

MCH91-45-1-4

FAX	TO: <u>GRAE THEATRE COMPANY</u>
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FROM: <u>ALBIE SACHS</u>	DATE: <u>2/8/93</u>
COMPANY: _____	
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TO: GRAE THEATRE COMPANY
FAX NO: 071-267 2703
FROM: ALBIE SACHS
DATE: 2 AUGUST 1993

My dear friends, colleagues and counterparts, including the two of you who are me -

I read through the script a few days ago and have been travelling, talking and writing ever since, so what I am sending you now are a few thoughts that bob in my head and not much more. Let me reiterate: the project is yours, you take responsibility for it, you make it work, you give it life and credibility.

1 . I was wondering whether the title should not be the Soft Vengeance of Albie Sachs. This could serve to attract people who saw the Jail Diary of Albie Sachs and add to the drama by making it as it were the second act of that play. It would also underline that this is a true story, that is, that the spectators are following the struggles and existential problems not of the dramatist but of a real person. I say this with some diffidence, the publishers chose the original title of the Jail Diary. I was thrilled at the honour implied, since it was evocative of the Diary of Anna Frank, and suggested that the work was one of quality. Having once agreed to forego my privacy in this respect, I am now happy to go the whole way.

2. I found the idea of the two Albie's quite ingenious. It certainly enables you to overcome the problems of staging a story based essentially on interior monologue. You might, even as I think David Edgar did, introduce soliloquy and direct speech to the audience to provide variety and subtlety. I don't know.

3. The two characters I felt unhappy about were my mother and the cop. I will deal with the cop first. You have some fun at his expense. The fact is that I was happy to have him there, not so much for protection but as a sign of my

legitimacy in the eyes of Her Majesty's Government! When you are nearly wiped out, you long to hear from every quarter that you are worthy. I also appreciated the delicate way in which this particular cop dealt with me, not overstating his role and not aggravating my anxiety. What came through to me was the intense irony which perhaps you could explore a little more. Here was I who had spent most of my life running away from cops and the Secret Service and who had been nearly murdered by somebody from that fraternity, eagerly accepting the presence of someone who came from the world of "the enemy".

The other aspect of intense irony was that for the first time in years I felt safe, that there were no bugs in my hospital room. Ours is a real paranoia.

With regard to my mother, it so happens that she dresses quite well. My emotional awkwardness with her was not based on Madame Souzatska type embarrassment. I have always admired her intelligence and progressiveness, even although she was fated to be a secretary and a server rather than a leader. The problem was really of an Oedipal character, if one has to look for a label! The line "I long to be mothered by everybody in the world except my own mother" sums it up. My dad did not attend my prize-givings. He was a the guy behind the newspapers - I got to know the top of his head and his legs and thighs quite well. A powerful, romantic, courageous person whose ego got mixed up with all public and private matters in which he was involved.

The question of carnality, the flesh, pleasure and self-image was central to the whole experience of recovery. Interestingly, you introduce my mother just after reference to my summoning up memories of love-making - reinforcing the Oedipal idea. I am not sure that that is a dimension that the play should take on. What I do feel however, is that the theme of love and loving as counterposed to the experience of hate is central to my story. I am sure that it is also central to the imagination and life-experience of all disabled people. I am not sure if the play brings out with sufficient starkness the fact that to the able-bodied world the problems of disability are seen essentially in instrumental terms. The limb-fitter wants to give me an arm that will look as good as new. The occupational therapist wants me to be able to do physical things. My friends on the one hand tell me stories about amazing one-legged people who do everything from skiing to dancing. For much of the time I also judge the success of my recovery in terms of things I am able to do but the real questions are how I engage with the world and with myself. It is not only

whether physically I can have successful intercourse, although this is a very important question, but will I be loved and will I love. The memories of pre-bomb love-making were important in relation to reviving a sense of unconditional acceptance of the kind that comes in the darkness of a deep physical embrace/encounter.

Less dramatic, but of very great importance, was touch. The way in which the doctors at first, and then the nurses, cleaned me, healed me and dressed and undressed my bandages (which were my dress), stays with me to this day. The nurses gave me a love for England that ten years of intellectual companionship had never given me. One of my biggest discoveries was about the power and pleasure of touch and how somehow as we left childhood behind us, we left touch behind us, and ritualised the occasions on which it could be used or associated touch with sexual encounter.

The second major query is over image. When I was asked about why I wanted a prosthesis, I came up with quick answers, based essentially on function and balance. The real reason, however, was to make it appear that I had not lost an arm. I wanted to be "normal" which meant I had to correspond to the outline of normality. Bit by bit I discovered that I had to be my own normality, and that the world would take me largely as I took myself.

To me, the two themes that were most fundamental were firstly, the one relating to love-making and emotional love and, secondly, how to learn to live with myself as I was, in reality disfigured more than disabled. I might mention that the loss of my arm has enabled me intuitively to identify with all sorts of people in our world who are not "normal" and has reinforced my respect for diversity, for the right to be different and for the need for each one of us to have pride in ourselves as we are.

Arising out of this, if I were dealing with the play I might try to reinforce these themes. I think the second one is particular important and that the writing and staging must go the whole way in involving the audience in identifying with armlessness.

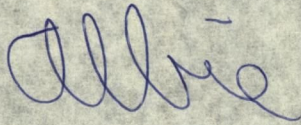
3. I am not sure how the presentation will justify the appearance and disappearance of lots of little characters.

4. I must look at the story again. If you go for the two Albie's, it is a Death and a Maiden scenario and one must win or they both must die. But death should not just be a

cheeky banterer or a bit of self-doubt. Death should be powerful and seriously threatening.

In conclusion, let me repeat that I am not reflecting on a text that is before me but passing on to you inchoate memories and responses related to having read the text some while ago. If you think it might be useful, I could engage more closely with the text and make proposals for how some of the dialogue could be adapted. But I am eager not to overpower you with the fact that this was my experience. The play is yours and you must run with it. I wish you every success.

Albie

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Albie". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly stylized font.