

ELLIE
FUCHS - 1

1979

Thurs. Oct. 25_n 1 p.m.

Dear Ellie,

Neither Bevyra nor I had a complete copy of the final version of the whole play. So Bevyra is dropping off Parts I, II and IV. And enclosed find a copy of Part III. This "Part III" is virtually identical with what you saw last night, except in 2 respects:

- (1) its version of the WJ's long speech is shorter (Bevyra is going to try to include a copy of the long version of the monologue, for purposes of comparison)
- (2) it contains a final page, whose function is to make a transition from "Hochbi-welfahrt" to Part IV - and which was therefore cut in the Open Eye production of Hoch. alone.

You're certainly welcome to look at all the other versions of the script, but I'd like your first impression of the play as a whole to be of what I consider its final version.

Your whole way of responding to the play is very gratifying to me. I'm really looking forward to talking with you more on Tuesday (I'll phone you about that Sunday night).

David Cole
UNI-2414

ELLIE
FUCHS

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My friend Alan (Allan, I think) Grossman once wrote a poem beginning, "God's Word, when it comes, is always/ Departure."

I quite by chance had tea with Nick Kepros last evening. He had not seen the reviews, even ~~mine~~ Erica's. I was alert enough not to tell him what she had said of his performance. I am getting in touch with Des McAnuff, but I must know whether your relationship with Bevy is negotiable. Please let me know before I call him.

All the best,



David - P. Y. I. Mailed w ms. on this date - (on letterhead)
finally! No acknowledgement yet.

Joe,

2.

ELLIE
FUCHS - 3

January 12, 1993

Mr. Terry Cochran
Wesleyan University Press
110 Mount Vernon Street
Middletown, Connecticut 06549

Dear Terry:

This letter at long last follows up our phone conversation in which I proposed that you consider publishing the plays of David Cole, author of Wesleyan's The Theatrical Event, and Michigan's just-published Acting as Reading.

If David were European, his plays would long since have appeared in print. I believe his plays deserve to come into the intellectual and artistic lifestream of American literature. It will be impossible for years, it is my guess, for them to do so by the marketplace route charted for plays in this country, where one's play may only be (but will not necessarily be) published after it is "successfully" performed to highly visible reviews. Cole's plays are too intellectual and philosophical to travel this route, although they have had much-admired readings at a number of professional and university theaters. Once published, however, I believe they will find their readers, and ultimately their producers and audiences. They might even contribute a little to reshaping our domestic notion of our own theater tradition.

The enclosed manuscript includes three plays: Cole's one-act play The Responses; his chamber epic, "The Moments of the Wandering Jew"; and -- an impossible combination! -- his metaphysical in-the-theater play, The Gods of the Theater. All three plays can be seen as mystery plays, and could even be published as "three modern mystery plays," or "three visionary plays," though such a subtitle might too eagerly relieve the reader of the work of discovery.

In this first correspondence with you on this project I enclose, in addition to the manuscript of the plays, two essays by me that trace what I call the mysterium form in modern drama. One of these was recently published in a volume you yourself may have initiated at Minnesota, the book of essays on Adrienne Kennedy. Cole sees himself as related to the turn-of-the-century tradition to which I attach Kennedy, and were I to write an introduction I would, despite their manifest differences, draw them together as contributors to an intermittent metaphysical tradition in American theater.

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The second piece is the mysterium chapter of my book that Indiana is going to publish. Towards the end of it I discuss The Moments of the Wandering Jew. As this play would take up nearly two-thirds of a published volume, I thought it wouldn't be amiss to show you the context in which I see this play, at least in part. (There are other contexts, such as the debts the play owes to Hegel, Shaw, and Emerson, but these could not be developed in the discussion I am sending you.)

I also send along a short review I wrote for The Soho News of the one section of The Wandering Jew that was professionally produced in New York, the only full production Cole's work has received. It was through this assignment that I first encountered Cole's work. Apart from this starting point, I will only add a few notes on the other plays.

The Responses is one of the most remarkable one-act plays I know. It has inspired much reverence at a number of theaters, receiving several readings, though no full production to date. It is the imaginative result of Cole's meeting with the Jewish responsa tradition -- described in the Author's Note at the beginning of the play. Its action is mystical: the transmission -- perhaps, we cannot be sure -- of divine inspiration from a holy man to his scribe. At the same time, it is a play about writing; one could say it describes a topography of writing, or alternatively, that it takes place inside the "soul" of writing. The play has much marvelous humor as well, which occasioned some earnest if misdirected questioning by a Jewish scholar at Emory, where I directed a reading of the play in 1989.

The Gods of the Theatre may be the most difficult of the three plays. It relies to an exceptional degree on the extended punning that arises from the play's central notion: heaven seen as a theatrical green room. The language continuously points in two directions, to a backstage play that opens on to metaphysics, and a metaphysical play finding expression through theatrical imagery. "It doesn't know how not to be both ways at once," Cole told me.

Until very nearly the end the play appears to be taking place in an intellectual or linguistic realm where everything has already taken place, yet where history is almost casually reversible. Suddenly at the end we realize -- or perhaps I should say I realized, as I suppose the ending is open to a range of readings -- that an irreversible movement of human spiritual history has been rumbling forward all along. A new kind of avatar has supplanted the Greek "gods of the theatre": the relationship of the new god to the human situation will inevitably produce a new kind of theatre.

I believe I saw that you read a paper, or served on a panel, at the "Re-thinking Marxism" conference at U. Mass Amherst. I was

ELLIE FUCHS -5
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registered to attend, but couldn't at the last moment, and have been trying to get them to send me the final program, which my unrefunded fee ought to cover. So far nothing from them. What was your topic?

I look forward to your response. In the meanwhile, I would love to receive a copy of your current list. I have heard indirectly that you are publishing Cindy Carr's work from the Voice. Wonderful choice: you seem to be building an "alternative" university press!

Thank you for looking at this.

With best wishes,

Elinor Fuchs
Columbia University, School of the Arts

Received 5/17/93
Send to David
write to Terry and ask for return of Ms.



WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY PRESS

ECLIE
FUCHS -6

David
R. Y. F.

Ellie

April 20, 1993

Elinor Fuchs
34 Grace Court
Brooklyn, New York 11201

Dear Elinor:

I apologize for the time it has taken to review David Cole's plays and the supplementary materials you sent. The plays are an impressive accomplishment, and I was very pleased to have the chance to read Cole's work.


Because of my own interest in the work, I have given a great deal of thought to how Wesleyan might publish the proposed volume; unfortunately I have not come up with a satisfactory solution. The Press used to have a concentration of books in theater criticism, but that was many years ago, long before my joining it. Now most of those books are either out of print or soon will be; THE THEATRICAL EVENT has not been available for some time.

Thus if we were to publish this work, it would necessarily be published as a narrow monograph (of about 300 printed pages), hardcover only with little prospect of a later paperback, in very modest quantities. It would have few reviews in the wider media because there published plays receive little attention. In sum, I don't think our publishing it would do justice to the work.

I regret this decision because I do have high admiration for the plays and would like to see them in print. I do, however, think it is the appropriate decision, especially given Wesleyan's publishing context.

Thank you for the opportunity to consider the material; please call if you would like to discuss this further.

Sincerely,


Terry Cochran
Director

received Mon, June 20, 1994
David Cole

34 Grace Court Brooklyn, New York 11201 718 624-0113

ELLIE
FUCHS -7

June 1, 1994

Mr. James Nicola
New York Theatre Workshop
220 West 42nd Street
New York, New York 10036

Dear Jim:

This is the play, The Moments of the Wandering Jew, Jim Leverett and I spoke to you about at the reception for The Medium. It is a huge historical canvas, but told in a series of often quite intimate scenes, hence the idea of "Chamber Epic."

In Europe a play of this scope and range of thought would have been scooped up by the first Stadtheater that read it. Here the play is practically sui generis. I've read it three times now. Seemingly quite intellectual at first, I find it becomes intensely moving and even uncanny. It requires an intense, inward performance in the role of the Jew for this emotional resonance to be felt by the audience.

As we told you, Richard Foreman is definitely interested in directing this play, and in addition, we think there is a good chunk of money that could be available for it. But the primary question right now is: Could this be a project that would interest you for NYTW.

We understand that you have announced a full schedule for next year, but is there any chance you could give the play a preliminary reading and get back to me (718-624-0113) or Jim Leverett (212-533-2685) by the end of the month?

With best regards,


Elinor Fuchs

34 Grace Court, Brooklyn Heights, New York 11201

Thursday

ELLIE FUCHS - 8

Dear David:

Don't want to discuss the play as accurately as I might have.

Thanks for our lunch, though I felt a little sleepy-headed. I returned home that evening to hear some very alert questions about the play, however, and I pass them on to you. These are from my daughter, ^{Elinor} who will soon be fifteen. Her depth of mind is unusual in such a young person. Here they are:

1. Why does the Jew take no pleasure in his own superior consciousness? He is always suffering.

2. The Jew doesn't know how to put his consciousness into context. It controls him --- like an animal emotion. (A comment, not a question.)

3. What is the actor playing Christ to the Wandering Jew? (I'm not sure what she is asking here: perhaps what role Christ himself has in the Jew's symbolic system...)

I pass these on only because I thought you would be interested in seeing how you could reach someone this age. Perhaps you will come over if you are ever in New York, and she will be able to speak to you directly.

Best,

Elinor

Elinor Fuchs