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Purification in the Arts

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Abstract

Purification is a multifaceted concept that not only liberates one from the emotions of fear and compassion but also from a range of human emotions, especially in the arts more broadly, and in rituals and celebrations practiced by many cultures throughout history. These rituals aim for purification on two levels: communal and individual. On an individual level, especially for participants involved in the ritual or celebration, purification leads to a state of release, expelling evil spirits, which in turn brings about healing.

Aristotle viewed purification as more than just a remedy for ailments; it is also a means of enjoyment for the audience. Besides the aesthetic pleasure associated with the imaginative structure enabled by tragedy through imitation and illusion, there is also pleasure derived from the process of purification. Avicenna (Ibn Sina) similarly noted that imaginative speech, like poetry, is a form of expression that affects the soul, causing it to expand toward certain things and contract from others without reasoning, thought, or choice. Thus, the soul responds to such speech in a deeply human, non-intellectual manner.

Keywords: Purification, emotional liberation, fear and compassion, cultural rituals

Introduction

Human beings, in their quest to free themselves from fear and anxiety about nature, have used imagination to create stories imbued with a sense of sacredness, passed down through generations alongside worship and rituals involving offerings and sacrifices. Greatly preoccupied with natural phenomena like the sun, moon, and the movement of the wind, they began to describe them symbolically and poetically, weaving around them myths akin to magical imagination. These myths acquired a cultural significance, serving as symbolic structures in their own right. They embodied human emotions, expressing a unity and continuity of experience, and held an essential function both in personal balance and in forming a relationship between the self and social order.

In the Middle Ages, purification was closely associated with the concept of sin, particularly in mystery and miracle plays. During the Renaissance, however, the impact of events and characters on the audience took on a sense of breathing and purification, felt throughout Renaissance theater in general and especially in the plays of Shakespeare. Sixteenth-century playwrights from the neoclassical movement linked purification with enjoyment, viewing it as a means to temper passions and channel emotions. In Romantic drama, especially German Romanticism, purification symbolized the release of emotional agitation.

At the start of the 20th century, around 1910, the Expressionist movement began addressing themes distinct from those explored by previous artistic schools. Early in the century, Expressionists were in constant search of a "new human," amid societal decay and the clamor of wars and machinery. This search brought to light a conflict within the Expressionist theater, expressing a vision of the new, solitary, innocent, and vulnerable human being who sought truth through inner reflection. Consequently, the typical hero of Expressionist drama was portrayed as a young rebel against the world of his fathers.

Regardless of the evolving nature of Expressionism and its development in modern theater, along with the impact it left on subsequent theatrical texts, it undeniably resonated with movements like Surrealism and Dadaism. The early Dadaists in Zurich in 1916, as well as their pioneer Alfred Jarry, who presented the play *King Ubu* in 1896, dismantled the strongholds of traditional theatrical text, stripping it of historical paradoxes and conventions. However, the Dadaists did not produce any substantial theatrical texts, and the same holds true for the Surrealist movement, which emerged from Dadaism.

One prominent Surrealist, Antonin Artaud, became a significant theorist, advocating for a new theatrical horizon he called the Theater of Cruelty. In this theater, movement, sound, and stage techniques overshadowed language, which lost its communicative dominance. The concept of the Theater of Cruelty played a crucial role in influencing major postmodern theater theorists, notably Peter Brook, Jerzy Grotowski, and Artaud. Among the few notable

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works within this paradigm is *Tear of the Blood*, considered a modern rendition of medieval mystery plays. Its protagonist, representing humankind as "Young Man" - an Adam-like figure - enjoys paradise with Eve until the moment of the fall, initiating a new journey. His perpetual search becomes increasingly challenging, as he seeks purity in a corrupt society.

Thus, Artaud's return to the concept of purification involves a duality of the spiritual and the physical, as part of his vision to restore theater to its carnival-like nature. In his theater theory, Artaud sought to achieve purification from a perspective distinct from Aristotle's. While Aristotle believed that purification relieves the audience of harmful passions, restoring them transparently to society, Artaud saw purification as possessing a therapeutic effect. He referenced the plague that devastated Marseille in 1720, which dismantled social and systemic structures. For Artaud, this destruction was a form of purification, obliterating the past to create something entirely new.

In terms of theater and text, Artaud created a new kind of text and performance. From this perspective, the text serves as a conduit, guiding the actor to a state of ecstasy and intense passion, leading to purification and liberation.

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7. Stress adapting reactions of a teacher includes psychological reactions (Anxiety and sadness), physiological (Headache, high blood pressure), and attitude related (Alcohol and smoking addiction, lifestyle and insomnia).