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Looking for Sundance. The Social Construction of a Film Festival

Daniel Dayan

The notion of performance

The word 'performance' can be used as a synonym of 'activity' but adds an essential nuance to that term. Speaking of 'performance' instead of 'activity' points to the fact that all social activities are modeled on cultural scripts. Some are explicitly so, many are implicitly so because the corresponding scripts are only known intuitively.

In a ritual, the performance is explicit. Both priests, participants, and audiences know they have a precise role to play. You can judge their performance. You can say, for example that the priest was excellent or poor. There are explicit norms allowing you to do so. In everyday life scripts are less formal. Quite often people enact them without knowing they do. This is why anthropologists – such as Erwin Goffman – have developed a dramaturgic view of our everyday life activities (Goffman, 1974). They show us that the notion of performance is not to be restricted to those areas where it is conspicuous.

Any social encounter involves at least two complementary performances, coordinated by social rules. Any gathering involves multiple performances, coordinated by collective rules. Whenever people interact, they know what it is they are doing even if they do not have a name for it. Anthropologists try to identify performances, to coin names to designate them, to unravel the scripts they perform. They try also to identify rules, to propose a grammar of encounters, a rhetoric of gatherings. The following paper tries to identify some of the rules that define what we call a film festival.

Introduction

Three festivals

My first film festival was Florence's *festival dei popoli*. I was in my twenties, saw dozens of films, came out with huge headaches and an encyclopaedic knowledge of ethnographic cinema. My second festival took place twenty years later. This was Tel Aviv, the world festival of student cinema (CILECT). I was head of the jury and only saw the final selection (seventeen films out of a few hundred). I learned

a lot about group dynamics by spending long hours trying to prevent some determined colleagues from seducing or intimidating other jurors into backing their own candidates. My third festival was Sundance. I was invited as an observer specifically interested in media anthropology. There were at least two themes I wanted to explore and Sundance represented a wonderful case study.

First I was interested in the question of spectators. What is an audience? How are audiences constructed? What is the difference between traditional (physically contiguous) audiences and the dispersed audiences of electronic media whose existence is essentially that of statistical measurements? Sundance offered the opportunity of observing the aggregation of usually dispersed media spectators, their reunion on a physical site. Sundance also offered the opportunity of watching spectators of a particular type. Those who came were collectively imbued with the values of a shared culture, used to a certain type of discourse in their debates and dialogues, capable of connecting aesthetic concerns and political choices. In a word Sundance allowed observing an audience that was reflexively aware of its identity and capable of articulating dissent or disagreement. This audience was a true public. I was also interested in the possibility of analyzing a social phenomenon of brief duration. Halfway between those almost permanent structures that affect society as a whole (kinship, political institutions) and those very small structures, also relevant to anthropology, that can be observed in very brief enactments (face to face encounters, presentations of self in various settings). The Sundance film festival offered the perfect example of a temporary event. Here was a world meant to function for a rather brief period, proposing interactions both intense and ephemeral, relying on rules at once effective and largely improvised. These rules were meant to be intuitively applied, and forgotten after a week. How were such rules enforced? Where did they come from? Were they the rules of a given subculture? Did they rather express that utopian – or, in Turner's word, "subjunctive" (Turner, 1977) – definition of social reality that takes over whenever symbolic occasions interrupt the course of ordinary life?

Taking harmony for granted

Park City expected crowds of visitors. How would the thousand participants coordinate their actions? Through what decisions and what improvisations would this aggregation of people turn into a festival? Was there an 'invisible hand' to insure – no matter how 'fugitive' – the emergence of a community?

I saw the very existence of the festival as a *collective performance*: as an ensemble of behaviours that were referred to norms, watched as spectacles, and submitted to critical evaluation. There are norms about audiences. These norms are translated into behavioural sequences: for instance you are not supposed to applaud musicians, while they play. Reference to such norms allows a judgment of the spectatorial behaviour. Yet the existence of implicit norms concerns more than the experience of spectators. There are also norms defining festival attendance. This attendance is witnessed by others, and it conforms to a certain sequence of activities. By attending, you are neither expected to obey a rigid set of injunctions, nor to follow some agenda of your own, regardless of the existence of individual activities around you. You are supposed to act in a manner both pleasurable for you, and congruent with the setting; to enact the script of 'what attending a festival means'. Given the nature of my theoretical interests, the best vantage point for me was that of a spectator. In addition to watching films, talking to other spectators, and

spending hours trying to figure out the shortest way through the catalog. I was granted easy access to the organizers. I was asking very general questions. They kept reminding me that this event was specific, and that it was, in a way, endangered. The individual performances that gave it substance could be convergent but also divergent; centripetal or centrifugal; harmonic or conflicting. There were forces in the festival that insured coherence. But there were other forces that were discordant. Organizers were constantly trying to balance the world of film making and the world of distribution; the emotionality of an occasion and the structural requirements of an industry; the geography of locality and the coordination of collective enactments based on shared conceptions. It was a repeated victory over entropy. Some performances were exclusively in charge of harmonizing others. Silencing cacophony was a full time job.

Thus Sundance called for a complex portrayal. The unity of the festival was a fragile equilibrium, an encounter between competing definitions; a moment of unison between various solo performances. Rather than taking harmony for granted, I would watch it in the making, stress its processual nature, explore rival scripts. This made me adopt a perspectivist view and this is why the following story is told from various angles. Each represents the experience of a specific group of participants.

Divergent performances, verbal architecture

What is a festival? What is this festival? Like all events that are not spoken for by the rules that define everyday life, festivals need constant captioning. Their participants need reassurance as to what goes on. Thus they keep offering definitions for themselves and for others through what they do and how they dress, and who they are, and – endlessly – through what they say.

In a way, a film festival is mostly spent answering questions about self-definition, identity, and character. This definitional activity is on the minds of all involved: organizers, jury-members, candidates, audiences, buyers and storytellers of different sorts, those who write catalogs, those who write reviews, those who script buzz, and those who write wrap-up essays. Each party involved in the definitional process (or struggle) issues printed material. Festivals turn out pages by the million: pamphlets, programs, photocopies, postcards, maps, essays, and excerpts. Ironically, film festivals live by the printed word, they are verbal architectures.

This is the story of an experience: That of attending the 1997 Sundance Film Festival. Like Borges' story it runs on divergent paths. The very nature of the festival pulls it in different directions, makes it the center of divergent and sometimes competing scripts. There is a story of young directors; a story of sales; a story of films shown; a (mostly unsung) story of the audience; a story of journalists; and, first of all, a story of the festival itself. Each of the stories proposes a temporal continuity, a plot, and a specific form of suspense. Each is often condensed in striking images. Each will be only briefly evoked here.

Focussing on the festival: providing unity

You land at Salt Lake city airport, find a limousine or cab, get to your hotel or condo; secure, fetch or buy viewing passes or tickets for screenings, and invitations for various parties. Then you start running to screenings, press conferences and dinners. From time to time you sleep. After a while you experience

a bizarre feeling. From reading the press and listening to conversations you wonder whether you are in the 'real' festival.

My own experience, and that of many others is, that until very late, not two people feel to have been in the same place. We plod in the snow, and circulate up and down Main Street, and queue at certain restaurants, and rush from the Egyptian Theater to the Yarrow cinema complex. Yet we might as well have selected our screenings on different planets. This is obviously connected to the number of films offered, and to the fact that - noblesse oblige - directors, actors and crews are mostly unknown. But is the festival a pirandellian exercise, where everybody is searching the 'auteur'? A huge projection test? A mirror handed to each visitor? Is it more than a juxtaposition of personal itineraries?

The festival acquires a collective dimension through a number of features that serve as providers of unity, catalysts for community, propositions for a shared experience. First there is the organization of the festival as a sequence of occasions that run from grand opening to the award ceremony. Second there is the presence of Robert Redford himself as an approachable Deus ex Machina. Third there is the ongoing chronicle of the festival provided by the Sundance channel and the omnipresent journalists. Fourth one should mention rumors and 'buzz', whose function is precisely to travel from mouth to ear, to involve some physical contact, to get across the diversity of affiliations and experiences. Last, but not least is enclosure, the local dimension of the event, the sense of a common space provided by Park City.

Sundance as local event: Backdrops, Park City as second unit

At first sight, the story of the festival looks like a local story. The mountainous landscape manifests its presence through snowstorms and avalanches. Fist fights erupt in chic restaurants. Park City is bursting at the seams. Yet geography seems to be added to the festival as a unifying device, as an afterthought, as a last minute adornment. The festival is a modular construction. It easily breaks down. There is a Los Angeles outfit (in charge of the selection of films). There seems to be a 'second unit' in charge of the set or backdrop (the Wasatch mountains; the main street of an old mining town). Park City does exist. But it really starts existing two weeks before the opening. Its existence is that of summer quarters where the Royal court would move 'en masse'. It is that of a rugged Idyll: the wintry equivalent to the rousseauist gardens where Marie Antoinette, queen of France, liked to go bucolic, surrounded with beribboned lambs. Such a treatment of place is not exclusive to Sundance. The African festival of Ouagadougou does take place in Ouagadougou. But it is entirely conceived in Paris and Brussels. Then reels, journalists, and jury are delivered by jet.

Latter Day Saints & Angels in America

Yet the geography of Sundance is more than a rhetorical ingredient. To a French observer, the contradictions of the festival are distinctively American. On the one hand, Utah, Puritanism, Mormons, rural virtue. On the other hand battalions of show biz executives and militants of the gay, queer and lesbian movements from Los Angeles, New York, San Francisco. On the one hand, the type of imagery involved in the name "Sundance", the persona of Redford, the state of Utah, and the Sundance catalog; on the other hand, college world, urban movements, political correctness of many shades. Sundance is where Latter Day Saints meet

Angels in America. The encounter is potentially explosive. Yet it does not result in hostility. On the contrary, it liberates a curious excitement.

This excitement leads to a changed view of films. "I was fooled", says a distributor, about the film he bought at the 1993 festival. "It played really well at Sundance -- and the film was a disaster." Was it the same film? Not really, the particular atmosphere of the festival transforms forms of viewing. Escaping for a while the constraints of mechanical reproduction, films are screened in a climate of palpable tension. Showing a film in Sundance is akin to a live performance. A rumor says that one of the projection rooms in the Yarrow is jinxed: Projectors break, films are torn, sessions are cancelled, and buyers leave.

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Focussing on journalists: linguistic invention

Chronicles of the festival are other devices through which the event acquires unity. Orbiting in curious loops, they are written in Park City, routed to New York and Los Angeles, and come back in printed form to where they came from. Even more intricate than the boomerang trajectory of such accounts, is their wording, the lexical repertoire displayed by journalists through reliance on trade jargons, street slang, shorthand formulas, outright terminological invention, Elizabethan preciosity. Writings on Sundance illustrate the lexical vitality of Hollywood English: Helmer (director), Thesp (actor), Pic (movie), Indie (independent film), fest (festival). Yet, between the lines, what is proposed is a presentation of self by the journalists themselves. Chronicles of the festival involve group portraits featuring reporters and their eventual readers.

Journalists are posing. Testimonial claims stress field work:

"At the Sundance film festival, it was hard to walk down in the street, without being mowed down by a camera crew." (Caryn James, *The NYT*. February 2 1997)

"Ms Davis ... burst into tears over the small screen and fuzzy acoustics that are standard in Park City." (Janet Maslin, *The NYT*. January 22 1997)

"Seated in a crowded coffee shop on Main Street, Ms Kudrow took a sip of decaf and said." (Bernard Weinraub, *The NYT*. January 20 1997)

Judgment passed on films, stresses membership in specific communities. New York Times critics are not too fond of 'juvenile angst.' Trade papers find certain films too middle age for their own good. The phrase 'art film' serves often as a prelude to eulogy.

Loyalty to the aesthetic codes of a community does not need to be explicit. There are bits of wisdom about Festival, festivals, cinema, films, and culture in general that are part of common knowledge. A consensus has been reached on Hollywood agents (cashmere clothes, Four-wheel drive, outpriced condos); other festivals (Cannes, Toronto, Telluride); box office hits (*Sex, lies and videotape*). Cultural references are kept in the background except when they are aimed at initiating a new generation of readers; at shocking the believers (Independent cinema consists of "rich kids with trust funds making films about poor people") or when the writers realize that they have been trapped in hopeless clichés. The remedy to the problem is found in redeeming the cliché by giving it a new and hyperbolic twist. Here follows a wonderful example of enunciativ mannerism, combining slang, shorthand & euphemistic toughness.

Sundance Film Festival kicks off Thursday with show biz honchos of every stripe from powerhouse agents to fledglings producers and hopeful filmmakers packing the snow-capped Utah resort town of Park City. Often lost in the crush of deal making is the fest's original intent as a showcase for cutting edge talents making chancy films with off kilter sensibilities and dicey subject matters. (*Daily Variety*, January 15, 1997, Steven Gaydos)

3 Focussing on films: reinventing genre

FILMES

Speaking of a festival and speaking of the films in it are two different exercises. Switching from one to the other involves a radical change in focus, in language, in attitude. If films are not to be used merely as emblems of some current zeitgeist, they have to be characterized for their own qualities, identified by plot, style, and emotional power. Yet, at Sundance, traditional genres or current Hollywood ones are vaguely taboo. In the program announcements the only genres that seem tolerated are cult and "B" Movies. Their marginality is what makes them tolerable: not respecting the strictures of existing genres is largely what selected films are about. But this confronts critics with a formidable task: that of either reinventing or replacing the notion of genre.

Ignoring genre boundaries

When boundaries between genres are either blurred or willfully ignored, attempts at characterizing films depend on finding an alternative set of film conventions. They call for a critical approach capable of capturing 'genres-in-the-making'. Such an approach exists. Mikhail Bakhtin (1981) once remarked that in each society there are different ways of inhabiting the same language, of channeling it into distinct cultural idioms, of exploding the apparent unity of culture. He pointed to the existence of languages of class, languages of race, languages of profession, but also languages of morning, languages of evening, languages of age groups. Applied to cinema, this composite view of culture suggests that films that no longer belong to known 'genres' can nevertheless be identified in terms of their discursive universes, located on a map of emerging social parlance. Characterization then, is no longer being based on narrative rhetoric, but on the identification of communities.

Genre as vernacular

In fact this is exactly what happens in Sundance. Not only has it become almost routine for a whole spectrum of independent films to be defined in terms of a given population, but the notion of a non commercial cinema that would cut across age-groups or social milieus seems no longer conceivable. One finds 'thirty something' films, 'teen-angst' films, politically correct films about Gays, lesbians, the black experience and about various communities of hyphenated Americans. Films are defined by the situation they occupy on the current map of an American Babel. They can be rejected if the groups that produce them fall out of political favor. Behind each film one feels more than an author - one feels a constituency.

Yet, if each community ends up producing and consuming its own cinema films meant for a certain audience might become sealed, protected from any contact with

other audiences. Sundance illustrates this danger. Yet it is precisely the place where segregated publics are allowed to attend each other's event, to look over each other's shoulders and to join for a while in the aesthetic equivalent of coalition politics. Documentaries become so many "reports from the front". Like news, but at a slower pace, they inform on the state of public opinion, on the different nuances of this opinion, on the processes and groups wherewith it emerges. By providing a forum, Sundance demonstrates that Culture is not condemned to being either inauthentic or vernacular.

4 Focussing on sales: foul Doppelganger?

RELLCAAD

From the point of view of the organizers of the festival, insisting on the business narrative of sales and distribution deals is in bad taste. Redford wanted to become a debonair king of discursive diversity, the patron of cinematic sincerity. In the process he has turned into King Midas. His blessing attracts eager crowds, for one bad reason: everything he touches turns into gold. Thus, popular imagination sees Sundance as lotto of some sort. A few lucky ones, each year, are sure to win.

Yet "the festival is not about limousines, splash and magazine covers." (Robert Redford, cited in John Horn, *The L.A. Times*, January 12, 1997). The narrative of sales is an unwelcome narrative, a doppelganger, and a foul alter ego of the directors' narrative. Park City, says a writer, turns into a "Medici palace with intrigues going on at every corner" (James Lasdun, 1997). These intrigues involve no cloaks and daggers. One does not meet "carnivorous acquisition executives with drool in the corner of their mouth" (Robert Redford, cited in James Lasdun). One sees cellular phones floating over restaurant tables, held to faces talking in the void. One feels the oppressive presence of an unspoken system of castes, the annihilating power of snobism. But, like other villains, the reviled buyers are watched with fascination. Their maneuvers elicit an interest that verges on pornography. Negotiating a deal is locally known as 'having sex'.

Films and distributors

When they reach Sundance, films divide in three categories. In the first, movies have already been picked up for distribution. In the second, negotiations have simply started. Remains the third category - unknown films that have been brought here with no contract and no contacts. For such films Sundance represents an immense hope. The festival rule of not allowing films in competition to have been shown anywhere else gives them an additional chance by inhibiting early deals. Distributors wait to know what else is on the program before committing themselves.

Negotiation, horse race and basement sale

Once the program is known, the narrative of sales focuses on Park City. The story is that of distributors trying to snatch "hot" films from each other. The race is merciless. "Sundance is celebrated for the frantic bartering and schmoozing that ignite the winter resort town as soon as the first film hits the screen at the Egyptian Theater on Main Street." (John Horn, *L.A. Times*, 12 January, 1997). "Teams of agents (...) prowled the festival in small platoons.." (Bernard Weinraub, *NY Times*, 20 January, 1997). "If it is for sale somebody will buy it (...) your job is on the line if you do not come back with a movie" (Tom Bernard, *Sony Classics*, *L.A. Times*, 12 January, 1997)

MULTICULT
audience narrative

"Having sex" takes place everywhere - condos, restaurants, theater halls, hotel lobbies, streets, cars. The climate is not longer one of rational negotiation. Park City has turned into a huge basement sale. The displayed bargains are "independent films", a phrase that carries connotations of courage, sincerity, individualism. Some of the films deserve the adjective. Some are better called "Indies" which simply means studios do not make them. The formers constitute the core of Sundance mythology. Typically produced for a song - between twenty thousand and two hundred thousand dollars, they are financed "by credit cards, personal savings, family money and .. rich uncles". (Bernard Weinraub, *The NY Times*, 27 January, 1997) Let us now praise these unknown films.

⑤ **Focussing on the film makers**

CREATIVITY

Graduating from Sundance

They are video-rental clerks, service station attendants. They have invested their last dime in the movie they are showing. They cannot afford meals and live on cocktail foods. At night they share a motel room with their whole crew sleeping on the floor. In the morning they find out that their hardly finished film has turned them into stars. This is perhaps the most celebrated aspect of Sundance: An American fairy tale. Cinderella with a credit card.

Best friends, graduation and bringing Mom along

Subjectively, the filmmakers' experience of the festival looks like a graduation. Many of them have invested money initially saved for college in the film they are now showing. They come to Sundance with roommates and best friends. Later, they will describe themselves as 'Sundance alumni' and muse about who the members of the same cohort were. They are the ninety-something class of Sundance.

All this of course evokes some delayed bar-mitzvah. Sundance is a family-romance, a family story. Independent films are orphans. Offering a shelter to these orphans, Redford is every young director's surrogate father. The family scenario also calls for mothers and for (a sprinkling of) biological fathers. They show up, both on screen, and in Park City. Mothers and dads crowd hotel rooms and condos. Siblings and best friends can be seen blushing in the middle of audiences. Sarah Jacobson, director of *Mary Jane is not a virgin any more*, is here with her mother and crew. All wear promotional badges: "Not a virgin." The audience applauds Macky Alston's documentary *Family Name* (in which the director tells his grandmother he is gay). The audience also cheers his family. Father, mother, sister, cousins, have come en masse from New Jersey, to attend the event. When unable to come, folks back home are not forgotten. The Sichel sisters have their picture taken with Uncle Bob for their mother to see. Snapshots are made during the award ceremony. Sundance is a turning point in the filmmaker's relations to their families. Parental fears are proved wrong: "You see, Mr. Redford takes me seriously. I *am* a film maker." Offers of peace are sent. Filmmakers feel secure enough in their acquired identity to reassert family ties. They can make a show of using their disposable cameras, of smiling for snapshots, of even bringing Mom along. Mom has lost her grip.

Anointment and petals in the Grand Canyon

The film makers' self presentation during the festival stresses folks, folksiness, family ties, loyalty to home. But this relation to home is dwarfed by another dimension of the event. The festival takes young film makers through the baptism of fire. Showing their film could be the turning point in their life, the equivalent of anointment. Ezra Pound once said that publishing a book of poems in America was like dropping a rose petal into the Grand Canyon and waiting for the echo. On the other hand" - writes a winner of the 97' grandprize - "hearing your name read at a ceremony like this is probably one of the more thrilling experiences life has to offer" (James Lasdun, 1997). This experience is so intense, and finally, so unpredictable that it reverberates with an almost numinous dimension. Like in Islam's 'Night of Destiny', the gates of heaven open for a while. During that while, fate is sealed. For both those anointed, and those who could have been anointed and were passed by, the event entails a sacred dimension. The festival's outcome is a matter of chance, an ordeal, an act of god. This is why Sundance is a pilgrimage site.

⑥ **Focussing on audiences: Pilgrims' Progress**

ANDICENTIAS

In a sober, often Spartan setting, the festival stresses the equality of those present, whether they come as players of the enacted drama (actors, directors, producers, writers, organizers, jury members) or as the audience of this drama. The public is made of fellow directors, fellow actors, fellow writers, fellow critics, of all those who have, have had, would like to have, or will have, films in the competition. In fact, until prizes are announced, viewers and players are often impossible to distinguish from each other.

← ANOMIMATO →

But then, for some of the festival participants, the event takes the form of a transfiguration. What now starts for them is a professional curriculum. They have changed essence, moved inside the screen. Their transformation is irreversible. For the other participants nothing irreversible has taken place. The very fact of being in the audience means that their progress to Sundance is a round trip. Their role consists in attending the sacred event, in witnessing a miracle that happens to others. This dramaturgy is characteristic of religious occasions. But, like in religious occasions, attendants cannot adopt the role of mere spectators. Those who perform and those for whom the performance takes place share intense feelings of community. In a way all have come to be part of a sacred event, either as elects, recipients of a miraculous grace, or as witnesses to the mystery of election. For both the elects and the witnesses, going to the festival represents a voluntary act of separation from the everyday life. By plane or battered car, they have undertaken a pilgrimage. The mountains they walk on are imbued with the numinous power of anointment.

Conclusion: the written festival

Many years ago, Roland Barthes wrote an essay on the meaning of fashion (Barthes, 1967/1983). This essay contains a paradox. In order to reveal its systematic dimension, fashion, suggests Barthes, requires to be studied indirectly. Fashion is meaningful, but only in as much as comments made by critics transform actual or photographed clothing into "Written fashion." Thus, in order to observe the "system of fashion" one has to look away from fashion shows. One has to turn to fashion magazines. Fashion is made of sentences.

Visual
Written

Barthes' paradox proved useful when I attempted to describe Sundance. Observation and interviews were obviously helpful, but the festival's most striking -- and to me most unexpected feature concerned the role of print. While Park City officials kept showing films and throwing parties, a Niagara of printed paper was spelling out meanings, offering captions, telling and retelling daily events until they reached a stable, paradigmatic form. Huge amounts of texts were pouring out every day. Some preceded the event, some looked at it in retrospect and many ran parallel to the festival. One could talk of a double festival: the visual festival of films and the whole of Park City as 'the written festival'.

My principal task as ethnographer was unexpected. I could not just ignore these masses of paper, reject this unwanted information, nurture the dream of a face-to-face Sundance. The paper festival was no less real than the gentrified streets of a ghost town. Being in Park City made no difference: I had to read.

Like the physical event, but even more acutely so, the written festival turned out to be made of different versions, relaying different voices, relying on different sources of legitimacy. But it also provided its own common threads. Many chronicles were conscious attempts at incorporating visions from various angles, voices from various groups. In a way they were proposing what I have attempted myself: switching angles, playing different parts, speaking in Hollywood tongues, performing ventriloquy.

Note

Four guides helped me in the research that led to this paper: Jan Andrews, Ken Brecher, Nicole Guillemet and Amy Redford. Many thanks to them and also to the *Sundance Channel* for giving me access to the diaries of many invited directors. Jonathan Nossiter and James Lasdun -- director and writer of the film *Sunday* -- accepted to comment on their experience during and after the festival. Their kindness was already repaid. They won.

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Basal Morality in Drama Appreciation

Dolf Zillmann

Aristotle, after pondering the essential characteristics of enjoyable drama, found fault with two principal narrative transitions and, accordingly, recommended their avoidance. In his *Poetica* (1966 edition, chapter 13) he stipulated that '(1) A good man must not be seen passing from happiness to misery, or (2) a bad man from misery to happiness.' Aristotle thought it self-evident that such transitions could not foster joy, nor any more moderate response affine to that emotion. He simply stated that the indicated narrative transitions would be deemed 'odious.' In discussing tragic plots, however, he articulated his reasons for projecting reactions of displeasure and vexation. He specifically implicated moral judgment with the mediation of reactions of joy versus revulsion to the resolution of various forms of dramatic narrative.

Essentially, Aristotle argued that persons pursuing good causes (i.e., consensually approved causes) are considered good people, and that good people are judged deserving of good fortunes. Analogously, persons pursuing bad causes (i.e., consensually condemned causes) are bad people, and bad people are judged deserving of bad fortunes -- or, at the very least, undeserving of good fortunes. Outcomes in accord with moral considerations thus can be enjoyed. In contrast, outcomes that violate moral considerations are those thought to squelch enjoyment and to foster irritation and contempt instead.

Considerations of morality have assumed a central position in drama theory ever since (Brewer & Jose, 1984; Carroll, 1984; Tan, 1996), and in the form of *moral sanctions* they have entered into the contemporary psychology of drama appreciation as well (Zillmann & Bryant, 1974, 1975). In particular, moral assessments have become an integral, pivotal part of the disposition theory of emotion that has been employed to explain the enjoyment to drama of any kind (Zillmann, 1996; Zillmann & Cantor, 1976; Zillmann & Paulus, 1993).

Moral-sanction theory of delight and repugnance

The intertwined operation of moral judgment and emotional disposition is outlined in Figure 1. As can be seen, observed behavior is thought to be assessed in moral terms (i.e., good versus bad, to varying degrees), and such assessment is expected to foster emotional dispositions. The approval of actions and their apparent purpose is thought to prompt liking and caring; disapproval, in contrast, is thought