

All theatre, in my opinion, is about change. We pay to see a character change. In change there is hope, and that is what I think an artist must do--not create false hope but dig as hard and deep as he can to find the best part of human beings. In the last scene of "Extremities" Marjorie's cycloptic drive to tear Raul apart results in a communication between victim and victimizer that goes beyond revenge. Marjorie does for Raul what all the social scientists, psychiatrists, police and prisons have failed to do--she gives him a conscience, and a soul. She makes him see himself from the other end of the knife. She makes him face himself. That is the beginning of change. Marjorie is exorcised of psychic torment, at the same time she gives Raul a soul. All theatre in my opinion, should be wish fulfillment tempered in reality. Women don't apprehend rapists. Marjorie is the exception. But we can learn about the rule by examining the exception. So many rape victims have told me that "Extremities" has provided the catharsis that rape, police, lawyers, courts have not provided. That alone has made the entire experience worthwhile.

William Mostrosimone
Trenton, NJ 1984



EXTREMITIES

THE DEPARTMENT OF SPEECH AND THEATRE
and the
UNIVERSITY PLAYERS

presents

EXTREMITIES

by

WILLIAM MASTROSIMONE

Directed by

ROBERT KIDDER

Technical Direction by

JOHN B. GORDON

Costume and Makeup Design by

DENISE WARNER

Stage Managers

THOMM YOST -- STEVE ZOLDI

EXTREMITIES is presented by special arrangements with
Samuel French

LOCK HAVEN UNIVERSITY
SLOAN THEATRE
NOVEMBER 13, 14 & 15
8:00 p.m.

THE CAST
(in order of appearance)

Marjorie.....ANGELA SPARKS
Raul.....PHIL EVANS
Terry.....JENNIFER SHARP
Patricia.....RACHEL URHOBO

SCENE

Between Trenton and Princeton, New Jersey
where the cornfield meets the highway.

ACT ONE

The present, September

ACT TWO

A moment later

There will be one ten minute intermission.

The first ten minutes of this play contain strong language and scenes of sexual violence.

The use of recording equipment or the taking of photographs in the theatre during the performance is strictly prohibited.

PRODUCTION STAFF

SET DESIGN.....RICHARD WAGNER (DESIGN)
JOHN GORDON (CONCEPT)

LIGHTING DESIGNER.....DAVID OXENREIDER

SOUND OPERATOR.....STEVE STEFF

LIGHTING COMPUTER OPERATOR.....KIRT MUNGER

PROPERTY MASTERS.....THOMM YOST
STEVE ZOLDI

PROPERTY CREW.....DEBBIE MARKOWITZ

SCENE CONSTRUCTION...

SCOTT THOMPSON

MICHAEL R. MILLER

JEFFREY C. SELFE

JOE KOBIALKA

BRIAN METROCAVAGE

DEBBIE MARKOWITZ

MELVIN FORTNEY

KIM HODRICK

DAN LAWSON

ALAN TODD

JIM McEACHERN

JEFFREY BUTLER

MATTHEW AVERY

JOHN STONER

JOE FERRARI

DAN MOFFIT

SCOTT KINCAID

ROBERT BURCHFIELD, JR.

COSTUME SHOP FOREMAN.....BETTY EDWARDS

COSTUME CREW...

LISA SADLER

CRAIG OREFICE

BARBARA RUETSCHI

KAREN MOLLER

TRACY ROGERS

MAKEUP.....ROBB WARREN

SPECIAL THANKS TO LEONARD LONG AND THE CLINTON
COUNTY WOMEN'S CENTER FOR ASSISTANCE WITH
PROPERITIES

IN MEMORIAM

University Player and member of Alpha Psi Omega

THOMAS EDISON CULVER

who died in an accident at work last summer in Dallas, PA.

THE MAKING OF EXTREMITIES

In May of 1978 I met a fifty-five year old woman. For convenience, let's call her Mary. Her face was cut, swollen and bruised. I didn't realize it then, but our conversation would alter the course of my life.

Mary was a rape victim. She told me she was raped the night before. Perhaps because I was a complete stranger, she told me about her bizarre ordeal. A nineteen year old man broke into her apartment with intent to rob. Thinking no one home, she startled him when she awoke. He raped her, beat her with a lamp and fled. Hours later, when she was able to pick herself up, she called the police and gave a description. She was given a humiliating pelvic exam at the hospital and taken to police headquarters to look at several suspects. Out of a line up of six, Mary made a positive identification of the rapist. He was arraigned and a court date set.

Months later the trial began. Mary was made to retell the rape before her peers, the public, the press. The rapist sat quietly in a three-piece suit, white shirt and tie. He looked like the son of a minister. When he was cross-examined he made amusing remarks. The jury laughed. There was evidence of rape but no evidence that *he* was the rapist. The case was dismissed. Mary left the courtroom. On the courthouse steps the rapist walked up behind Mary and said, "If you think that was bad, wait until next time."

Mary informed the police. They told her that they would keep regular patrols near her home, that she should call them on the slightest suspicion. But there are many hours in a minute when you're waiting for the rapist to return. The house plays such cruel little pranks. A board creaks in the middle of the night. The dripping faucet sounds like a man coming up the stairs on tiptoes. The wind. A cat. Mary slept with the light on. Next to the phone. With a butcher knife. It was too much. She quit her job, lost her pension, and bought a one-way ticket to the opposite coast.

On her way to the airport, Mary stopped by to say goodbye to me. If she hadn't, "Extremities" would not exist. She thanked me for listening. We shook hands and parted. As she walked through the door, something possessed her to stop and turn and say: "There was a moment during the rape when the animal stopped and reached for one of my cigarettes on the night table...He couldn't reach it...He put one foot on the floor...At that moment I knew I could kick him and hurt him...The moment waited for me...But I just lay there...Paralyzed...Maybe it was that I was just brought up not to hurt anybody...Maybe it was that I was too afraid that if I didn't hurt him enough, he'd kill me...I don't know...I did nothing...He lit a cigarette, raped me again and then beat me with a lamp...I will think about that moment for the rest of my life...I will fantasize about what would have happened...Now I can see myself hurting him...And hurting him some more...It's hard for me to admit that I love to hear his scream...I should have acted...I would've got real justice...Not to act is to have to live with a coward for the rest of your life...If I had five minutes in a locked room with him now..."

Mary did not finish the sentence. "Extremities" was written to fill in the blank she left. I had never seen such anger in a woman except on stage in "Medea". Something screamed in me. I was sick and angry. Sick because the woman's life was ruined. Angry because her peers let a guilty man go. "Extremities" came out of me like an overdue baby. I began writing that night at midnight. I worked all night. I thought it was a two-character play, but then Terry and Patricia walked in. I slept two hours at the end of Act One. By three that afternoon I had finished.

In the ensuing months, I began my research. When I heard of a rape trial, I would sit in the court all day. I talked to spectators, lawyers, sometimes defendants and plaintiffs. I learned that one out of three women in the U.S. are sexually assaulted by age eighteen. That of all rape cases that are able to pass strict rules of evidence, only two percent result in conviction, which means that it's easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rapist to go to prison. That the average rapist rapes 29 times. That means 29 women. Most rapes go unreported due to embarrassment or fear. That juries are so fearful of sending an innocent man to prison many guilty men are set free. Now I began to fathom Mary's urge to rip the rapist to pieces.

As a man I have been reeducated about rape. The most dangerous teaching is the unconscious acceptance, the insidious little assumptions one makes while growing up. I have, through the play, freed myself of the two lethal myths. One, that women cause rape, and two, that rape is for sex. A woman can never cause rape. That is a male excuse for the desire to rape projected into the victim. Rape is done to degrade, humiliate and intimidate. It is a confusing issue because the tenderest act of man and woman is used to disguise the most brutal and sadistic. The extremities of the spectrum are brought together. Based on interviews of victims, the worst part of rape is not the physical. It is the fear, the threats, real or imagined, the degradation, the helplessness. "Extremities" has focused on the latter. Audiences often have to be reminded that no rape occurs in "Extremities". But audiences often *think* that a rape has occurred because of the mental cruelty of the first scene. We see Raul tossing Marjorie about like a tattered doll. We cannot know what is happening in her head. We can only surmise. We can only do that by giving something to the play, by investing emotion, by empathy. A play can only work when the audience is willing to project themselves into the protagonist in order to understand the character's thoughts and emotions. The audience must pay twice: once to get past the box office, and again to get beyond the footlights. When empathy comes easy, that is what we call a commercial play. "Extremities" is not a commercial play.

"Extremities" contains the seeds of all the things that interest me as a writer--politics, ethics and morals, and psychology. A woman alone, a man enters, the play begins. From the very first, we see a contageon of violence pass from Raul, to Marjorie, to Terry, to Patricia. It grows in the language and in the action like a germ culture. The monster in all of us is just under the skin. Scratch the skin deep enough and it comes leaping out full-blown. In order to survive Raul, Marjorie has to become like Raul. To do that is to lose herself. The victim and victimizer, the cager and the caged, from each other.

Thus, the psychological play leads to the moral play--How does one deal with evil without becoming evil oneself? Marjorie has a choice--to act or not to act. To turn Raul over to the police is a choice which would result in his release which would result in her death. Marjorie's self-preservation forces her to make another choice--to not release him, to bury him and assure herself he will never return. Standing so long on the verge of that choice, Marjorie equally fears what she will become after Raul is six foot under. There is no safe choice. On the one hand, her life is jeopardy. On the other, her sanity. She must act and act strongly, decisively. There is no help. Neither the authorities nor friends can lend a hand. Marjorie's helplessness leads to the politics of "Extremities", the idea of the violated social contract. Every individual and society make a deal: let's all surrender our state of nature, our animal impulses, in return for protection, in order to form an orderly society of rules by which we can all have freedom from each other. In "Extremities", Marjorie's actions are based upon the perception that society violates the social contract by not keeping up its end of offering protection. Sure, the police say, Call us when there's a problem and we'll come running, but what's that mean to a phi beta kappa prison graduate like Raul? Marjorie feels abandoned and therefore must defend herself against the most privileged citizen in our society--the recidivist criminal. And those who criticize me for Terry and Patricia's unfriendly reaction to Marjorie's dilemma had better turn their daggers to the two percent conviction rate first. Sadly enough, Marjorie's roommates' reaction is all-too-true. If "Extremities" could change anything, I would have it alter the perceptions of the people who sit in the jury box; I would have them hear testimony through the ear of the social contract. A play does not have to say anything. But it must do something. "Extremities" has changed people's perception of rape. The rest follows.

What some people have applauded or booed as 'comic relief' in "Extremities" is no such thing. I set out to recreate Mary's experience. I wanted to write a courtroom drama, not in court, but in a living room (where a woman is most likely to be raped, in her house). I wanted to create a psychic trial where all characters shift roles and become plaintiff, defendant, prosecutor, judge, jury, witness, etc. I wanted to show how the rapist can turn the jury around. In our society, we are all guilty of a prejudice. If some one makes us laugh, we think well of him. The rapists I have seen, and talked to, were cleverly rehearsed in their lawyer's offices, given a Sunday suit and a spitshine, and after an amusing remark, had spectators and jury saying, 'My, he's such a nice fellow--I don't think he could have done such a terrible thing'--That's the goal of every defense attorney, to let one positive trait through and let it begin that chain reaction that ends in a reasonable doubt. The result is 98 percent chance of freedom for the rapist. To the horror of misunderstanding critics of "Extremities", audiences laugh. Alot. Where there is tension, there is need for release. Laughter is the most accessible form of release in the theatre. Raul has a certain devil-may-care variety of humor, but it's not for the sake of making mirth, but to turn people around, give doubt, divide, manipulate and finally destroy. He represents no social class or ethnic group. He only represents the men who know the law and how to beat the system. I have observed it countless times in courts and who doesn't like it, don't kill me. I'm only the messenger.





