

**On the Development of a Theory similar to “Cubism” in the contemporary Theatre, with *CLOWN SHOW FOR BRUNO* serving as our Primary (and perhaps only) Example.**

Here is a tragedy, true to Life, the story of **Bruno Shultz**, as told by three clowns in a railway station; rather, 3 clowns, using all their wives, present the story of **Bruno Shultz** on a stage; no, we and all the designers and myself, the Author, using our wily wives, employ these actors, (friends of ours, actually), to say our words and make our movements; rather, **3 Clowns**, through their Art as **Harlequins** of old, tell this true story of a horror that cannot be told – not straight, or in any other way, in my opinion, than this: that is, divided in triplicate and unpredictable throughout.

**Bruno Shultz** was one of those uncommonly intelligent and talented Jews, who, for reasons of history or heredity or accident, could not find a normal place in the society into which he was born: Czernowitz, Checkoslovakia, a basically Jewish center of commerce and learning, to a family perhaps ruined by in-breeding or bad luck, and doomed, though he was an artist of the first class – **Bruno** knew himself that what he was doing was linguistically Intelligent and inspired – had grown to maturity during a catastrophical time for his (our) people. A time of Idiocy and Imbecility and Crime, not limited to the German psychopaths who had a barbaric good party-time of it, but other fools who also had a good time – naming them would be superfluous and the words, these precious words of condemnation and disgust, would be wasted on them. So, the German killers were on their way, and there were all kinds of clowns helping them to clear a path, take care of the town, the bikers and tourists and other Nazi shiteheads; to shoot the Jewish leaders, cut the throats of the intellectuals, and the thinkers and the poets. and the artists, like **Bruno Shultz**.

They were having a good party, these apes, and kept their motorcycle chains clean and cozily oiled; and their shows were clean and their sex lives were as pure as the snow in the wilderness (of course, *not really*). Therefore, **Jacko**, the **Clown** with responsibility for **Landau** (the shooter of dear **Sophie** from the upstairs window) has a familiar Puritan streak: He himself is not responsible, it is Nature, with all its trickery, that has fooled the German people into an acceptance of Genocide as a tool for Wisdom. Yes, Wisdom. A Racial Clean-up. Revenge against the smarter and more talented. Or at least pragmatism, a purgation, a solution, as the saying went. Shiteheads all.

But that’s what intrigued me, phrases like, “as the saying goes.” And this is an essay about a theater technique, not history, which, like most things, remains a muddle. I call this technique, at the moment, *Cubistic*, in that the foreground and background are interchangeable at any moment, and the theory of Character is the same – that is, a moment to moment exploration of a purely Theatrical problem, where characters are at an angle, and shift places and personalities. And here, I have to admit, it was Daniel Stein, who played (and maybe will continue to play) **Bruno** and

**Emilio**, who suggested the word, “Cubistic” to describe the action of the play, much of which is, of course, Word Play, that is to say, Unspeakable. I have called it, elsewhere, *The Way of the Harlequin*.

The theatrical problem I am referring to is the integration of high-end poetry with catastrophic real-life content. That’s one way of saying it. In truth, I followed my own hard-won intuition, and I wanted to pay homage to this person, **Bruno Shultz**, with whom I identified in an almost miraculous empathic, literary way. As I have done, in the past, with **Paul Celan** and **Francois Villon**.

Here, I can say, that I sense that I have almost already lost you with this embarrassingly egoistic tone of voice. I regret it. But one’s attention is possibly exhausted by linguistic thought occurring on more than one level. And that’s the case in the theater, when you’re sitting there with an audience and somebody groans and rushes out of the room. A moment of real faith can then occur. It means, in this case, a faith in the play and its origins. Here, in this case, me and Bruno are like brothers, perhaps twins, little Jews with big heads, befuddled by so-called Actual Life, like the ones the Aryans lived, or like the Pretenders we see a lot of on American television.

It is the Faith of a Poet: That he SEES the stage, and hears the voices who speak from it, entitled, as it were, by Providence. So, that’s an amazing fact (or “facto,” as **Jacko** would put it), and these actors, **Clowns** though they be, know it. They have this weird entitlement: they belong, they’re in charge, they know they belong and they know they’re in charge, and they don’t think anything is possible without them -- which is of course, true. It’s a thrill to behold such a thing -- knowledge as free as that -- and yet in submission to the Text. Only actors can do that, or, more to the point, actors who can be **Clowns**, emboldened by the truth of the stage. To say it another way, they are freed by the text and the theatrical situation, to *Be*. Not in the bullshit philosophizing Heidegger sense, but in the performance sense, the “being onstage” sense, because none of it, of course, is possible without the audience.

We begin from that -- the presence of the Audience. Once that is acknowledged, I can use all the artifacts at my disposal: Masks, a sound track, lighting, posturing, falling down, and so on. There’s nothing I, the **Harlequin**, can do wrong, once I know you are *There* and I have shown you my face. We have **Cleo** and **Emilio** and **Jacko**, prepared for anything, including the worst – which, of course, occurs. And it’s you, the audience, that’s made it possible, even inevitable. I find that condition, for lack of a better word, amazing, when you consider the actual life of **Bruno** and the Historical events depicted, evoked, mocked, revered, and submitted to, finally. The train comes into the station. The gunshot enters the head.

About **Bruno**: He himself was at an Angle, so to speak, in a corner, not up front, but secretly, a genius, with his top hat and his worship of women. That pretty much can describe me, except that I’ve lived long enough to understand a little something about it and have been gifted with the medium – Theater—in which to explore it,

turn it inside out, embody it, where he, as far as I can tell, stuck with the literary genre and the cartoon. But we are not so far apart. I feel as though I can see him now on the other side of the room, watching my freakish ways with a wry smile. He knows how I feel about the feminine arch of the ankle, the intrinsic loveliness of the breast, and the preciousness of a loving kiss from a woman. He knows my weaknesses -- personal shortness of height, distracted easily by a pretty face on a woman, and a feeling of inferiority -- and I'm not ashamed to talk about them. Rather, I am and I'm not. Either way, they are the same weaknesses for us both. Well, let's say they were (are) quite similar.

Which brings us to the murder of the Jews. Rather, how to portray my love for this secular man and the outlandishness and humiliation and stupidity of his fate? And at the same time be sincere in showing my love for my own people, the Jews? Of course, it's easy to say here that this is so because his Fate was my own, in some ways, and not only mine, but some of the best and irreplaceable minds of the Jewish people were at stake, including the writers and poets and actors, living and dead. There's the clue, there's the entry into the dark: our common love and hate and traditional contradictions, none of which mattered in the face of an absurdly murderous impulse coming from the gut of History itself, from the heart of Old Europe; Mankind mucking along above an earthquake of hatred and killing as though innocent of the whole story, a bystander, as it were, who didn't fall into the burning cracks of Hell.

We love the Stage, and an Audience, regardless, me and **Bruno**.

This must take some explanation, for myself, not just for you, who is an excuse for this opening of the heart. My play, *CLOWN SHOW FOR BRUNO*, is a literary act of bare survival in the face of impossible circumstances, and that's why maybe I'm using the word, "miraculous" -- because it brings into being an existential, and "cubistic," sense of a life that was lived, in **Bruno's** terms, in a kind of Borderland, a Fantasyland, a land where earth and sky did not actually meet, but merged to form a new world made of different atoms and different thoughts.

In this world, a Stage world really, minimalistic and acute, **Jacko** can be **Bruno's** father, and also the Killer **Landau**; **Cleo** can be Bruno's **Juna**, and also his mother, and **Emilio** can be **Bruno** and also: himself. It all depends on the timing, the masks, the language, and so on.

That's why we have the masks, an ancient and valuable trick -- to provide total freedom for the Actor, and Release (by which I mean, also, freedom of thought) for the Audience, who is forced to witness the truth in a way that is not only entertaining, but certainly engages the mind, one hopes, with an impression of things as they are. For sure, they were that way then. It's all true. Further, it introduces the idea of levels of meaning on the stage, using all the theatrical possibilities of the stage, as well as a kind of economy: **3 Clowns** can play all the

parts, and with panache, i.e., a fervent, courageous joy – to imitate the German language – a horror/joy.

There's a sorcery to all this, and I wish I could tell you what it means, what it's made of. Maybe I've already told you: It's the command, the ownership of the actors, their sense of the terrain, along with impeccable timing that can't be faked, else you'll be tormented by strange nightmares coming from **Bruno's** literary world. Moment to moment, this **Bruno** world (onstage) is changing, and it is inhabited by the innocent and the evil alike. The contradictions there can be moving, and even funny. But the bullet to the brain is inescapable. **Dear Bruno.** There, he died, going home with a loaf of bread under his arm, a pail of soup in his hand. Shot at his door, in the street, by a frantic German Idiot with a gun.

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