen the most suitable approaches for the material in question. Since the goal has been to find possible influences, the preference has been on the two latter categories. The pre-expressive model is more static and concentrates rather on locating the innate similarities between different performance traditions.

The first link to Eastern, if not necessarily Japanese tradition, can be found in the emphasis on the non-verbal. Mistrust in word has dominated the whole 20th century. This mistrust has been particularly strong during the polarised times of totalitarian ideologies, such as the 1930s in Europe. Mime, a theatre form which subordinates or denies the importance of Sire le Mot, seems to be particularly suitable medium for such times, and, indeed, there was considerable activity in the field of mime during the period. A wide variety of performers sprouted up. Hardly any of them invested in 19th century pantomime tradition with its commedia dell’arte-based characters and romantic and melodramatic themes. Many, like Decroux and Barrault, plunged into experimentation along with other representatives of the modernist movement which influenced all the arts.

However, it was not only the importance of silence in Eastern cultures that appealed to the renovators of theatre and mime in particular. Modern mime was physical art, and Oriental theatre forms were considered to be on a far more advanced level in this respect. Rigorous physical training methods resulting in the ultimate professionalism are connected with the training principles of Eastern traditional theatres.

The second link to the Oriental can be found in modernism in general. In its quest for new ways of artistic expression, modernism often sought inspiration from past and non-European cultures.
Mime has a particularly strong French flavour, and the most visible representatives of the art during 19th and 20th centuries have, indeed, been Frenchmen, namely Jean-Gaspard Deburau, Étienne Decroux, Jean-Louis Barrault, Marcel Marceau, and Jacques Lecoq. The question why France would become so strong in mime in 19th century and remain such in 20th century, is interesting. The restrictions imposed on the use of speech during the first half of 19th century are not sufficient explanations. These were fairly short-lived and did not keep the mime companies, with the exception of Pierrot character, from adopting spoken dialogue as soon as they were removed. As far as 20th century, and the 1930s in particular, is concerned, there certainly were no such restrictions.

One likely reason for the dominance of France in mime is the continuity of the tradition which is exceptional in the history of mime. 19th century pantomime carried on to the following century with modifications and renovations. A sign of the strength of the tradition is the vehemence with which Étienne Decroux attacked it - and, indeed, the ease by which Marceau later adopted many of its key elements. While acknowledging the French achievements in mime, we can also ask whether canonisation tends to omit the other lines than the dominant, and often male ones. For example, the clear interest in mime in England during the 1930s or the work of Angna Enters in the United States at approximately the same time, remains forgotten or understated. Another important and un researched area is the contribution of Suzanne Bing in the development of modern French mime and, especially, in bringing the influence of traditional Japanese theatre into it by playing a crucial role in the production of the nō play Kantan at the Vieux-Colombier school. There is still plenty to be done in researching and canonising the female tradition in mime. One of the contributions of this study is in focusing some of the limelight on the other representatives of mime during the period concerned. Their work is often omitted from the books on modern mime. The same applies to some of theoretical writings on mime that I have taken up in this study.
In this work, the contemporary representatives of the 1930s mime are presented very briefly, mainly in order to look whether their work contained any influences from traditional Japanese theatre as well. In addition to the British mimes and Enters, I have analysed a dance-theatre performance by Kurt Jooss, *The Green Table*. Jooss’ art offers also an opportunity to deal briefly with the connections between modern dance and modern mime. The line between mime and strongly theatrically oriented dance is very thin, bringing into mind the difficulty of defining, for example, the *kabuki* dance. It is also interesting that Decroux, who was critical of modern dance, made an exception with Jooss, calling him brother and expressing a wish to write about his work.

It must be said that parallels to and actual evidence of traditional Japanese theatre having influenced the mimes who were contemporaries of Decroux and Barrault are very marginal. Enters had some interesting contacts with Japanese performers but chose to search inspiration from other sources. In case of the British mimes and Jooss, no significant parallels can be found, at least on basis of the materials that were used. The results with Decroux and Barrault are definitely more promising.

During the first years of the 1930s, Étiennne Decroux and Jean-Louis Barrault developed the key concepts and techniques of modern or, as it is also called, corporeal mime. These techniques and, especially, Decroux’s lifelong elaboration of them, still live in the work of contemporary performers - whether they are admirers of his ideas or not.

In theory, the influence is possible. Especially, if the focus is on traditional Japanese theatre forms, *nōgaku, kabuki* and *bunraku*, which all were, at least through literature, known in France by and during the 1930s. The French had also had an opportunity to see some examples of Japanese theatre which, although far from authentic performances of the traditional forms, could bring a
flavour and impressions on different, corporeal, performing techniques for the interested and open-minded. I was not able to find any information that would have confirmed that Decroux or Barrault saw, for example, the performances of Nihon-Geki-Kyōkai group in Paris in 1930 but it is likely that they heard about those from Dullin in whose lAtelier theatre they both were working at that time. Dullin had seen the performance and was enthusiastic about it, and it seems that it was exactly the performing skills of these Japanese actors that he slightly later compared with Decroux’s and Barrault’s skills in mime.

Another documented and likely influence, on Decroux at least, was the performance of Kantan at the Vieux-Colombier. It seems likely that he saw it, even if some statements that were long considered his comments on this performance most likely refer to another student performance at the school.

There are very few references to any form of Japanese theatre in the articles that Decroux and Barrault wrote in the 1930s. Actually, there are no texts by Barrault from this decade and I have used a text in which he reminisces on the 1930s and his views on mime during the period. A short note on the minimal use of decoration in Japanese theatre is included in Decroux’s article, which was written in 1931.

Finding parallels between the texts and theories on modern mime and traditional Japanese theatre and its aesthetics is easier than finding the actual references. Of course, the parallels have to be treated with caution. For example, it is possible to find some similarities between the theories of Zeami and Étienne Decroux - but it is clearly possible to find plenty of differences as well. When it comes to the actual mime pieces that Decroux composed and rehearsed with his students in the 1930s, it is easy to see that Japanese, or any other Eastern influence is not particularly evident in them. They are built around occupational gestures, sport themes, and the explorations of machinery. These themes would later develop
into the four character types that Decroux favoured in his training and teaching: Man of the Drawing Room, Man of Sports, Man of the Dreams and Marionette.

It is not surprising that when the possible influences are looked at more closely, the Decroux scholars do not have any other alternative than to state that the similarities and parallels derive from the pre-expressive level, the area that is common to all theatre traditions.

Yet, it cannot be denied that in his role of a master teacher, Decroux resembled an Oriental master. He devoted his life for teaching and perfecting his and his students' skills in the restricted area of corporeal mime. He himself did not aspire to perform as much as to educate and do research in this selected area. Undeniably, his influence on many of his own students has been extremely profound. This brings in the enhancing effect of the United States in particular. Decroux taught and performed in New York after World War II and, subsequently, his school in Paris had a steady flow of U.S. students, of whom several have continued his legacy not only by performing but also by writing. Without this 'added value' Decroux might never have obtained his legendary status as the Afather of modern mime@.

The development of Jean-Louis Barrault in the 1930s is a very different matter. Surely, he was very strongly under Decroux's influence during the first years of the decade, and brought an important contribution to the development of the techniques of modern mime. His text pertaining to the decade actually evokes the theories of Japanese martial arts, and I have read them in parallel with a guidebook by Deshimaru Taisen, a martial arts teacher. It is probable, though, that the ideas presented in this particular text were not ideas shared with Decroux in the first two years of the decade. Many elements in them show the influence of Antonin Artaud with whom Barrault got acquainted during the first half of the decade.
In the mid-1930s, Barrault started building his own career with theatre productions which were based on the solid corporeal skills of the actor combined with the other theatrical elements: music, sound, lights - and text. Thus he actually started approximating the total expression of traditional Japanese theatre forms. Again, with a look at some of the other contemporary performances that used mime as a part of a theatrical production, I have examined whether Barrault went further than his contemporaries. It seems that he did: the amount of mime in Barrault’s plays was larger than in the other productions and so were the parallels with traditional Japanese theatre forms. Yet, another 1930s trend embracing traditional Japanese theatre should not be forgotten, namely the work of Marie-Hélène and Jean Dasté and, again, Suzanne Bing. This line, naturally, derives directly from Jacques Copeau and the tradition of l’École du Vieux-Colombier. The 1930s saw the productions of the Compagnie des Quinze, in which mime was an integral part. The influence of the Japanese theatre is not particularly strong in these. Whereas, in the 1940s and 1950s the Dastés and Bing approached the Japanese themes more directly with their productions of Sumida and Kagekiyō.

If we wish to see the influence of traditional Japanese theatre on French mime in the 1930s, we definitely have to look at the direction of Barrault who, actually acted as a very interesting living hourglass by filtering impressions from different sources into his work. At first, he was exposed to the ideas of Antonin Artaud whose eclectic mélange of Eastern esoterism influenced him deeply. However, when it comes to the influence of traditional Japanese theatre, he was primarily influenced by Paul Claudel, whose knowledge and interest in traditional Japanese theatre forms went far beyond the knowledge and interest of an average Frenchman. Again, it seems that the literature that was available, did not have much of influence. The information transmitted in conversations and in correspondence was far more crucial.
It is clear that in Barrault Claudel discovered the talent that he would have needed to achieve his aspirations with his own experiments with the nō-style - in a very broad meaning of the word - in the 1920s and 1930s. It is not a coincidence that Claudel was much taken by Barrault's 1930s theatrical productions, and that, eventually, Barrault would create highly acclaimed mises en scène for Claudel's plays. Barrault did manage to combine the sacred and the profane, the religious and the entertaining, the shamanic and the satyric. Of course, it was not pure mime but theatre - in which mime played a central role.

If all these examples are looked at as an entity, it can be concluded that in addition to the possible pre-expressive strata, there was some infiltration and certainly a fair amount of misunderstanding in the relations between Japanese traditional theatre forms and modern French mime. This was visible already in the 1930s but got more evident in the following decades when there were more opportunities for first-hand authentic experiences on traditional Japanese theatre forms. With this study I wish to have grasped the Spectre of the Orient during one period of modern French mime, but it is clear that there is still work to be done in this field, and perhaps with other Spectres as well.
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A Brief History of Mime and Pantomime: Tightroping between the Serious and the Grotesque

The first European mime plays trace back to 581 B.C. Written documents appear one hundred years later\(^1\). These early mimes were folk comedies written in dialect, and they combined music, dance and acrobatics with dialogue\(^2\). They were not mime performances in the present sense of the word. Their role in the history of mime derives mainly from the word 'mimos', and there are writers who insist on excluding these grotesque and profane comedies from the history of mime altogether\(^3\).

Mime as a non-verbal art which relied mainly on corporeal expression of the performer, emerged in Ancient Rome. However, it seems that also performances called 'mimus' continued. The word 'pantomimus' was created for the new art form. Allardyce Nicoll describes the genre as an art of interpretative dancing which was favoured more by nobility than the masses\(^4\). The birth of Roman pantomime took place around 240 B.C. Its origins are, indeed, in dance drama, which transformed to a form in which a pantomimus danced or mimed a story told by a narrator\(^5\). Typical source materials for ancient Roman pantomime were various myths and legends.

Nicoll writes that performers of ancient Roman pantomime were compared to tragedy actors, only they were considered more versatile.

\(^{1}\) Nicoll 1931, 41

\(^{2}\) Hugounet 1889, 12; Nicoll 1931, 78

\(^{3}\) Verriest-Lefert 1974, 111

\(^{4}\) Nicoll 1931, 133

\(^{5}\) Hugounet 1889, 13-15

\(^{6}\) Nicoll 1931, 133
There is limited amount of documentation of mime performances between the Roman period and 18th century. It can be assumed, that in medieval Europe, mime was a natural way to convey biblical legends in multi-lingual environment. During the Renaissance, eloquent corporeal expression must have been an asset for commedia dell'arte companies, which toured both multi-dialectic Italian peninsula and other European countries\textsuperscript{7}.

Elizabethan dumb shows are a chapter by themselves. Like in commedia dell'arte, non-verbal sections were used as a part of play in the Elizabethan theatre. In commedia dell'arte, the use of mime was most common in comic interludes named lazioni and in episodes, in which actors pretended to be in darkness\textsuperscript{8}. In the Elizabethan theatre, dumb shows were used in various ways. Murder scenes, stately occasions, and magic or supernatural apparitions were commonly expressed by a dumb show\textsuperscript{9}. Unlike Italian intermedii, dumb shows are found almost exclusively in serious plays\textsuperscript{10}. This is another interesting example of parallel currents of the serious and the comic in the history of mime.

In 18th century, ancient Roman pantomime was revived both in England and in France. Already in 1702, the English dance master John Weaver called his works pantomimes. The themes of Weaver's compositions originate from Greco-Roman myths. 'Love of Mars and Venus' (1716) was the most popular of his works. Weaver also wrote his theories in 'The History of Mimes and Pantomimes', which was published in 1728. In this book, Weaver considers his own pantomime superior and closer to the ancient Roman tradition than the other contemporary British 'Dramatick Entertainments consisting of Dancing, Gesture and Action intermix'd with Trick and Show'\textsuperscript{11}. However, in his opinion, even these are closer to the ancient Roman tradition than performances of visiting Italian groups, which were using

\textsuperscript{7} Scott 1977, 13
\textsuperscript{8} Scott 1977, 14
\textsuperscript{9} Mehl 1982, 22-25
\textsuperscript{10} Mehl 1982, xii
\textsuperscript{11} Weaver 1728, 3
pantomime only as a part of their performances. The English experiments were at least 'Representations of entire stories carried on by various Notions, Action and dumb show'\textsuperscript{12}.

Weaver was clearly concerned about pantomime's seriousness as an art. Revival of ancient Roman pantomime was a way to bring serious topics back to the theatre\textsuperscript{13}. He also attempted to clarify the concepts of 'serious' and 'grotesque', and thought that the difference is not in the use of tragic comic elements but in the use of characters. In serious theatre, the heroes are natural, like gods. In grotesque theatre they are artificial, like Harlequin, Colombina or Pierrot\textsuperscript{14}.

The French Jean Georges Noverre followed same paths as Weaver in England slightly later, at the end of 18th century. His theories were in alignment with the wider neoclassicist movement. It is surprising, that Noverre does not refer to Weaver's work, of which he must have had some knowledge, because of his own frequent stays and studies in England\textsuperscript{15}. He sees himself as the first person to revive the ancient Roman pantomime\textsuperscript{16}.

Noverre's views on ancient Roman pantomime are ambiguous. There is appreciation but also some amount of criticism, because he sees that this pantomime was not based on dance, but on conventional gestures, which spectators were able to decipher, because they were trained to non-verbal language at special schools or institutions\textsuperscript{17}. Key concept behind Noverre's gestures is \textit{soul}=This is the base of his own 'danse pantomime ou en action'\textsuperscript{18}. Tragic themes suit best for an art which aims to express areas which do not yield to verbal

\textsuperscript{12} Weaver 1728, 4
\textsuperscript{13} Weaver 1728, 5-6. It should be noted that Weaver, in spite of advocating serious pantomime, does write also about comic pantomimes - and he did compose some himself.
\textsuperscript{14} Weaver 1728, 56
\textsuperscript{15} Noverre 1952, 12
\textsuperscript{16} Noverre 1952, 44. Also in Noverre, Ballet Pantomime in Rolfe 1981, 55. From the point of view of the mime in 1930's, it is interesting that the English translation of Noverre's 1809 'Lettres sur les arts imitateurs en général et sur la danse en particulier' was published in 1930.
\textsuperscript{17} Noverre 1952, 15-16, 43
\textsuperscript{18} Noverre 1952, 37. The names used by Noverre vary: \textit{ballet héroï -pantomime, ballet en action, ballet pantomime}, etc.
expression\textsuperscript{19}. Like Weaver, Noverre used both tragic and comic topics\textsuperscript{20}, but resolutely avoided the \textit{commedia dell’arte} tradition. Noverre’s influence in ballet was considerable, but his art remained a treat of small circles. It was never the kind of popular entertainment as 19th century pantomime would be.

Speechless performances based on the \textit{commedia dell’arte} and other popular entertainment tradition emerged in the first decades of 19th century, partially because of restrictions imposed on the use of speech\textsuperscript{21}. Talent and popularity of the mime Jean Gaspard Deburau was, however, the most important factor in this development. Performances of the \textit{Théâtre des Funambules} were a mixture of popular theatre forms. Important for Deburau’s own development was ‘pantomime sautante’, ‘une intrigue mêlée aux excercises du corps’\textsuperscript{22}, in which the performers were dressed up as \textit{commedia dell’arte} characters. Deburau excelled\textsuperscript{23} as Pierrot, or Baptiste, as this character was also called. Deburau developed Baptiste from a simple glutton to a multi-dimensional clown, which has been characterised as sarcastic and sentimental\textsuperscript{24} or intellectual, psychological, and satirical\textsuperscript{25}. His clown appealed to a very wide audience. Deburau has sometimes been described as a hero of lower classes, which made the aristocrats laughable\textsuperscript{26}, but this is too simplified. His scenarios and audience appeal prove that the butt of his jokes covered all strata of society\textsuperscript{27}.

\textsuperscript{19} Noverre 1809, 21

\textsuperscript{20} Noverre 1952, 85.

\textsuperscript{21} The tradition of restrictions goes back to 17th century, and was used against the highly popular Italian groups in France. However, there is no indication that these restrictions would have created an independent mime or pantomime.

\textsuperscript{22} Janin 1832, 81

\textsuperscript{23} Storey 1978, MMM 1/3, 174

\textsuperscript{24} Disher 1925, 135

\textsuperscript{25} Dick 1960, 184

\textsuperscript{26} Felner 1985, 31

\textsuperscript{27} Comparisons to Chaplin have been made, not without reason. Paseková 1986, Ballett International, 14.
Pondering the relation between the serious and the comic was not relevant for performers of the Funambules theatre. Their shows were created for public entertainment. Nor left Deburau behind any deep theories on the essence of mime. These theories and legends were created by others, for example by Deburau’s contemporaries Jules Janin, Théophile Gautier, and other writers and artists later in 19th century. The question on seriousness emerged only after Deburau’s death, as a call for new content and ideology for pantomime, promoted by Jules Champfleury.\(^28\)

Champfleury’s first pantomime for the Funambules, ‘Pierrot, valet de la mort’, aimed to show that A’homme spirituel transcending his physical infirmities and moral limitations was taken seriously”\(^29\). His second pantomime was characterised as "instructive, philosophic and worthy of the complete attention of serious people”\(^30\), and later his work veered clearly toward realism à la Balzac. Pierrot stayed in the realistic pantomimes, but his muteness and traditional white face had to be justified with some feasible reason\(^31\).

Pierrot pantomime survived until 1879\(^32\). However, its revival took place in less than a decade, in 1888, when le Cercle Funambulesque was founded\(^33\). The Cercle Funambulesque consisted of artists and writers, among them Felix Lecher, Paul Margueritte, Raoul de Najac, Jules Champfleury and Paul Legrand. Their goals were to revive the classic pantomime, to support new pantomime and to stage old market theatre, improvised comedies and Italian comedy, as well as, eventually, to stage new comedies, which would adhere to old Italian comedy or to commedia dell’arte tradition\(^34\).

\(^{28}\) Striker 1984, 50

\(^{29}\) Striker 1984, 51

\(^{30}\) Striker 1988, 53

\(^{31}\) The muteness of Pierrot character was not absolute, there is evidence of occasional utterances by the various Pierrots. Deburau himself, however, is known to have spoken in only one play at the Funambules. Storey 1978, MMM 1/3, 174-175.

\(^{32}\) Hugounet 1889, 185

\(^{33}\) In some sense this kind of a loose group, fascinated about pantomime, had existed some decades earlier, in late 1850s, when Deburau’s successor Paul Legrand inspired a whole range of artists to writing plays which mostly fitted to the category of realistic pantomime (Storey 1985, 65-66). Champfleury was thus just one of the representatives of this group.

\(^{34}\) Hugounet 1889, 238; Bergman 1966, 61
It must be said that the work of le Cercle was more revivalist than renovative\textsuperscript{35}. Combining music to mime was one of the rare aesthetic renovations considered by the group. In this "pantomime à la note", music would be the subordinate element\textsuperscript{36} which would mainly help the audience to follow the plot\textsuperscript{37}.

\textit{Le Cercle Funambulesque} staged eight performances with a total of twenty seven pieces in 1888-1890. Two thirds of the pieces used traditional, \textit{commedia dell'arte}-based, pantomime characters\textsuperscript{38}. Pantomimes promoted by the group were classified into four main categories: melodramatic, realistic, fantastic (féerique) and romantic\textsuperscript{39}. Tragic themes were rare, although there were members in the group, for example Paul Margueritte, who longed for the serious element:

\begin{quote}
- - the cheerful Pierrot has seen his day. - - I want no more of that. - - As for me, I have
conceived a tragic Pierrot. - - Tragic because he's afraid, he is in terror, crime, anguish.\textsuperscript{40}
\end{quote}

Not surprisingly, Margueritte's pantomimes, which had such titles as 'Pierrot assassin de sa femme', have also been characterised as 'macabre'.\textsuperscript{41}

\textit{The Cercle} was not an unanimous group. Margueritte was the leader of the romantics, who wished to simplify the language of pantomime and liberate it from conventional gestures, whereas the classicists, among them Paul Hugounet, wanted above all to respect the traditions\textsuperscript{42}. However, Pierrot turned out to be a flexible character and, interestingly enough, in 1890's, the advocates of both symbolist and naturalistic theatre found

\begin{footnotes}
35 Dick 1960, 178.
36 Hugounet 1892, 15.
38 Rolfe 1978, 148.
39 Hugounet 1889, 238.
40 Margueritte 1981, 69.
41 Storey 1978, 177.
42 Rolfe 1978, 147.
\end{footnotes}
pantomime useful for their artistic purposes. For naturalists, it was a way to express sentiments, which could not be expressed by words. For symbolists, pantomime was a medium which could veer towards fantasy and also involve the audience in a very special way.

The 'Magic Century of French Mime', from Deburau's first Pierrot performance until the early 1920's when Severin's last performances took place, was irrevocably over. There were no efforts to renovate the art during the first decades of 20th century, and it remained as variety and music hall entertainment, in which the notorious demi-mondes often performed. The plays were usually speechless parodies of popular melodramas.

The driving force behind this type of entertainment was Georges Wague, who had been a member of the Cercle Funambulesque. Wague also developed 'cantomimes' in which popular songs were mimed as the song was sung. However, Wague had also aesthetic ambitions: he called his mime 'mime d'inspiration' or d'instinct, which was opposed to 'mime d'école', the mime which based on the use of conventional gesture. His principles, with their emphasis on connection between gesture and thought, bear some resemblance to Noverre's theories. In 1916, Wague started teaching mime at both the Opéra and at the Conservatoire thus bringing mime into respectable theatre training. And it seems that, after World War I, some individuals voiced their concern about the disappearance of the art, and called for a wider curriculum in mime at the Conservatoire:

Il faudrait à notre conservatoire national une classe ouverte à des jeunes gens étudiant plus spécialement la pantomime - - Le diplôme d'un mime devrait valoir celui d'un flûtiste, d'une cantatrice ou du plus vibrant tragédien.

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43 Bergman 1966, 60.
44 Rolfe 1978.
45 Often called 'the last of the Pierrots'. Clark 1923.
46 Rolfe 1981, 89.
47 Rolfe 1978, 150.
48 Rolfe 1978, 155.
49 Pons 1923, 4.
Thus in the beginning of 20th century, mime became a respectable part of French actor training. The gap between comic and serious seemed to grow narrower. Yet the inclusion of mime on the established curricula of the Conservatoire was far from the total corporeal training introduced at Jacques Copeau’s École de Vieux-Colombier in 1920s.

When thinking about the stagnation of mime during the first decades of 20th century, it should also be remembered that the thriving silent film industry most certainly lured the best mime talent of these decades. Perhaps it was not a surprise, that only in the 1930s, after the sound film had established itself, the next wave of renovation took place.

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50 For example Wague played in many filmed melodramas. Some mime pieces were filmed, too, but filmed mime did not turn out popular. Rolfe 1978, 156.
Glossary of Japanese Terminology

If the definition is borrowed, the source of the definition is indicated after each term. The transliteration system followed in the glossary and the text is the Hepburn system, except in citations in which the transliteration used in the source is followed. The Japanese names are written with indicating the person’s surname first.

.aragoto  Rough business in kabuki, the style of the oversize, supernatural, rough masculine hero, especially loved in the Edo area; opposed to wagoto. (Ortolani 1995)

.bugaku  Dance-music or dance-entertainment—one of the major genres of Japanese theatre, introduced from China in the 8th century A.D. and still performed in a substantially unchanged form. (Ortolani 1995)

.bunraku  Popular name for the puppet theatre, derived from the famous puppeteer Uemura Bunrakuken (1737 - 1810); since the late 18th century this name has in the common use replaced the older term jōruri. (Ortolani 1995)

.butō  Post-modern dance genre, with roots in dadaistic and surrealistic experiments, born to express in a subversive way the feelings of anguish and terror experienced during the wartime destruction of Japan. (Ortolani 1995)

.dan-mari  Mimed sections in kabuki plays; often involving stage fights or scenes acted in darkness

.dō  The way, the road, the way of doing things
.Edo  the old name for Tokyo, especially referring to the Edo Period (also called Tokugawa Period after the ruling military family) in 1600 - 1867, the prime time of bunraku and kabuki.

.Edo kagura entertainment of, or for the, gods consisting of music dance and pantomime and performed in the (in this case, in the Tokyo area) shinto shrines.

.gigaku music and entertainment for Buddhist religious services imported from South China in early 7th century A.D.

.hana the Flower. The successful interaction between the actor and the audience. Stage presence =

.hara the stomach area of the human body.

.Heian period name of a period in Japanese history (794 - 1185, sometimes counted to 1192 A.D.); the Golden Age of ancient Japanese culture, predominantly based on the Imperial court in Kyoto; in the performing arts, bugaku reached its splendor.

.iemoto In several traditional Japanese arts, the head of the school. The iemoto has extensive powers and provides the preservation of the tradition in his art. (Ortolani 1995)

.jikyōgen the plays in the kabuki repertoire which are based on dialogue and action, as opposite to the plays based on dance (see shosagoto). Sometimes also called jigei.

.jo-ha-kyū originally in gagagu, the musical pattern often translated as exposition, development and climax. The principle was later applied especially to nō. (Ortolani 1995).
.kabuki traditional form of popular theatre which began at the end of the 16th century, and soon became the most successful theatre entertainment in the red light districts of the great cities. (Ortolani 1995)

.kagura 神音乐 the general term for shintō music, in which various rites, dances, and pantomimes were included. (Ortolani 1995)

.kiseru a long-stemmed pipe. Often used by courtesans or old women characters in kabuki.

.kudoki a technique used in kabuki (origins in bunraku) in which the onnagata walks/dances on the stage to the accompaniment of samisen.

.kumadori make-up style created for the aragoto roles in kabuki, based on strong colour-coded stripes.

.kyōgen most often the comical form of theatre which developed parallel to nō, and is still performed between the plays of a typical nō performance. (based on Ortolani 1995).

.Meiji period (1868-1912) historical period named after the Emperor Meiji. The Meiji restoration marked the end of the Tokugawa shogunate and the opening and westernisation of Japan. (based on Ortolani 1995)

.Mibu kyōgen a form of religious (buddhist) theatre, performed at Mibu temple in Kyoto, in which mime plays an important role.

.mie in kabuki, a pose used in climactic moments.

.ningyō-jōruri puppet theatre based on the interplay of the puppets (ningyō) and the story-telling (jōruri).
one of the forms of the traditional Japanese theatre. Developed by Kanami and his son Zeami in the fourteenth century in the sarugaku tradition. (according to Rimer - Masakazu 1984).

a word indicating both the classical nō and kyōgen as two facets of the same tradition. (Ortolani 1995)

Women kabuki from the beginning of the 17th century to 1629 when prohibited by the authorities because of alleged indecency of its performers, often called-for or real prostitutes (yujō, hence the alternative term yujō kabuki); onna kabuki, (according to Ortolani 1995, 314), focused on extravagant and sensual dances.

in kabuki, a male performer of female roles; also called oyama. (Ortolani 1995).

in kabuki, plays which consist only or primarily of dance (like Musume Dōjōji) (Ortolani 1995)

Three-stringed instrument the instrument originally came to Japan from China over the Southern Islands to and became very popular in the second half of the 16th century; it first took the place of the old lute (biwa) in early joruri puppet play and then became the prominent instrument in kabuki music; alternative transliteration jabisen; usually transliterated in English as shamisen. (Ortolani 1995)

an antecedent of nō theatre. Entertainment dating back to Heian period, with roots in China and Central Asia. Based originally in acrobatics, songs and dances, later on more dramatic structures.

in joruri and kabuki, domestic plays, i.e. plays reflecting the
life of commoners during the Tokugawa period.

.shimpa new school of drama, a form of theatre which developed after Meiji restoration as an attempt to westernise the Japanese drama. (Ortolani 1995)

.shingeki the new theatre movement, which began in 1906 and has dedicated itself to the ideal of the westernised theatre. (based on Ortolani 1995).

.shin-sarugaku new sarugaku. Flourished between the second half of the 10th and the end of the 13th century. Its characteristics, as compared to the old sarugaku, were an emphasis on monomane (mimicry) and comic-farcical roles, and its appeal to urban audiences. (Ortolani 1995).

.shintō the way of the gods; the indigenous religion of Japan. (Ortolani 1995).

.shite the chief actor in the nō. There is only one such role in each play. The performer is usually masked, and his costumes are the most elaborate. (Rimer-Masakazu 1984).

.Shōwa period (1926-1989); the reign of Emperor Hirohito.

.suriashi the gliding steps in nō theatre. The walking style as a whole is called hakobi.

.tachimawari stage fighting movements. (Ortolani 1995).

.Taishō period (1912-1926), named after Emperor Taishō.
.wagoto

in kabuki, the style of the gentle, soft, romantic male hero, especially loved in the Kyoto-Osaka area; opposed to aragoto (Ortolani 1995)

.waki

the second most important category of nō performers, after the shite. The waki serves as a foil for the shite and often sets the scene. He is never masked. (Rimer-Masakazu 1984).

.wasaogi

comic pantomime. (Ortolani 1995)

.yūgen

in Zeami’s time, a complex principle of literary aesthetics fashionable at court in judging the beauty of poems. Zeami applied it, with the meaning of refined elegance, to the performance of nō. In his later writings Zeami gave to the term a deeper meaning, including a profound, mysterious sense of the beauty of the universe, and eventually also of the beauty of human suffering. (Ortolani 1995).

.zen

a Japanese school, of 12th century Chinese origin, teaching that contemplation of one’s essential nature to the exclusion of all else is the only way of achieving pure enlightenment. (Collins Dictionary of the English Language 1979)