

Critical Correspondence
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Annie-B Parson and Sibyl Kempson
In conversation with Aaron Mattocks

On Wednesday, September 19, 2012 Critical Correspondence co-editor Aaron Mattocks met with Annie-B Parson (co-artistic director, Big Dance Theater) and playwright Sibyl Kempson in Chelsea to discuss their collaboration, *Ich, Kürbisgeist*, which was a co-commission of Performance Space 122 and *The Chocolate Factory*, and which had three week run in October and November. The production recently closed, surviving Hurricane Sandy, a presidential election and a freak overnight blizzard. The two women spoke about aspects of their creative practice, revealed telling anecdotes about craft, religion, doom and disaster, and making work that is ultimately, sometimes unknowingly, personal.

Aaron: First of all, I just want to know how you guys met—the story of Sibyl Kempson and Big Dance Theater.

Annie-B: Well we met—I don't know how you and Paul met, but we met—I was working on a project about women ballet teachers in their 80s. I wanted to interview them—I wanted to show the world that we have a really strange business model, that we overlook some of the really serious businesswomen in this country-- a) because they are women and b) because most of them are really old --women that have sustained *their own* companies for 50 years and have very quietly created a really eccentric business model—and taught the whole country to appreciate art. Someone recommended I interview Sibyl because she studied ballet in a small town with a veteran teacher, so we met.

Sibyl: I bet you didn't know *that*, Aaron!

Aaron: I sure didn't. [Laughter].

Annie-B: Well I asked, and when I met Sibyl's ballet teacher—who must be in her seventies and looks like she's about 25 years old—she told me Sibyl was her *best student*.

Sibyl: She's senile.

Annie-B: This woman has literally the hugest ballet school in New Jersey—I mean, she wasn't kidding—it's not like she has six students. She had hundreds of students.

Aaron: It's like the Rock School.

Sibyl: I think she was thinking of somebody else. [Laughter]. But I did go to a class with Greg Zuccolo one day at City Center, and he was like—I mean, I was like the fattest hog in the room—

Annie-B: Wait, you can't just pop in on ballet!

Aaron: Was that like a class with Zvi Gotheiner?

Sibyl: It was an Israeli man...?

Aaron: That's him! That's Zvi. You went to Zvi's class?!

Annie-B: Oh, he's the best.

Sibyl: It was wonderful. I was a little lost, and very fat—you know, bumbling all over the place—but Greg said, you have very good technique, you know, that's from Sally Notara. Because I'll tell you what—I wasn't in no shape then, and I'm not in no shape now, but... [Laughter].

Annie-B: But we saw your piece—Paulie and I went—it's like yesterday. We went to that theater, I can't think of the name—Ellie's theater.

Aaron: Oh, Dixon Place!

Annie-B: The old one, on the Bowery. We saw *Crime or Emergency* with the big cast. We fucking loved it. I just thought it was so hilarious the way you dealt with narrative. You'd set something up that was so complicated and suspenseful, and then you would set something else up, and set something *else* up, and nothing was ever resolved or handled in any way. It was so delightful. It was so mischievous, and such a relief from chasing the dog. We said to each other, "We really want to work with her, this Miss Kempson!" And that was so long ago, but it took a really long time to find the right piece. The way *this* piece happened is kind of cool. I wrote Suzanne [Bocanegra, visual artist and costume designer for *Kürbis*] and she said, "[L]ets do something dystopian or about seventies back-to-the-land people! But what's the piece? We're not writers, so what's the piece?" So I said, "Oh! I'll ask Sibyl." And I wrote to her and she responded, "Oh yeah, I have a seventies back-to-the-land piece."

Aaron: "I have dystopia!"

Annie-B: So that was *Kürbis*. That was how *Kürbis* happened.

Sibyl: I can't believe it! I remember, I do remember that. But I thought we were just fooling around. And then when you were like, "We're going to do it," I was like "Really? Are you crazy?" [Laughter].

Aaron: *Kürbis* had happened before, right? The script existed from a production somewhere else.

Sibyl: I had done a draft, and I had done it in the same Bowery theater place. I had a director, Jessica Brater, who has a company called Polybe + Seats—they do a lot of environmental consciousness theater—and she teaches at Barnard. She used to direct a lot of Sylvan Oswald's work. I don't remember—I got teamed up with her at the Flea, she directed a reading, and I really loved the way she directed it, so we did this little production of it. We used these Elizabethan costumes from Barnard, she had this connection, and we used the Bats! The resident actors from the theater company at the Flea. But it was an earlier version.

Aaron: Annie-B, how do you feel the piece fits into the history and scope of what Big Dance does? I am interested in that partially because I wanted to ask about primary sources. I know a lot of the time you use several different primary sources to develop the texture of a piece, but not exactly a script... Sibyl, with the script, you have a ton of very interesting and strange primary sources yourself...how do these come together, or affect each other?

Annie-B: I'll answer the first half, and Sibyl, you can answer the second half, because—the first half is, how does it fit into Big Dance? I think probably in the sense of adolescent rejection—the way you do

things when you're an adolescent, where you end up rejecting things—like, I'll go out with *this* boy because my parents hate him, kind of thing. It was sort of after doing *Supernatural Wife* and *Comme Toujours Here I Stand* in such big theaters in Europe, and also at BAM, that I really just craved doing something tiny and intimate, and this cried out to be in some kind of site-specific, really, really intimate venue. I thought it needed to be something that you're very close to, so you're not just thinking of language as meaning, but you're also thinking of language as a kinetic experience, because the language is extremely kinetic. It took just as long to make, as it turned out, as the other works. The scale is physically small, but it's not any smaller in terms of our effort, our work or our investment in it.

We have done plays before, and we feel we're doing a play, in a sense. It's a very unusual play, but still, Sibyl handed us a text—and we're trying to understand that text, as best we can. So that's not really that new—we have done that, from time to time, we did Ödön von Horváth, a lot of German things. And Euripides. That's a play. We spoke 6,000 of his words. But even though we are doing a play, it still feels very personal. I can't speak for anyone else but myself, but it feels very personal to me. I feel like a lot of people think that work is only personal if it's about you—if it's your story, your life story, but I find even structural work can be extremely personal. This particular play feels very personal, which doesn't surprise me at all, because when we first read it, I was like "Hey Paul, let's do this," and we went to Sibyl and she read the whole thing for us, and I still really didn't know what any of the words meant, but I felt a really strong response to it, and wanted to explore it, which is the reason you do work—it's the reason you choose anything, any material. Some of it—like when she says what some of her references were—we always wanted to do *The Parson's Widow*, which is another Carl Dreyer movie, but as it turns out, there are themes in the play that I relate to really strongly, and that I feel are very much—I don't know—I can't think of another word to describe it but personal, even though I didn't write it.

What was the second part of the question? Sources?

Sibyl: In writing the text—yes. Carl Dreyer's *Day of Wrath*, Karl Jung's *Symbols of Transformation*, Charlie Brown and the Great Pumpkin. Also, I was in Austria and I saw a field of pumpkins that had been smashed, and the seeds harvested, and then the bodies of the pumpkins just sort of left to rot in field upon field upon field. And I was like, "What? How? How do you get away with this? It's not like you're leaving them there for seeds to grow next year, because you *take* the seeds!" That kind of horror, agricultural horror. Also a long period of touring and hearing language that I didn't know, but spending so much time there that I started to pick it up a little bit, and then just being kind of jazzed-up by that. Then it was Halloween time—I got back from tour and it was Halloween, and I needed to write something, and I just started to write this Halloween text, and then obscure it by first replacing vowels and then replacing consonants, and then having different people coming from some other place and time, either coming from another place in that same time or coming from another time into that same place and speaking in a different made-up dialect.

Aaron: It's so interesting to me that you had this experience touring. When I first saw *Kürbis* at PS122, at that gala event when it was the last night of PS122 ever (or something like that), I had just gotten back from being away for four months—we had been in France forever—and I felt like I kept saying, "I miss the sound of little children speaking in French." It was so liberating to not be annoyed by the sound of people talking, their idle chatter, because you can't eavesdrop, it's just an abstraction. It's just sound. I feel like I remember sitting there, and when Tymberly [Canale] started speaking I just got this big smile on my face, like, "Oh, I'm back." Just—I'm somewhere foreign, and I can just feel language instead of listening to it.

Sibyl: Instead of having to understand it. It's very relaxing.

Aaron: I find it very comfortable. At first you're like, "Oh my god I wish I could understand," but then you're like, "Wait, this is such a freedom, actually!"

Sibyl: And you can still communicate. There's still communication happening even though you don't understand what the other person is saying. It's like when you're traveling and you need information, and you somehow figure it out, even though you have *no* idea what the person just said to you.

Annie-B: But the truth is that most of what you understand from another person isn't really in their text. You're already doing it all the time. So it's tricky to figure out how to stage it, or what to do with it, because it could be directed many, many ways, is what we've discovered. It could be directed in pure abstraction, absolute, pure abstraction, which is most like how I experienced it when I first heard it. But then there's so much more there, I feel like, than just the sound of the language, there's so much more there. It's just unendingly fun to figure out what to foreground and background.

Aaron: It reminds me of that New Yorker article you recommended to me, how people were solving crimes with the tapes of people's syntax, and the way they are using language. They were arguing that the way you actually understand people speaking is so much from visual information, and we actually reiterate a lot of stuff between spoken and gestural communication.

Annie-B: And we're so poor with our language, anyway, we're so poor! It's not like most people—I mean me, it's not like my language is rich enough to express *near* enough the things that I feel. I'd like to put a sign up above the audience as they enter, that just says, "Relax." "Don't Worry." You know?

Sibyl: Yeah. Maybe there's a way to do that—"Just—relax. Everybody take it easy."

Annie-B: Group meditation, take a breath...

Sibyl: "Allow it to happen."

Aaron: I feel like the way it's set up, not the explicit humor of it but just watching people lumber in and how they present themselves does put you very much at ease—like, "I'm just going to sit back and let these people shoot the shit and see what happens." I mean that's how I always felt about it, from the beginning. And then, at American Realness, for the first time I felt this sense of doom that started to come into play. I felt it also when I saw the ERS [Elevator Repair Service] piece that you're working on, there's some doom there, there's always some shit that's about to descend from somewhere else.

Sibyl: Oh, weird! Weird that you would say that.

Annie-B: I asked her if she was Cassandra.*

*(*N.B. -- In Greek mythology, **Cassandra's** beauty caused Apollo to grant her the gift of prophecy. When Cassandra told him she wanted to stay a virgin, Apollo placed a curse on her so that she and all her descendants' predictions would not be believed. In more modern literature, Cassandra has given rise to the archetypal character of someone whose prophetic insight is obscured by insanity, turning their revelations into riddles or disjointed statements that are not fully comprehended until after the fact.)*

Sibyl: I just taught a play in my class that was written by this playwright Jami Brandli, she lives in LA but she tells this 50s housewife story that's based on her four aunts who all shared a vacuum cleaner, in like North Bergen, New Jersey, and she tells it, but she makes them Clytemnestra, Medea, Cassandra and

Antigone. And you'd think that'd just be the worst—like, if someone told me to see that, I'd be like, "I'm *not* going to see that," but I went to see this reading and I fell in love with this play, because she breaks Cassandra at the end. She doesn't know what's going to happen at the end, she's like, "I don't know!" This thing that the women are locked into, they end up breaking it. So I've been thinking a lot about Cassandra anyway.

Annie-B: I made my Cassandra piece about 25 years ago, ok? Everyone needs to.

Sibyl: I guess we all have it in us. But doom-lady—I guess. I'm always fearful. Like, when September 11 happened, I was like, "Duh! What did you people think?" It just came as absolutely no surprise to me at all. But I'm a positive person! Well, I really work to remain positive.

Aaron: Well, I don't even know if it's doom in a bad way. I always get this sense in this Lynchian way, like, "There's something else going on here that I don't know, we're going to go through some wormhole and end up somewhere else."

Sibyl: I feel that about life, a lot of the time. It always feels like there's something else going on.

Annie-B: Can you remember when you wrote the Kürbis speech at the end?

Sibyl: When I first wrote it? No, too long ago. That would have been six or seven years ago, I guess. I can't remember.

Annie-B: I mean, I'm using Black Sabbath and stuff. [Laughter].

Sibyl: That's a really, really, really good idea. I was doing some research this morning and Black Sabbath totally came up like four times.

Annie-B: You're *kidding*. Oh that's *weird*.

Sibyl: And a bunch of other stuff, like I wish I had known all this earlier, when I was rewriting *KürbisGeist* because there's that Walpurgisnacht.

Annie-B: The Balanchine piece?

Sibyl: Just the holiday! The German holiday on April 30th. It's a springtime thing, but it's also become this big German death-metal festival. Like, "Walpurgisnacht!" [In a German accent]. [Laughter]. And Black Sabbath is using a lot of that imagery. I'm so glad you're using Black Sabbath. That kind of brings it full circle—I don't have to have that regret anymore.

Aaron: To what extent did working with Big Dance change or influence the script? Annie-B, did you and Paul go to her and say, "We want this thing to be this way," and change things?

Annie-B: Did we?

Sibyl: There was more of a back-and-forth, I think. We had a lot of meetings. I had this feeling and I still do, I don't know what it is, but feelings of how it should be done, or how it should be spoken, so I was coming in to do these crazy pronunciation lessons, for awhile.

Annie-B: That was crazy. It was fun.

Sibyl: Yeah, it was really fun, for me. Talking to you and Paul, because you really got in there and wanted to know what the story was, and I didn't want anyone to know the story, for some reason. The impulse was to obscure it, to hide it, because the story itself was too simple. Then later I had done all this other research for all these other projects and I was like, "Oh, it's this," like, you know when you do something, and you don't know why, but then later you find out, like this connection happens? I'd been reading a lot about this guy Mircea Eliade.

Annie-B: Oh, I love him! He's my favorite!

Sibyl: I didn't know about him!

Annie-B: Oh, *Myth of the Eternal Return* is like my favorite book!

Sibyl: Oh my god.

Annie-B: Soul sisters. [Laughter]. I've been reading that book for 25 years.

Sibyl: It's amazing. My dog actually just chewed a part of my copy, and I was like, you've got to be kidding me, but we saved all the pieces and I'm going to put it back together. [Laughter]. But there's another one, *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, and that one breaks it down, like, "Sky and Sky Gods," "Water and Earth, Agriculture."

Annie-B: I pulled that book out while I was working on this. The other thing that I did when I was working on this, because I think in a sense, the piece is very religious—

Sibyl: —Yes—

Annie-B: —Or about religiousness, and I happened to be reading this book.

Sibyl: *The Myth of Eternal Return?*

Annie-B: No. I'm always reading that book. This was a different book I'd never read, called *Living the Year Biblically*. It's about a guy who lived for a year according to the Old Testament. He's very funny. Paul couldn't read it because he thought it was too light, but I thought it was hilarious and clever. What he does is he actually learns all the things that people did in the Old Testament and he does them. He stones people, he has a slave—an intern [laughs]. He finds a way to do everything that's in the Bible. Some of them are "Murder magicians." Things like "Bind money to your wrist, bind books to your head." All this crazy stuff. So I made a list of all those things, and we did them. In rehearsal. We did them all.

Sibyl: Wow.

Aaron: How did he stone people?

Annie-B: He just took some stones and he went like *this* one day. [mimes tossing a handful of pebbles] [Laughter].

Aaron: Because he didn't want to get in trouble with people!

Annie-B: Yeah, and one day he got an email from a guy that went to college and it said, “I love your writing so much, can I intern for you?” And the guy was like, “If I can call you my slave.” [Laughter]. He needed a slave! He found ways to do everything by making it funnier than it actually is, because he actually finds a way to live by Biblical law for a year, and it’s *intense*. It’s a very rigorous way to live. So we played around with all the rituals that I felt were in the ethos of the text.

Sibyl: In a way, we’ve had this whole dialogue around the piece that we didn’t even know was going on, just in terms of source material and stuff that you ended up using. After a certain point they were like, “We don’t need you in rehearsal anymore,” and I was like, “Ok!” Because I was really busy anyway, but I missed it! It was also a huge relief, because I was coming from the land of doing all your plays yourself—everything—stage managing, making the costumes, starring in whatever leading roles there were, casting.

Aaron: What’s available.

Sibyl: *Me*. I’m available, let’s go.

Aaron: *Secret Death of Puppets*.

Sibyl: Well, that was more of a collaboration, actually. I realized, I’m going to die, if I don’t—so it was hard for me to be in there and not control everything! It was so liberating to be like, “They’re going to take care of it,” and then go to the showing and see this thing that I *never* could have come up with myself in a million years, an entirely fourfold contemplation of everything that’s at work in that text that I feel, in a way, like I wrote without knowing what I was writing. Seeing so many things pulled out and then expanded upon—and *contemplated* and then expanded upon, and expressed, and layers of work, is new for me, and phenomenal. To see something that not only gets the point across but surpasses my own means of being able to transmit it. That’s a big deal. That’s a huge deal for me. The work on the piece continues. The writing on the piece continues. They’ve continued the writing, and now I’m continuing the research on the piece. It doesn’t end, it just keeps going. For me it’s very meaningful and really important, because I don’t know if I could have kept writing, even. This is the perfect training ground to let go of a written text.

Annie-B: You hadn’t done that before?

Sibyl: No.

Annie-B: Wow, I didn’t know that.

Sibyl: I have done it, but I always felt disappointed in some way, or cheated in some way, or cheated artistically.

Annie-B: When you see your work in a way that doesn’t make sense it’s so painful. I think of the piece in four sections, and the fourth section being audience address, and it’s really this idea of Sibyl’s, because the audience speaks together at the end, and it’s very much like church, because going to the theater is like church anyway, it just feels so right. You have to hear it to believe it, but it’s also one of those things that you kind of have to be present at to write it. Sibyl’s been rewriting the last speech that the audience does for awhile, and she sent us a version recently, and Paul and I both had the same response, like, “We *think* so,” but you can never really tell until the audience does it. So we found an opportunity on

Governor's Island before the opening, to have an audience do it so we could all listen. It's *so different* when you hear everybody do it all together, and they've never read it. You can feel whether it's right. One thing we noticed about the text that jumped out at us, actually hearing the audience do it--we queried the audience a lot about it, because they were actually doing it, so they had a lot of information to give--it's so gorgeous to hear them speak in unison. I mean, we don't really have church—this *is* our church, and so, once I heard the audience do it, I was like, "Why don't we do this at the end of every play?" It makes perfect sense. It's like you're letting the audience respond but you're giving them the language to respond in. I'm quite in love with the last speech, and the ideas around it.

Sibyl: I'm interested in stuff that is from religion, or from religion that is so old we can't recognize it anymore. In *Symbols of Transformation* I took a lot of images from--you know when you open up a book and they have plates—photographs and drawings? I wrote a lot from those, and at the Dixon Place show when the Kürbis guy comes, I did a slideshow of just these images that are really heavy and deep and disturbing but you don't know what they are. It's not Christ on a cross. It's not anything that we recognize, all these ancient religions, but they still speak to us, unbeknownst, behind our back, in a way! That's another thing I'm really concerned with, in this piece and in pieces since. I feel like Paul and Annie-B and the entire cast have all latched onto that, that desire, as well, to bring that back—some of the religious ritual side to theater.

Aaron: The ritual is really interesting because there are rituals of theater, the rituals of the staging and all the rituals of the pumpkin harvest thing, and then using language to actually subvert the ritual of just sitting and taking in a play. It's very active in that way.

Annie-B: It's always that thing when you make something, what survives and what doesn't, and stuff I feel like gets erased, but it's still there, you can still see the erasure marks. Like for instance we have this whole part where we had everybody bind money to their wrist and paper to their head, and eat certain foods, and wash, the whole thing with water, and fire, and we got involved with *every* icon—but, it's gone. Now it's gone. Paulie took it out. But we went through that, and I feel like the erasure marks are all over the piece.

Sibyl: The imprint is still there.

Aaron: The experience happened.

Annie-B: It's weird because I was really upset when he wanted to take it out, but I was like, "Ok," [groan] but then later, I wasn't missing it. Because I do think it's there, somehow, it's there.

Sibyl: I'm having the same thing with the ERS piece. There's this one part that John doesn't like, and I was fighting, fighting, fighting because it's a whole big theme! He said he was just not connecting to it. I was getting so angry, and then I thought, "You know what? I'm just going to take it out." And my thing was: "I'll just make another piece out of it then! I'll just make another play!" [Laughter]. You know? "I'll do what I want!" Which I may still do—but the point being, then I looked at the script, where it was, this indentation of where this part used to be--we take this away but we still have its indentation. I think Richard Foreman does a lot of stuff like that—he puts something in and makes everybody rigorously work on it and master it, and then takes it out. So what you're seeing is only really 5% of what they worked on during the rehearsal process, but it's so invested...with *investment!* [Laughs].

Annie-B: I always reference the erased de Kooning. Robert Motherwell erased a de Kooning drawing. It used to be in the Whitney, I don't know if it's still there. It's actually a beautiful drawing. I always thought it

was some dingy-doo that he did, but actually it was this gorgeous drawing, and he erased it, and that was the piece—it's called "Erased de Kooning." I got really into that, a long time ago, "I want to erase everything!" and I erased a whole bunch of things, but left the trace—I'd work with Stravinsky's music, and then erase the music, but leave all the rhythms in it.

Sibyl: That's so important. You remove the original structure. It's like when you make a paper mâché around a balloon, and then you remove the balloon, and then you have this thing.

Annie-B: Something else. Like that.

Aaron: It's 7:15!

Sibyl: What?

Aaron: The show's at 7:30. We have to go.

Sibyl: Do you have enough information? Are you sure? Did we even scratch the surface?

Post script: emails

Aaron: September 21

Thank you both for the interview on Wednesday. I can't wait to hear how difficult the background noise is going to be. Adventures in transcription, chapter 7 in my never-existent autobiography.

The only question I thought I would pose to you both, which I didn't get to, was:

Do either of you have any questions for each other?

Annie-B: September 21

My question: Sibyl, you said once to me that you don't believe (?) in craft or structure. What did you mean?

Sibyl: September 29

Ok, so lame I never got back to you on this.

I'm trying to remember about the craft part. Well, I believe in crafts. I love craft stores and making crafts like different dolls or embroidery or floral arrangements, working with a glue gun, especially for a play. But I do cringe a little bit when I hear people talking about the "craft" of playwriting. I get this feeling like I should stay away from whatever that situation is where people are tossing around that term in that instance. What is this adverse reaction? It just rubs me the wrong way. Why? It makes me feel trapped in something. Some kind of conception of what it is to be writing plays. Or of what plays are. It strikes me as being really easy to be overly-prideful about writing plays if I'm talking about it as "my craft." Playwrights practicing, *plying* "their craft." Maybe it's the possessive pronoun that often goes before it. But it's also the sound of the word itself. Likening it to a

blacksmith, which is a craftsman or a cabinet-maker. But it makes me shudder. There's some kind of implication of control or mastery. Or having some kind of POWER of playwriting. The use of "tools" and "devices." And those are the kinds of plays I am not interested in writing. I *am* interested in blacksmiths, and potters, and bedazzlers, and glass-blowers worldwide. Those are the craftsmen and craftswomen, they wear aprons when they're working and there is sawdust around, or iron shavings, or beads of dried glue. I don't wear an apron when I'm writing a play and I don't have a 'workshop' (although God knows I've been in some playwriting workshops - but they are too ubiquitous to be against or to not believe in). I'm also, as you know, interested in witchcraft, but not 'wichcraft, which also makes me sick in a similar sort of way. Because at 'wichcraft they're just making sandwiches. It's food. And I have to walk away very quickly and not look inside that place because I'm afraid I'll want to go in there and smash up the whole place because of the way they're treating food in there. Or the way I imagine they are treating food in there. I'll never know because I'll never go in there. So there's a parallel I'm forming here between sandwiches and plays I guess. And that makes sense? Sandwiches are basic and practical and don't try to sell me some whole lifestyle about it? And perhaps, maybe the same with plays. It's just irksome in a way it's hard for me to put my finger on. I heard Rich Maxwell liken it to shipwrighting and I like that comparison a little better. That seems more like it to me.

As for structure, it's another thing that's hard to be against, because structure is everywhere. But that's just it! Structure is everywhere. Structure happens, on its own. My problem is the over-weaning of emphasis on structure, like that it always has to be the same or you've got to figure it out beforehand, before you start writing or before you can know the play. That it's something that's got to be imposed *onto* the play - for me it's something that emerges as I go. I'm working as intuitively as I can, following pathways of research and impulse, putting things together without knowing why at first, and then I almost always, provided I can put the time in, find out why later on. The connections and the reasons reveal themselves later. Same with "character." Like when people list their characters in the beginning of their play and give all these clues about what they are like, and who they are. "Emilie, 25. Very pretty, naive and innocent. Curious about the world around her." In my book, pretty is as pretty does, honey. I wait til I find out what the character is going to *do* before I make any ascertainties about character or what that character is about. If I ever do! Because then we end up sitting there saying, "Oh, no - Emilie would never do that - that would go against her naivete, her prettiness" and I don't think we should feel like we've got that much say as playwrights. I want to only be observing what needs to happen, and staying out of the way as much as I can.

Annie-B: September 30

Sibs,

I really respond to your allergy to character as a one liner easily summarized: "Paul is a hard working director and actor who loves to joke around with his buddies after work". Mac talked about how to be REAL (whatever that means), characters need to do things that are OUT of character.

This craft business is interesting. There are ways that movement can be sculpted, manipulated, handled, honed, played with (looking for the right word) that is ever evolving

and very personal, but is a sort of craft, like knitting gone wild! Like if you only knew how to knit and purl in a pattern you would have little craft, but if you could use knitting and purling in a way that is totally crazy, personal, drunk, you could make something unique, but you started with knit and purl.

I think of structure as more meaningful, even spiritual, central, and luminous, but it all depends on what charges you up. (my "blonde" roots are showing here-- I am a step-grandchild of the Judson Church/Cunningham tradition)

In the end it doesn't matter; what matters is what you make.