

dication is acting: It is a simple form of acting but acting, nevertheless. Feldman seems to say that it "is not theatre." What he really means is that it is not *good* theatre, and he will not accept it. This is perfectly valid from a practical, if not an intellectual, point of view, but he reminds me of those who say that certain examples of modern painting and sculpture "are not art." It is an easy way to protect oneself from that which is disliked and to prevent analysis and discussion; this attitude frequently stems from a "holy" view of art in which anything disliked is evil and sacrilegious.

No, I have not discussed "commitment," although I have "avoided" it only for the length of this reply. I have not discussed it because I do not consider it a factor in defining acting. As with indication, it may be a factor in judgments of good and bad acting, but this is a personal matter, and I do not wish to imply that my value judgments are, or should be, universal and objective.

However, I have to say, Peter, that you do not understand commitment at all. Do you really think a person can be committed only to acting? Can't a painter, a writer, a sculptor—or even a doctor or a teacher—be committed, too? Do you really think that the "Happenings people" you speak of do not "involve" themselves and "invest something" of themselves in a "course of action?"

Perhaps you have not seen the performances. (And isn't this the true meaning of "academic" in its perjorative sense—one whose ideas are detached from direct experience?) At any rate, I know many performer/creators of Happenings and related works, and, in most cases, there can be no question of their commitment. It goes beyond *engagé* to become, as has been necessary, a source of courage. Granted that they do not "show off" this commitment or wear it on their sleeve, so to speak, but neither are they inter-

ested in playing "I'm-more-committed-than-you-are."

Of course I have seen performers in Happenings (and in plays) who seemed to lack commitment. A very few have even appeared intent on destroying the work of art they had agreed to help create. It is ridiculous to think, however, that there is anything in this form or in any other form, that prohibits or is detrimental to commitment. (If anything the fact that Claes Oldenburg is one of the greatest visual artists of our time helped him to gain commitment from his performers.)

These people whom Feldman wishes to disparage—or at least prohibit from the sacred realm of theatre—are artists. Like all artists, I think that their work "fulfills" them, "frees" them, "enriches" them and "renews" them. The words sound a little corny to me, but art is a serious spiritual/psychological affair, and it is difficult to find words describing importance in this area that are not corny. (Some artists might also be or feel "redeemed" by their work, but certain religious beliefs would have to be held by the one making the judgment.)

Thus we have not a definition of acting but an insight into Peter Feldman's theatre. It seems to be a theatre not unlike Grotowski's in which the actor performs as a "surrogate for all men" and is "redeemed." Although the performance is probably rehearsed and, to a great extent, set, the actor is free to make choices of some sort during the presentation. It is a way to investigate "certain aspects" of the actors' "inner selves." It could be a very interesting and important theatre, but I am unwilling to accept it as the only one.

#### THE EDITOR:

As a playwright and a translator of plays, I have become painfully aware over the years that plays—old or new, native or foreign, individual or in collections—are the one and only category

of literature that no one, or almost no one, ever reviews.

This is probably due to the fact that plays are supposedly reviewed in the papers when they are produced. But in the first place, many printed plays do not get produced; and in the second place, many plays which are produced deserve a close look by a genuine critic with the leisure to think when they appear in print. After all, in a production review a good deal of space has to be devoted to the merits of the production as such.

We playwrights and translators are, in short, the orphans of literature. When I wrote a scholarly book on Tragedy, and another one on Don Juan, I enjoyed a great number of reviews in journals of all description, but when I published a collection of Don Juan plays, and another collection of medieval French plays in translation, there were no reviews whatsoever anywhere. My own plays have been reviewed twice, and one of these two times, frankly, because I knew the editor. No one reviews when a new translation of Lope de Vega is published, or when Bentley prints several fresh translations in a collection. Once in a great while, a new translation of *Cyrano de Bergerac* may be noticed in *The New York Times*. But write a book of theory, of history, or about acting, or costumes, and again there are reviews.

To an infinitesimal extent, *Educational Theatre Journal* and the very obscure *Drama & Theatre* try to fill the gap—that is to say, they throw five grains of sand into a bomb crater. It seems to me there should be at least one journal of respectable circulation which makes a point of filling this gap—in part, at any rate. Whether it is a collection of Albee's plays, or a new translation of *Wallenstein*, or an anthology of Dadaist French drama, or the published single play of a new writer, *someone* on the literary/theatrical scene should pay attention.

Oscar Mandel

*THE EDITOR* replies:

As an author of books on performance history and theory, I can agree that the reviewing of all kinds of theatre books seems strangely capricious, un-systematic and incomplete. As editor, however, I do not believe that it is the obligation of *The Drama Review* to make up for these shortcomings. As indicated in the introduction to T51, it is our policy not to review, appraise or evaluate. This applies to books as well as to productions, performers, directors, designers and so forth. (Although I do not wish to go into further analysis of this position here, the philosophical basis for it will be discussed next September in our Theory/Criticism issue.)

On the other hand, *The Drama Review* now devotes more space to new publications than it has in the past. We publish a list of books received and short descriptions of those books we believe will be of the greatest interest to a large number of our readers. The publishing of expanded descriptions (or reviews) of all new theatre books would take a great deal of space and would change the basic nature of *The Drama Review*. We attempt to deal with performance, its theory and history, rather than with dramatic literature, and I am afraid that the proper place for the review of scripts is in a literary rather than in a performance publication.

