SELECTED TWENTIETH-CENTURY AMERICAN PLAYWRIGHTS ON TRAGEDY

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By

Ellen Margaret Harrington

A THESIS

Submitted to the College of Communication Arts of
Michigan State University of Agriculture and
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MASTER OF ARTS

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AN ABSTRACT

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ABSTRACT

The problem of this study was to derive a definition for modern tragedy from the non-dramatic writings of a selected group of twentieth-century American playwrights. Six playwrights were chosen on the basis of the abundance of their critical writings and works for the stage. An attempt was made to crystallize a definition of tragedy or to find a common core of beliefs from which further study could determine a definition. The playwrights selected were Maxwell Anderson, Eugene O'Neill, Arthur Miller, Tennessee Williams, Elmer Rice, and Clifford Odets.

In this study only critical writings were considered. This was done so that any compiled definition or common core of beliefs might be based strictly on the playwrights' views on the subject of tragedy, rather than on various interpretations of the playwrights' dramatic works.

The procedure followed for this study was first to gather together the non-dramatic writings of the playwrights and then to examine them to discover those applicable to any explanation of tragedy. These views were then presented in the individual chapters.

Eleven points for discussion formed the basis for the compilation of views on tragedy held by the six selected playwrights: (1) reference to historic dramaturgical ideas, (2) styles or forms, (3) poetry in tragedy, (4) character and theme as the primary elements in tragedy,

(5) the tragic theme as an expression of life, (6) the tragic hero or character, (7) morality, (8) the revelation of truth, (9) the effect of tragedy upon an audience, (10) the purpose of tragedy, and (11) the optimism or exaltation of tragedy. On some points the playwrights are in agreement, on others, they disagree. Yet, even in agreement, the similarity of views did not always result in a definite conclusion or statement on tragedy which would entirely encompass the ideas of the individual playwrights. Therefore, no single definition emerged from the examination of these views.

Since most of the playwrights' critical writings were done in connection with their own plays, these non-dramatic writings alone did not create a feasible basis for a definition of tragedy. However, there was a common core of beliefs based on similarities in the critical writings of the playwrights. Further research in which both the plays and critical writings of these men would be considered was recommended in order to find a valid definition of tragedy for the modern American theatre.

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Though love repine and reason chafe
    There came a voice without reply:
"Tis man's perdition to be safe
    When for the truth he ought to die."

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

> The arts are fragments of the time and place which produces them and cannot be comprehended either conceptually or imaginatively, outwardly or inwardly, without some knowledge and imaginative understanding of their context. . . . In tragedy do we not find an image of the deepest conflicts in the life of the time?[1]

Because of changing or developing cultures and civilizations, needs of people in successive ages differ. For this reason, an attempt to arrive at a contemporary definition of a term which will encompass its use in all times and cultures is extremely difficult. For example, no definition of "tragedy" from Aristotle to the present has ever satisfactorily embraced all plays written and labeled as tragedy.

The purpose of this study is to discover views on tragedy of a selected group of twentieth-century American playwrights. Six playwrights have been selected because of the abundance of their critical writings on tragedy and their prominence in the American theatre in the twentieth century. They are Maxwell Anderson, Arthur Miller, Clifford Odets, Eugene O'Neill, Elmer Rice, and Tennessee Williams. Each playwright's views will be considered separately. Wherever applicable, the theories of these playwrights are compared with each other and with prominent theories of past ages.

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[1]Eric Bentley. The Playwright As Thinker. (New York, Meridian Books, 1955), p. 34.

There are several approaches to studying modern American tragedy. One method is to study the critical writings of the playwrights. A second method is to study the plays of playwrights who have attempted to write tragedy. Another way is to combine the study of the critical writings and plays of the playwrights.

Crane Brinton in his Ideas and Men expressed the first approach to philosophical dissertation:

> Men do not consistently act in logical (rational) accordance with their professed ideals; here the realist scores. But their professed ideals are not meaningless, and thinking about ideals is not a silly and ineffective activity that has no effect on their lives. Ideals, as well as appetites, push men into action; here the idealist scores.[2]

In this same way the six playwrights of this study are to be viewed. Their own plays will not be considered except where they are part of the playwright's theories. Whether or not any or all of these playwrights wrote tragedy or whether or not their theories coincide with their practice is of no concern in this paper.

In the contemporary American theatre the playwrights rather than the critics or the audience appear to be setting the standard for tragedy. Therefore, it seems justifiable to discover the views of some of these playwrights in the hope of arriving at a definition of "tragedy" that may be applied to the contemporary American stage. By comparing and analyzing these views, perhaps a crystallization of a contemporary American conception of tragedy may be found.

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[2]Crane Brinton. Ideas and Men. (New York, Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1950), pp. 16-17.

However, it may be that such a crystallization of the playwright's views is impossible. In which case, an attempt will be made to find some common core of beliefs among the playwrights, which might be used as a basis of further study of the American contemporary concept of tragedy.

The six chapters which follow contain the views of the six selected American playwrights: Maxwell Anderson, Eugene O'Neill, Arthur Miller, Tennessee Williams, Elmer Rice, and Clifford Odets.

Each of the selected playwrights turns for the most part to the stage of Periclean Athens; to Aristotle, Shakespeare, and certain of the latter nineteenth century and twentieth century playwrights to obtain a precedent for his theory and practice. There are basic similarities and dissimilarities in the views of the surveyed playwrights which may be extracted and compared. The concluding chapter contains this comparison.

CHAPTER II

MAXWELL ANDERSON

A man must die
for what he believes . . .
and if he won't then he'll end up believing
in nothing at all--and that's death too.[1]

A well-known writer for the modern American stage, Maxwell Anderson has long been a student of theatre in all its aspects from theory to production. As a student he has experimented to find out what constitutes drama and how it affects an audience. When Anderson began his career in 1930, he felt that there was not an American playwright capable of writing a great play, but he could not explain why he felt this way. Later, in the 1930's, he believed that audiences desired a theatre that concerned itself, not with the superficial immediacy of the journalistic prose drama, but rather with man's place and destiny, discussing these in prophetic rather than prosaic terms.[2]

Anderson felt that the theatre must return to its poetic, emotional tradition and that the poet, or playwright, must be a prophet, dreamer, and an interpreter of the racial dream. None of the other

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[1]Maxwell Anderson. Eleven Verse Plays. (New York, Harcourt, Brace, & Company, 1940), Key Largo, p. 118.

[2]Maxwell Anderson. Off Broadway. (New York, William Sloane Associates, Inc., 1947), p. 49, 52. This idea was first expressed in the preface to Winterset and later expanded in "Compromising and Keeping the Faith" and "The Uses of Poetry." All three essays are included in this book.

playwrights surveyed would object to this viewpoint except to say (as Anderson himself once said) that no playwright can go beyond his own times to look back and speak to them. He is and must be a reflection of his age and the thoughts, hopes, dreams, and prophecies of the people in his immediate culture.[3]

Anderson feels that the purpose of the theatre is to discover and hold up to public view that which is most admirable in the human being. The theatre, says Anderson, is a religious institution that has been devoted to the exaltation of man's spirit. The plays that have come down through history, the ones men have loved, are those that represent human loyalty, courage, love that fills and purges the souls, and grief and sorrow that ennoble. Anderson goes on to say:

> The great plays of the world—those accepted by civilization as part of a great heritage and played for centuries—are almost all concerned with the conduct of exceptional men or women in positions of great respectability, men with tragic faults and weaknesses but with mind and strength enough to overcome in the struggle with evil forces, both those within themselves and without.[4]

In other words, the lives of exceptional men or women who have human flaws but are capable of facing opposing forces, have been the subjects of the plays most loved throughout the centuries. Anderson feels that there is a reason for this, too, for any play that has been held a favorite for many years may be analyzed, and in it will be found some moral or rule of social conduct in which the human race believes.

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[3]Ibid., pp. 20-21, 32-34, 52.

[4]Ibid., pp. 29-30.

The three things Anderson holds to be most important to tragedy have been presented: (1) An exceptional character is in conflict with some opposing force, (2) this character represents some human truth or moral, and (3) the rise, weakness, and exaltation of the character are a source of emotional release to the audience.

Anderson feels that if an artist works in favor of the good (assuming that there is also evil) and hopes for its victory, then morally he is strong. Any other position is not only wrong, says Anderson, but will not be accepted by the audience. The hero who is representative of a writer's views must face conflict with indomitable courage or he can no longer claim manhood. Only then will the audience accept him. It is not that a hero is expected to be superhuman. He must have human weaknesses, but he should resist all that would attack him and emerge from the conflict, whether victorious or defeated, with his morale untouched.

Anderson continues by saying:

> There have been critics who held that the theater was central among the arts because it is a synthesis of all of them. Now I confess that the theater appears to me to be the central art--but for a different reason. It does bring together all the arts, or a number of them. But its distinction is that it brings them together in a communal religious service. Any other art, practiced separately, can be either moral or amoral, religious or pagan, affirmative or despairing. But when they come together in the theater they must affirm, they cannot deny. It is as if poetry, music, narration, dancing, and the mimetic arts were bits and pieces of theatrical art, stripped away to function alone and rudderless without the moral compulsion of the theater.[5]

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[5]Ibid., p. 32.

All the arts work together in the theatre for morality. More clearly, according to Anderson, everything that is used in the theatre for the production of a play is centered toward a scene in which the character reflects a truth of life which is a moral belief of the people. If this central point is lacking, then the whole production is of little value. Anderson is quite insistent that the people have and must determine their own standards, their own goals and their own beliefs. They will accept only such truths as reflect these.

The theatre is an artistic symbol of the never-ending struggle between the good and the evil within men. Opposing forces are always present and ready to suppress man, and the good must never drop its guard. The good and evil in mankind, says Anderson, are the same as the good and evil that are an integral part of evolution. Man has within himself the power for evil and the power for good. The struggles are those that have filled the history of mankind. Yet, it is the good in man toward which he climbs, and toward which mankind reaches. If the protagonist in a play is to represent all these things to an audience, there are certain things that must be a part of him as a person in order to make the play a tragedy.

Anderson has gleaned eight principles from the tragedies of the past that he feels are still valid:

> 1. The story of a play must be the story of what happens within the mind or heart of a man or woman.
> 2. The story of a play must be a conflict, and specifically, a conflict between the forces of good and evil within a single person. The good and evil to be defined, or course, as the audience wants to see them.

> 3. The protagonist of a play must represent the forces of good and must win, or, if he has been evil, must yield to the forces of the good, and know himself defeated.
>
> 4. The protagonist of a play cannot be a perfect person. If he were he could not improve and he must come out at the end of the play a more admirable human being than he went in.
>
> 5. The protagonist of a play must be an exceptional person. . . . If a man be picked from the street to occupy the center of your stage, he must be so presented as to epitomize qualities which the audience can admire. Or he must indicate how admirable human qualities can be wasted or perverted—must define an ideal by falling short of it, or become symbolic of a whole class of men who are blocked by circumstances from achieving excellence in their lives.
>
> 6. Excellence on the stage is always moral excellence. A struggle on the part of the hero to better his material circumstances is of no interest in a play unless his character is somehow tried in the fire, and unless he comes out of his trial a better man.
>
> 7. The moral atmosphere of a play must be healthy. An audience will not endure the triumph of evil on the stage.
>
> 8. There are human qualities for which the race has a special liking on the stage: in a man, positive character, strength of conviction not shaken by opposition; in a woman, fidelity, passionate faith. There are qualities which are especially disliked on the stage: in a man, cowardice, any refusal to fight for a belief; in a woman, self-pity, or lack of pity for others, or an inclination toward the Cressid [unfaithfulness].[6]

These eight points are similar to Aristotle's description of the hero. Anderson arrived at them after a careful study of the heroes of the great tragedies, which is the same way Aristotle arrived at his descriptions.

In brief, then, to Anderson a tragedy must be a play about the conflict of good and evil within a character, according to the human truths defined by the audience. This character represents the forces of good and wins, or he represents the forces of evil and is defeated. The character must be exceptional in that he represents, in some manner,

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[6]Ibid., pp. 24-26.

human qualities. Into the conflict this character must throw all the force of his existence and come out a better man either for his defeat or his victory. Finally, Anderson lists qualities which people like and dislike in characters, and these too resemble the qualities mentioned by Aristotle.

When a playwright chooses a story he chooses one which he thinks will be of interest to his own time and place and to his audience, yet he picks one that expresses, also, something within himself about which he feels he must speak. Anderson feels that in a theatre devoted to man's exaltation, dramatic poetry is his greatest achievement. It is toward the heights of emotion and feeling and expression of the dramatic poetry reached by the classical writers that all playwrights have striven. Anderson feels that no modern writer has proved himself worthy to be compared with the Greeks or Shakespeare as writers of tragedy because not one of the moderns is a poet. Anderson writes that:

> The best prose in the world is inferior on the stage to the best poetry. It is the fashion, I know, to say that poetry is a matter of content and emotion, not of form, but this is said in an age of prose by prose writers who have not studied the effect of form on content or who wish to believe there is no limit to the scope of the form they have mastered. To me it is inescapable that prose is the language of information and poetry the language of emotion. Prose can be stretched to carry emotion and . . . occasionally rise to poetic heights. . . . But under the strain of an emotion the ordinary prose of our stage breaks down into inarticulateness, just as it coes in life.[7]

Anderson feels that playwrights must turn to poetry as the language of the play. The American theatre is capable of becoming an artistic and

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[7]Anderson. "A Prelude to Poetry In the Theatre," Winterset. (Washington, D. C., Anderson House, 1935), Preface, pp. iv-v.

beautiful and meaningful force in this world, but it is only a poet who can express the feelings of America today and who can make the drama what it can and should be.

In the modern theatre, however, the playwright who sets his play in other times and places, as the ancient writers did, is considered a romanticist or an historian. It is necessary that playwrights of the modern American theatre learn to express modern man's dreams, struggles, and hopes in the language of poetry that will reach the heights of emotion and exaltation. From his continual reference to plays of past ages it may be inferred that Anderson considers endurance the main test, however fallible, of the excellence and worth of a tragedy.

Plays in times other than that of the Greeks and Shakespeare have been written in the language of poetry about men representing human qualities fighting against forces that would suppress them. Why have they not succeeded? Aristotle speaks of the relief of emotions, the exaltation of the spirit, as a part of tragedy. Modern writers say that tragedy is essentially optimistic because of this ultimate ennobling.[8]

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[8]Anderson, Off Broadway, op. cit., pp. 28-30, 65-66, 90; New York Times, Oct. 17, 1937, XI, 1:6.

Eugene O'Neill: Mary B. Mullett, "The Extraordinary Story of Eugene O'Neill," The American Magazine, Nov., 1922, 94:34-5; J. M. Brown, "American Tragedy," Saturday Review of Literature, Aug. 6, 1949, 32:124; Carol Bird, "Eugene O'Neill—The Inner Man," Theatre Magazine, June, 1924, 39:9, 60.

Arthur Miller: New York Times, Feb. 27, 1949, II, 1:1; Miller, Collected Plays, (New York, The Viking Press, 1957), Introduction, p. 38.

All this is not possible unless a man, or the audience, becomes aware of what has been before. It is at the moment of recognition of what has gone before and what is inevitably to be that all emotions reach their height and man is freed from his struggle, because he no longer must fight, he then knows the right way. These moments are as important in modern plays as they have ever been. They are essential to a play and every element of the play must center around this one point, for as Anderson points out:

> The mainspring in the mechanism of a modern play is almost invariably a discovery by the hero of some element in his environment or in his own soul of which he has not been aware. . . . A play should lead up to and away from a central crisis, and this crisis should consist in a discovery by the leading character which has an indelible effect on his thought and emotion and completely alters his course of action. The leading character . . . must make the discovery, it must affect him emotionally; and it must alter his direction in the play. . . . Everything else in the play should be subordinated to this one episode—should lead up to or away from it.[9]

The scene of recognition, the point at which the leading character in a play discovers something about himself that changes his whole life, must be the focal point of a play. Anderson has said that this character must not be a perfect man because this discovery must make him a better man than he was before. An audience will not accept a play as valid tragedy in which the character becomes worse than he was at the beginning

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Tennessee Williams: New York Times, Dec. 7, 1947, VI, p. 19.
Elmer Rice: New York Times, Dec. 24, 1938, IX, 3:3; New York Times, Feb. 12, 1933, IX, 3:1.
Clifford Odets: Barry Hymans, "Twenty Years On a Tightrope," Theatre Arts Monthly, April, 1944, 39:68-70+; New York Times, Dec. 14, 1935, XI, 3:1.

[9]Anderson, "The Essence of Tragedy," Off Broadway, op. cit., pp. 57-60.

of the play. The character becomes a better person by discovering some error in himself which makes him suffer. By suffering he learns and does what he can to rectify the mistakes brought about by his error.

However, Anderson's main concern is that the essence of tragedy "is the spiritual awakening, or regeneration, of [the] hero."[10] It is to this that the audience responds. If this awakening is in terms of a higher moral value, they will accept the play as valid.

The playwright must prove to the audience that man is purified by suffering, that there is in man an urge to be better than he seems.

> The theater is much older than the doctrine of evolution, but its one faith, asseverated again and again for every age and every year, is a faith in evolution, in the reaching and the climb of men toward distant goals, glimpsed but never seen, perhaps never achieved, or achieved only to be passed impatiently on the way to a more distant horizon.[11]

The modern theatre, according to Anderson, must be an expression of and for the people. It must be the means whereby the dreams and hopes of man are symbolized. Tragedy is the dramatic form in which this symbolization occurs if certain emotional heights, which can be reached only through poetry, are intensified because a character, who is the representative of the human race, in his struggle between good and evil arrives at a point where he discovers something about himself, some error or fault, which causes the release of emotions. In addition, this character must in some way become a better man. Thereby, he

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[10] Ibid., p. 64.

[11] Ibid., p. 66.

symbolizes the human belief that man learns through suffering to reach for a higher goal. He symbolizes, too, that the struggles of man against powerful forces which would suppress him only make him greater, lift him higher, and place him closer to the ultimate goal for which mankind reaches.

Anderson also has said that "the only sources of human dignity and respect for the individual are the great arts, such as poetry, and the great religions, such as Christianity."[12] It is in the great poetry of the world that Anderson has seen the hope of the unconquerable spirit of man. The theme of tragedy has always been that of the victory of man over himself in the face of the defeat of annihilation. Tragedy tells people that men are better than they think they are. The poets have always shown man that he can dream, that he can succeed in what he reaches for. It is in this manner that Anderson connects poetry and tragedy, and claims poetry is the only possible language of tragedy. It might be noted here that none of the other playwrights in this study will deny the power of poetry, nor will they deny that Anderson is right in calling poetry the language of tragedy. Where they do disagree is on a definition of poetry, but as this is not part of the present study, let it be sufficient to say that poetry is a part of tragedy and cannot be separated from it.

Why is it that tragedy, in its expression of the exaltation of man, affects an audience? What good is this effect? The men who have

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[12]Anderson. Journey to Jerusalem. (Washington, D. C.: Anderson House, 1940), Preface, p. vi.

left understandable records of mankind have given this world dignity and meaning, for man gains both intellectually and morally from knowledge of man's triumphs and defeats. Anderson also said that,

> The nobler a man's interests the better citizen he is. And if you ask me to define nobility, I can answer only by opposites, that it is not buying and selling, or betting on the races. It might be symbolized by such a figure as a farmer boy in Western Pennsylvania plowing corn through a long afternoon and saying over and over to himself certain musical passages out of Marlowe's "Doctor Faustus." He might plow his corn none too well, he might be full of what we used to call original sin, but he carries in his brain a catalytic agent the presence of which fosters ripening and growth. It may be an impetus that will advance him or his son an infinitesimal step along the interminable ascent.[13]

So, Anderson feels that the good effect of tragedy is that having experienced it a person becomes better both intellectually and morally. By gaining nobler interests he becomes a better citizen. It does not matter who he is, if he has experienced this exaltation, this knowledge of the record of the nobility of man, he has within him the source for further struggle, for reaching and climbing higher and higher.

There are four things which constitute modern tragedy according to Maxwell Anderson. (1) Poetry is an inseparable part and without it the expression of the tragic situation is not possible. (2) An exceptional character, though not perfect, represents the human struggle between good and evil. In this struggle everything about him is centered toward the point at which the character recognizes within himself a flaw which causes him to suffer. However, by this suffering he

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[13]"The Arts as Motive Power," taken from a speech by Maxwell Anderson at the Founder's Day exercises at Carnegie Institute of Technology. New York Times, Oct. 17, 1937, XI, 1:6.

learns and becomes a better man. (3) The struggle between good and evil is the struggle of man against something within himself, therefore the play must be applicable to its own time and age. (4) The audience will accept the play only if it is applicable in its own time, and only if the central character becomes a better person for his experiences, and if by learning he can show them one more step toward the goal of highest morality toward which mankind is climbing.

CHAPTER III

EUGENE O'NEILL

Love is a flower
Forever blooming.
Beauty a fountain
Forever flowing
Upward into the source of sunshine
Upward into the azure heaven;
One with God but
Ever returning
To kiss the earth that the flower may live.[1]

Just as Maxwell Anderson was the proponent of the use of poetry in the theatre, Eugene O'Neill prescribed the use of masks. Just as Anderson felt that tragedy could not reach the emotional heights it should without the use of poetry, Eugene O'Neill felt that masks should and eventually will be used to gain the emotional and psychological depth that tragedy must reach in modern America.[2] Though O'Neill admitted the right of any style or form of presentation to appear in the theatre, he himself, claiming to be a melting-pot for many forms, denied the validity of plays in the so-called realistic style as effective drama. He felt that too much of this century had been spent

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[1]J. M. Brown. Upstage. (New York, W. W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1930), p. 74. (Quoted from The Fountain by Eugene O'Neill.)

[2]Eugene O'Neill, "Memoranda On Masks," The American Spectator, Vol. 1:3,2, Nov., 1932.

by the theatre on portraying the triviality of the surface aspects of life.[3] Strindberg, whose plays had the greatest influence in showing O'Neill what modern drama could be, was considered by O'Neill to be the greatest interpreter of spiritual conflicts. O'Neill felt this type of conflict should constitute the drama of today.[4]

O'Neill did not designate the use of masks for all plays, certainly not realistic plays, but he did ask for their use in plays of spiritual conflict and psychological struggle, which go below the surface into the parts of life not seen by other men. It is here that the mask should be used as the symbol of the true reality which is beneath the surface reality.[5]

At one time O'Neill said that he did not think it was possible to write anything of value or understanding about the present. O'Neill felt that the present is so mixed up with superficial values that it is impossible to know what is important.[6] When he set out to write a modern tragedy based on the classical concept of tragedy, he placed Mourning Becomes Electra in the period of the Civil War. This was done in order that the period might be a mask of time and space that would allow the audience to grasp at once the truth of the drama which was

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[3]New York Times, Jan. 6, 1924, VII, 1:1.

[4]Ibid.; Ira N. Hayward, "Strindberg's Influence on Eugene O'Neill," Poet Lore, Dec. 1928, 39:596-604.

[5]O'Neill, "Second Thoughts," The American Spectator, Vol. I, 2:2, Dec., 1932.

[6]New York Times, Oct. 6, 1946, II, 1:5.

the struggle of life.[7] At other times he wrote tragedy of times, places, and people as they exist, hoping that their physical displacement might be great enough or small enough for the audience to see the truth of the drama.[8]

The struggle of life is the most important aspect of drama to O'Neill.[9] What form of presentation this takes is not of the greatest importance, according to O'Neill, nor is the length of the story, which should be as short or as long as necessary to tell the story. There are certain rules which must inevitably enter into the production of an art. O'Neill felt these rules must be learned before they can be broken, and a knowledge of them is necessary even though the writer does not follow the traditions of the theatre.[10] For himself, O'Neill considered Strindberg's conception of what modern theatre can present to be of importance, but for the ultimate purpose behind theatre, O'Neill, like the other writers, seems to have turned to Aristotle and the classical Greeks.[11]

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[7]O'Neill, "Working Notes and Extracts From a Fragmentary Work Diary," European Theories of the Drama, ed., Barrett H. Clark, (New York, Crown Publishers, Inc., 1947), p. 531.

[8]Carol Bird, "Eugene O'Neill--The Inner Man," Theatre Magazine, June, 1924, 39:9,60.

[9]O. M. Sayler, "The Real Eugene O'Neill," Century Magazine, 103: 341-349, Jan., 1922; New York Times, May 11, 1924, IX, 5:2.

[10]S. J. Woolf, "Eugene O'Neill Returns After Twelve Years," New York Times, Sept. 5, 1946, VI, p. 11. O'Neill referred to the schools of dramaturgic philosophy of past ages which set up certain rules for the writing of tragedy.

[11]New York Times, Jan. 6, 1924, VII, 1:1. A. H. Quinn. A History of the American Drama From the Civil War to the Present Day, Vol. II, (New York, Harper & Bros., Publishers, 1927), p. 149. Nathan Boyd, et al., eds., The American Spectator Yearbook. (New York, Frederick A. Stokes Co., 1934), pp. 165-7.

Maxwell Anderson considered poetry to be most important in tragedy. O'Neill agreed but thought the poetry of a play should come through the use of the spoken word to bring about original rhythms of beauty. In fact, O'Neill said that his plays were primarily written for the ear; the sound and rhythm of the dialogue becoming structurally like a musical composition. He used words to tell what people think and feel. He found in speech a basic rhythm, which is the way theatre must reach the people—in their own language, thoughts, terms, and rhythm.[12] This rhythm of poetry is a means of bringing into a modern tragedy the mysteries of life. It is a means of building the audience's emotional response to a play by drawing together all technical, physical and mental aspects of the play into one perfect understanding of the exaltation of man. O'Neill felt this should be the only end of tragedy. In addition, O'Neill said:

> I'm always, always trying to interpret life in terms of lives, never just in terms of character. I'm always acutely conscious of the Force behind—(Fate, God, our biological past creating our present, whatever one calls it—Mystery, certainly)—and of the one eternal tragedy of Man in his glorious, self-destructive struggle to make the Force express him instead of being, as are animals, an infinitesimal incident in its expression. And my profound conviction is that this is the only subject worth writing about and that it is possible—or can be—to develop a tragic expression in terms of transfigured modern values and symbols in the theatre which may to some degree bring home to members of a modern audience their ennobling identity with the tragic figures on the stage. Of course, this is very much of a dream, and the Greek dream in tragedy is the noblest ever.[13]

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[12]Quinn, Ibid. New York Times, Mar. 3, 1929, VIII, 4:6. John Anderson, "Eugene O'Neill," Theatre Arts Monthly, Nov., 1931, 15:938-46.

[13]Quinn, Ibid.

For O'Neill the character in a tragedy must not be the reflection of a dramatic idea, but of life. There is always some force with which man is struggling to make part of him rather than to be an emanation of it. To O'Neill this struggle is the only subject worth writing about for the modern theatre, and it must be discussed in terms of contemporary values and ideas.

In order to bring the tragedy of the Greeks to the modern stage O'Neill compared the idea of Greek fate to a modern psychological concept. Along with this concept a certain sense of distance and perspective must be present in the plays of the modern stage.[14] He attempted to exploit this concept in Mourning Becomes Electra. O'Neill later suggested that ways of presenting this comparative concept might be the using of stylized play-forms, period plays, masks, or even showing to the theatre audience a type of life they may never have seen before. The important thing is life. "I am never the advocate of anything in a play—except humanity toward Humanity."[15]

O'Neill tried to arouse the compassion of his audience for the unfortunate, suffering, and oppressed. He wrote of life as he saw it exist for many people.[16] This explains O'Neill's choice of characters for most of his plays. He felt that there is dramatic material in the

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[14]O'Neill, "Working Notes and Extracts from a Fragmentary Work Diary," European Theories of the Drama, ed., Barrett H. Clark, (New York, Crown Publishers, Inc., 1947), pp. 530, 533, 536.

[15]New York Times, May 11, 1924, IX, 5:2.

[16]Bird, "Eugene O'Neill—The Inner Man," op. cit.

lives of oppressed people because they are direct and sincere in both what they do and say. They don't hide behind the banal surface aspects of society; their lives are exposed to view.[17] Because of this they can be used more freely to portray life and its struggles to the American audience:

> What is the theatre for if not to show man's struggle, whether he is black, green, orange, or white, to conquer life; his effort to give it meaning? Doesn't that struggle, that endless effort to conquer life, show that man loves life? It may conquer him, but it never beats him, else he would have stopped struggling 10,000 years ago. The dramatist does not present life, but interprets it within the limitations of his vision. . . . When a dramatist interprets the world, and thus creates his own world, he uses the human soul, all life if you like, as a keyboard. . . . I don't think it is the aim of the dramatist to be "true to life," but to be true to himself, to his vision, which may be of life treated as a fairy tale, or as a dream.[18]

O'Neill thus said, in effect, that there is no reason for the theatre to exist if it is not to show man's attempt to win a place in life and to make it worth-while. This man can be of any culture; it is the struggle that is important. By this struggle man proves his love of life and that no matter how life tries, it can never conquer him. In presenting the struggle, the dramatist must write as he sees life. He may use any part of life or all of life to show his interpretation of this eternal struggle, and he may use any form he chooses to tell it.

O'Neill felt that American playwrights must bring the American struggle of life to the American people. American lives and stories are dramatic and closely allied to some of the very deepest rhythms of

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[17] Ibid.

[18] Ibid.

life, which is the type of thing O'Neill wanted to see on the stage.[19] He felt that the aims of this country are a portrait of the aims of man and that tragedy is so native to this country that each person in it possesses a tragic element. O'Neill believes in the optimism of tragedy and feels that any work of art is a happy thing. (Maxwell Anderson also treated this same idea, which was described in Chapter I.) America is built on the hope of tragedy and is therefore essentially a work of art. O'Neill also said:

> To me there are no good people or bad people, just people. The same with deeds. "Good" and "evil" are stupidities, as misleading and outworn fetiches as Brutus Jones' silver bullet.[20]

O'Neill felt that any American may be the subject of tragedy, if his life can be shown to fit the truth of life. (It should be noted that most of the playwrights in this study felt tragedy should take a moral position and that good and evil should be the opposing forces in the struggle.) O'Neill, however, said that life itself is the opposing force and not the superficial aspects of good and evil.[21] O'Neill did

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[19]Anderson, "Eugene O'Neill," op. cit.

[20]Allan Gates Halline, ed. American Plays. (New York, American Book Company, 1935). From an interview published in the Philadelphia Public Ledger, Jan. 22, 1922, and here included in the introduction to Eugene O'Neill's Great God Brown.

[21]Anderson, "Temple of Democracy," Ladies Home Journal, Feb., 1947, 64:34-5+; also, Off Broadway, op. cit., pp. 24-26, 29-30, 32-34.
Miller, Collected Plays, op. cit., pp. 42-45; New York Times, Feb. 27, 1949, II, 1:1; also, "On Social Plays," A View From the Bridge, (New York, The Viking Press, 1955), preface, pp. 9-11.
Williams, "The Timeless World of a Play," Theatre Arts Monthly, May, 1944, 39:32-3+.
"The Ideal Stage Situation," Theatre Magazine, Oct. 1915, 22:179+.
Rice, "American Theatre and the Human Spirit," Saturday Review of Literature, Dec. 17, 1955.

admit that in a tragedy man should not lose his struggle. "The whole secret of human happiness is summed up in a sentence that even a child can understand. The sentence? 'For what shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?'"[22] A man who pursues the unattainable in life will be defeated, but it is his struggle that is his success; because when a person fights forces inside and outside himself for a better future, he attains a spiritual significance that is inspiring and exhilarating.[23] The inevitable drama of such a life must be the basis of expression in the theatre, for Sayler quotes O'Neill as saying:

> The theatre is to me, . . . is life--the substance and interpretation of life. . . . Life, is a struggle, often, if not usually, unsuccessful struggle, for most of us have something within us which prevents us from accomplishing what we dream and desire. And then, as we progress, we are always seeing farther than we can reach.[24]

O'Neill felt most men have within them a barrier to accomplishment. This is the tragic flaw in every man. Yet, because man continues to struggle, O'Neill felt that he moves forward, and as he moves forward he moves his goal higher and farther away.

Why then does tragedy move an audience to response? O'Neill believed that it is because only the tragic has the greatest beauty--truth. Truth is the meaning and the hope of life. It is only in the

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[22]Hamilton Basso, "The Tragic Sense," New Yorker, Mar. 6, 1948, 24:34-84.

[23]Mullett, op. cit.

[24]O. M. Sayler, "The Real Eugene O'Neill," Century Magazine, Jan., 1922, 103:341-9.

unattainable that man achieves a hope which is the goal of his life and the glory of his death. By living and dying for this unattainable hope man attains himself.[25]

In tragedy, according to O'Neill as quoted by Mary Mullett, an audience is appealed to through the emotions. Emotions, because they are instinctive, are the result of the experiences of each person's life, and the experiences of the whole human race since the beginning of time.[26] Emotions can sometimes be a better guide than thoughts, because thoughts are surface reactions brought about by an individual's reaction to society, while emotions are the very depth of life. Because truth goes deep, it will be reached by an appeal to the emotions. The truth is the struggle of everyone to find a place where he "belongs" in life.

Understanding one another can be one way in which men may gain their goals. O'Neill felt, as Carol Bird quoted, that the following should be the effect of tragedy on an audience:

> If they are inspired to help these unhappy brothers, the writing and producing of a so-called tragic play is worthwhile. . . . People who have suffered do not need these reminders. They already feel divine compassion. But there are those who have not been touched by misery. These may well suffer, by proxy, for a few hours in a theatre. It will do them good. It will have a humanizing effect. Thus to taste vicariously a bit of life's bitterness. . . . As for this type of play having a depressing effect or accentuating the futility of human endeavor, I do not

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[25]J. T. Shipley. Guide To Great Plays. (Washington, D. C., Public Affairs Press, 1956), p. 470. From a New York Tribune (Feb. 13, 1921) article on Eugene O'Neill's Diff'rent.

[26]Mullett, op. cit.

> agree with any such opinion. We should feel exalted to think that there is something—some vital, unquenchable flame in man which makes him triumph over his miseries—over life itself. Dying, he is still victorious. The realization of this should exalt, not depress.[27]

O'Neill has already been quoted as saying that the only thing he advocated in any play was "humanity toward Humanity." The above statement further supports this view. By seeing the struggle of life in others, by suffering empathically in the theatre, those who have not struggled may be inspired to help those who struggle, and so help mankind in his reach for a higher goal. A play in the tragic mold should not be depressing or pessimistic. It should make the audience feel that there is greatness in man that makes him continue to conquer life and continue to reach for a greater spiritual significance. This is exalting to an audience and to mankind.[28]

In summary, Eugene O'Neill felt that the theatre interprets life and in modern America it should interpret the life of modern America. Any man who will struggle to reach for the unattainable dream may be the subject of this interpretation of life. This presentation of life will inevitably be a portrayal of the truths of life. The only dramatic form which can possibly comprise these things is tragedy, because tragedy is the portrayal of the basic truths of the human race. The theatre must present tragedy and all the things that tragedy means so that men may be inspired to help others in their struggle to attain

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[27]Bird, op. cit.

[28]Ibid.

significance. O'Neill advocated no specific form or style for writing tragedy. However, he did want to see more plays calling for the use of masks. An important contribution to modern tragedy is O'Neill's comparison of the Greek idea of fate with a modern psychological concept.

Modern American tragedy, according to O'Neill, consists of a character who struggles to reach a goal which is unattainable because of some lack in himself. It portrays man searching for the truth which is his life and hope. The effect of tragedy is to inspire its audience to aid others in the struggle to attain a higher spiritual significance.

CHAPTER IV

ARTHUR MILLER

Arthur Miller came into the dramatic spotlight in the middle of the 1940's. His views on modern theatre are based on those held by Aristotle and influenced by nineteenth century Germanic thought and expression. Miller is also an admirer of the dramatic writing techniques of Ibsen. In both his dramatic and non-dramatic writings, the influence of Hegel's theory of free will as opposed to strict determinism is evident.

Like many modern American playwrights, Miller feels that each age must answer its own needs and create its own definitions. He believes that determinism is a contradiction of the purpose of drama. A tragic hero, according to Miller, is inconceivable in a drama that is bounded by the idea of an inescapable trap.[1] This is not because people would rather have a hero and a victory. It is because the history of man has been an overthrowing of one deterministic philosophy by another. Miller believes that without free will it is inconceivable that man could overthrow ideas no longer necessary to life. Just as life cannot stop changing, drama cannot stop changing. And for each

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[1]Arthur Miller. Collected Plays. (New York, The Viking Press, 1957), Introduction, Part VII, p. 54.

age "a new poem will appear because a new balance has been struck which embraces both determinism and the paradox of will."[2]

According to Miller, the plot of a tragedy is influenced by conflict and morality.[3] This concept is similar to the ideas presented by Aristotle in the Poetics. The form or style of a play depends on its expression of conflict and morality. Form and content of a play are inseparable. Miller says that form is determined by the nature of the content:

> The play will either be intent upon rounding out the characters by virtue of its complete answers to the common questions, or will substitute answers to a more limited group of questions which, instead of being "human," are thematic and are designed to form a symbol of meaning rather than an apparency of the "real."[4]

Miller says that the style of a play will be determined by whether the playwright chooses to portray the realities of life or to symbolize attitudes toward life. Style and form are therefore important only as tools to achieve the playwright's purpose of bringing out living thoughts and feelings.

According to Miller, the language of the play is an outgrowth of its thoughts and feelings. Since poetry is the language of universal thought and emotion, then poetic form must be a part of the expression of life which is the purpose of tragedy.[5] Miller believes that the

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[2]Ibid., p. 55.

[3]Ibid., pp. 3-8, 46, 52.

[4]Ibid., Part I, p. 5.

[5]A compilation of ideas presented in Arthur Miller's "On Social Plays," A View From the Bridge, (New York, The Viking Press, 1955), Preface, p. 7; and Collected Plays, op. cit., pp. 8, 12, 47, 52-55.

evolutionary quality of life, as developed in Ibsen's plays, must be a part of modern drama because an awareness of the process by which the present has arrived is an essential part of the consciousness of life. And to Miller the chief end of drama is the creation of a higher consciousness of life and not merely a subjective attack on the nerves and feelings of the audience.

Miller looks at the dramatic in terms of an organic and dynamic approach.[6] The plot must be an organic whole composed of all the Aristotelian elements; the theme must be organic in its application to mankind. What is dynamic and applicable in life will be so on the stage.

Miller arrives at his play by carefully analyzing a subject and its results before developing a plot. In developing the plot of a play a certain sense of the moral (the right and wrong, the good and evil) must be included for the drama to be of any consequence to an audience. Aristotle explained that a truly great tragedy must be basically morally right for the audience. The conflict of a tragedy is the conflict between evil and good, wrong and right. It is the struggle of these opposites within a man that produces the tragic conflict. It is the recognition of that struggle that makes a man rise up, gain stature, and become worthy of the heights he must scale to make the struggle worth-while.

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[6]Notes on "plot" gathered from the following: Miller, Collected Plays, op. cit., Part I, pp. 1, 5; Part III, pp. 16, 19, 22; Part VI, pp. 42-45; Part VII, pp. 46-47, 53-55, and A View From the Bridge, op. cit., pp. 10-13. New York Times, Feb. 27, 1949, II, 1:1.

It is not possible to include all of life in the theme of one play, but there is always some element of morality that must enter in as the consequences of actions performed, and the audience must see and know these consequences. A play must answer the questions of how man is to live and derive his values. Miller says that it is necessary for a play to ask a man what he has done for the world and it must weigh his life as if it were on trial.[7]

Miller believes, as did Aristotle, that conflict is an essential part of tragedy, and, further, that there is sufficient evidence that this conflict is worth-while for the character.

> I understand the symbolic meaning of a character and his career to consist of the kind of commitment he makes to life or refuses to make, the kind of challenge he accepts and the kind he can pass by. . . . [The component parts of a play are aimed] all to the end that that moment of commitment be brought forth, that moment when, in my eyes, a man differentiates himself from every other man, that moment when out of a sky full of stars he fixes on one star. . . . The less capable a man is of walking away from the central conflict of the play, the closer he approaches a tragic existence.[8]

To put it more clearly, the meaning behind a character and his life depends on the stand he takes or refuses to take in life. Miller feels that there is a point in any man's life from which he cannot turn. All the parts of a play should be centered toward the moment when the challenge is accepted. When a man can no longer refuse to commit himself on the main theme of a play, the closer he is to being a tragic hero. When all parts of a play are centered on the hero's commitment,

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[7]New York Times, Feb. 5, 1950, II, 1:6.

[8]Miller, Collected Plays, op. cit., Part I, p. 7.

the necessity arises for scenes of high and open emotion that express the rise toward this point. A play, therefore, must be constructed toward a climax rather than being merely the evocation of a mood or a huge spectacle.[9] There can be no separation of form and content. A tragedy must be constructed with all parts centered toward the climax.

The people of the twentieth century are capable of expressing life in terms of great tragedy. The social life of the modern world is coming closer to an approximation of the Greek social life that made possible the ancient tragedies.[10] Ancient Greek drama was a social drama in which the individual was a whole man only in so far as he was a part of society. The world today has a more complex social structure and more complex standards than did the Grecian civilization.

People therefore think that a man today is not capable of reaching the heights of the tragedy of the Greeks and the Elizabethans. When the quest of tragedy is not involved, people never hesitate to attribute to all men, well-placed or not, the same mental processes. Thus any man can be considered capable of tragic action.[11] If the exaltation of tragic action could only be felt by the high-bred person, then it is not probable that tragedy could be the favorite form of drama for the mass of mankind through history.

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[9]Ibid., pp. 7-8.

[10]Miller, A View From the Bridge, op. cit., p. 14.

[11]New York Times, Feb. 27, 1949, II, 1:1. "Tragedy and the Common Man" is also included as the preface to a published edition of Death of a Salesman by Arthur Miller.

> In the sense of having been initiated by the hero himself, the tale always reveals what has been called his "tragic flaw," a failing that is not peculiar to grand or elevated characters. Nor is it necessarily a weakness. The flaw, or crack in the character, is really nothing—and need be nothing, but his inherent unwillingness to remain passive in the face of what he conceives to be a challenge to his dignity, his image of his rightful status.[12]

Miller says the "tragic flaw" is not restricted to those people of rank and that any man may have that flaw. And it need not be a weakness. It may be the inability of a character to turn his back on a challenge. Here Clifford Odets and Arthur Miller share closely the same concept of a tragic hero as a man who must resist any threat to his dignity.

Miller feels that generally the requirements of a tragic figure have not changed through the years. It is the outlook of the audience that changes. It is possible that people are unable to see tragedy in the society in which they live. (Anderson also believes this and feels that the theatre must show man the tragedy about him and the ultimate ennobling that results from tragedy.[13]) Yet, Miller adds, the tragic hero must be one who is recognized theoretically and socially as one who is capable of representing the society and of being the heroic questioner of life. He must be recognized, not as a misfit or a complainer, but as one who is questioning the "way things are" in order to discover an ultimate truth or way of life. It is in the realization of each man as a part of society and as an individual that the tragic

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[12]Ibid.

[13]Anderson, Off Broadway, op. cit., pp. 45, 53, 90-91.

figure will be found. The criteria of the modern concept of the hero must be created from the modern man.[14]

Tragedy in modern America must not be a separate entity from the civilization in which it takes place. Miller says that though Aristotle spoke of a fall from heights of which no common man is capable, Aristotle need not be considered judge of these times any more than Hippocrates would be allowed to practice his medicine today. Aristotle lived in a slave society. When so many people (as slaves) are given no choice in life, then, as Miller says, it is impossible to see tragedy in any but the higher ranks of society. But, Miller adds this comment:

> There is a legitimate question of stature here, but none of rank, which is so often confused with it. So long as the hero may be said to have had alternatives of a magnitude to have materially changed the course of his life, it seems to me that in this respect at least, he cannot be debarred from the heroic role. The question of rank is significant to me only as it reflects the question of social application of the hero's career . . . the questions, in short, whose answers define humanity and the right way to live so that the world is a home, instead of a battleground or a fog in which disembodied spirits pass each other in an endless twilight.[15]

Thus Miller says for the modern stage that a man can be refused acknowledgement as a hero on the basis of social rank but not on that of stature.

It would seem logical to say that to insist upon rank for the tragic hero is merely clinging to the mores of a culture that no longer

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[14]A compilation of ideas presented in: New York Times, Feb. 27, 1949, II, 1:1; Miller, A View From the Bridge, op. cit., pp. 14-15, and Collected Plays, op. cit., Part IV, pp. 30-31.

[15]Miller, Collected plays, ibid.

exists. For it follows that if rank or nobility of character are indispensible to tragedy, then the problems of those with social rank are the only problems to be discussed in tragedy. "But surely the right of one monarch to capture the domain from another no longer raises our passion, nor are our concepts of justice what they were to the mind of an Elizabethan king."[16] It is the questioning, claims Miller, the tearing apart of what man holds to be secure that gives a man stature. Rank is not important in this day of the common man, it is the stature man attains in his attempts to answer the questions of life that makes a tragic hero.

> The Greeks could probe the very heavenly origin of their ways and return to confirm the rightness of laws. And Job could face God in anger, demanding his right and end in submission. But for a moment everything is in suspension, nothing is accepted, and in this stretching and tearing apart of the cosmos, in the very action of so doing, the character gains "size," the tragic stature which is spuriously attached to the royal or the high-born in our minds. The commonest of men may take on that stature to the extent of his willingness to throw all he has into the contest, the battle to secure his rightful place in his world.[17]

In other words Miller says it is the point at which man questions all that "seems-to-be" that he gains the tragic stature of which he is capable.

One of the most important parts of a tragedy to Aristotle was the scene of recognition.[18] No one, through the years, has denied this

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[16]New York Times, Feb. 27, 1949, II, 1:1.

[17]Ibid.

[18]S. H. Butcher, Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art, (New York, Dover Publications Inc., 1951), pp. 40-41.

importance, perhaps because in recognition of the truth surrounding him, man finds an awareness of himself. Miller feels that as a man comes to know himself he must experience to his very core the passion of his life. He must question his whole existence and rise above the life that is stepping over him and live what is left with his knowledge of himself.[19] If a man is capable of doing this, his stature cannot be denied, even though he be of low social rank.

> It matters not at all whether a modern play concerns itself with a grocer or a president if the intensity of the hero's commitment to his course is less than the maximum possible. It matters not at all whether the hero falls from a great height or a small one, whether he is highly conscious or only dimly aware of what is happening, whether his pride brings the fall or an unseen pattern written behind clouds; if the intensity, the human passion to surpass his given bounds, the fanatic insistence upon his self-conceived role—if these are not present there can only be an outline of tragedy but no living thing.[20]

This desire to reach the goal toward which he has been striving, then face it and recognize it, will determine a tragic hero. For it is the seeking that leads a man to heights and eventually causes his fall. However, as a man falls, it is his awareness of what has happened, a realization of the mistakes or faults that led to his fall, that creates a response in others. A man need not have the intellectual fluency to verbalize his situation to be aware of what has happened to him. Miller says:

> It seems to me that there is of necessity a severe limitation of self-awareness in any character, even the most knowing, which serves to define him as a character, and more that this very

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[19]Miller, A View From the Bridge, op. cit., pp. 8-10.

[20]Miller, Collected Plays, op. cit., Part IV, p. 33.

> limit serves to complete the tragedy, and indeed to make it at all possible. Complete consciousness is possible only in a play about forces, like Prometheus, but not in a play about people.[21]

There must be a limit to the degree to which a man can recognize his faults or mistakes and become aware of his situation, says Miller. The destruction of temporal necessity in a play emphasizes the elements of existence which in life are not visible or ordinarily felt with equal power. It is in the time magnified that the important aspects of men are seen: the fate and career of the hero rather than his private characteristics, his social and symbolic side. Much of the essence of tragedy, to Miller, is in the effect that a tragic situation has on the hero ultimately and on the audience emphathically. If an audience can see the whole man only as an individual in society, then they are capable of feeling the tragic victory.[22] The answers to the questions asked in a tragedy will be answers that apply to the whole society and not just the individual.[23]

As a follower of Aristotle, Arthur Miller considers one of the most important parts of tragedy to be its cathartic element ". . . through pity and fear effecting the proper purgation of these emotions."[24] It is by this element of catharsis that a play of the modern day is often judged. And it is the catharsis of emotions (built up in response to

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[21]Ibid., p. 35.

[22]Ibid., pp. 33-35.

[23]Compare this entire concept with Tennessee Williams' "Timeless World" theory: New York Times, Jan. 14, 1951, II, 1:4.

[24]Butcher, "Aristotle's Poetics," op. cit., p. 23.

the stature and intensity of the tragic conflict) that results in the feeling of uplift and optimism.

In his article "Tragedy and the Common Man,"[25] Arthur Miller says that as a general rule he thinks the tragic feeling is evoked for an audience when they are in the presence of a character who is willing to fight for his personal dignity. In fighting, he must question the environment which has been considered stable. In this questioning, fear for the stability of life is aroused in an audience. Yet, from this questioning they learn. The consequence of man's need to evaluate himself justly is tragedy, says Miller, but the discovery of the moral law is the enlightenment of tragedy and shows the way to the destruction of the enemies of man's freedom.

> The tragic right is a condition of life, a condition in which the human personality is able to flower and realize itself. The wrong is the condition which suppresses man, perverts the flowing of his love and creative instinct. Tragedy enlightens--and it must, in that it points the heroic finger at the enemy of man's freedom. The thrust for freedom is the quality in tragedy which exalts. The revolutionary questioning of the stable environment is what terrifies.[26]

Expressing doubt of the status quo terrifies, says Miller, but the attempt to create a new life is that which exalts the spectator.

Arthur Miller feels that optimism is part of the effect of tragedy and cannot be separated from it. In the optimism of tragedy Miller sees a great hope for mankind:

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[25]New York Times, Feb. 27, 1949, II, 1:1.

[26]Ibid.

> There is a misconception of tragedy with which I have been struck. . . . It is the idea that tragedy is of necessity allied with pessimism. . . . In truth tragedy implies more optimism in its author than does comedy, and . . . its final result ought to be the reinforcement of the onlooker's brightest opinions of the human animal. For, if it is true to say that in essence the tragic hero is intent upon claiming his whole due as a personality, and if this struggle must be total and without reservation, then it automatically demonstrates the indestructible will of man to achieve his humanity.[27]

Miller says, in effect, that if a tragic hero is a man who will fight for his "rightful" position in society, and who fights without reserve of will or strength, then the indestructible will of man to grow and achieve the ultimate in his life is proved and the optimism that he will continue to grow and reach is achieved.

It is the audience that accepts or rejects a play. Without the audience the theatre and drama would not exist. As a member of the audience, each person sees what is on the stage not only through his own eyes but through the eyes of others.[28] Standards of right and wrong, good taste and bad, are weighed with the social standards, and a truth is seen in the light of conventional reaction. Each member of the audience has some concept, hope, or anxiety which is his alone as an individual; "and in this respect at least the function of a play is to reveal him to himself so that he may touch others by virtue of the revelation of his mutuality with them."[29]

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[27] Ibid.

[28] Miller, Collected Plays, op. cit., Part II, pp. 10-11.

[29] Ibid., p. 11.

> The problem of art is . . . to go beyond and discover the total truths of the making of man in the interaction of his inherited nature with the Society in which he must struggle to mature—and to so symbolize the disparate as to create "beauty," which is the ultimate organization of reality.[30]

In summary, Arthur Miller believes that modern tragedy is the presentation of a social individual who will face the challenge to his dignity as a human being, search for a goal, ask the question of the right way to live, focus his whole life and being on the answers and become aware or conscious of his life and manner of living. The intensity of his emotions at this point break, and this man, this social individual, is overcome. Because he is conscious of what he has been and what he is becoming he is enlightened. Pity and fear are aroused in the audience by the questioning of the supposed stability of their lives, yet with the realization of new goals, these emotions are purged, and the exaltation of the man in his enlightenment becomes the exaltation of the audience.

In addition, Miller feels that the essential purpose of the theatre as an art is the expression of the living thoughts and feelings of man as a social being. An appeal to the emotions of an audience through rhythm, melody, and language is the basic means of this expression. Further, any man who is a member of society, who is capable of making a commitment to life, of questioning his own way of life, is capable of reaching the heights of tragedy regardless of his rank in society.

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[30]W. David Sievers, Freud On Broadway, (New York, Hermitage House, 1955), p. 396.

CHAPTER V

TENNESSEE WILLIAMS

Tennessee Williams has said that Garcia Lorca and Anton Chekhov are his favorite playwrights and have probably influenced his work more than others.[1] He has called Chekhov his dramaturgic mentor. Chekhov wrote, not to explain or show the way, but to give people a picture of themselves so that they might understand and choose their own course of reform.[2] Lincoln Barnett quotes Tennessee Williams as observing:

> Every artist has a basic premise pervading his whole life . . . and that premise can provide the impulse to everything he creates. For me the dominating premise has been the need for understanding and tenderness and fortitude among individuals trapped by circumstance.[3]

Further, Chekhov insisted on telling the truth to people about themselves without embellishment or shadow.[4] Williams accepted this concept and its application to the theatre. At one time he said that the theatre has

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[1]New York Times, Dec. 7, 1947, VI, p. 19.

[2]David Magarshack, Chekhov, (New York, Grove Press, 1952), pp. 371-2; and Chekhov the Dramatist, (London, John Lehmann, 1952), p. 14. S. S. Koteliansky, trans. and ed. Anton Tchekhov, Literary and Theatrical Reminiscences, (London, George Routledge & Sons, Ltd., 1927).

[3]Lincoln Barnett, "Tennessee Williams," Life, Feb. 16, 1948, 24:113-4.

[4]Magarshack, Chekhov, op. cit., pp. 173-4, 371, and Chekhov the Dramatist, op. cit., pp. 33-35.

been called the charlatan of the arts, but it is the one art in which charlatanism is most easily detected.[5] In further support of this he said that the playwright has no chance for success unless he says intelligibly what he has to say and unless it is worth saying. Even the cheapest entertainment is honest because anything that professes to do what it does do is honest. There are too many critical and penetrating eyes cast in the direction of the stage for anyone to succeed with dishonesty.

If Aristotle's six elements of tragedy are used as a pattern for explanation, perhaps an understanding of Williams' attitude toward tragedy can be attained.

In the Poetics, Aristotle cited six elements which compose tragedy: plot, character, thought, diction, melody, and spectacle.[6] Williams says, "My chief aim in playwriting is the creation of character. I have always had a deep feeling for the mystic in life, and essentially my plays have been an effort to explain the beauty and meaning in the confusion of living."[7] Williams believes that the use of character and its development is primarily to explain and discuss the vital questions of mankind. He considers that any plot, incident, or action in a play should be an emanation of the character and an explanation of the character in its development. Williams feels that his play,

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[5]New York Times, Oct. 3, 1948, II, 1:5.

[6]Butcher, trans., "Aristotle's Poetics," op. cit., p. 29.

[7]New York Times, Dec. 7, 1947, VI, p. 19.

The Glass Menagerie, holds its audience through the revelation of quiet and ordinary truths in character, rather than by incident or situation.[8]

In the "Afterword" to Camino Real, Williams explains his approach to plot. He says that dynamic and organic are the two terms that define the dramatic values he most appreciates.[9] Aristotle said that the objects of artistic imitation are men in action,[10] men represented as either better or worse than in real life, or as they are. Tennessee Williams uses the word dynamic to describe his choice of situations of "men in action." Williams wrote:

> It is only in his work that an artist can find reality and satisfaction, for the actual world is less intense then the world of his invention and consequently his life, without recourse to violent disorder, does not seem very substantial. . . . Then what is good? The obsessive interest in human affairs, plus a certain amount of compassion and moral conviction, that first made the experience of living something that must be translated into pigment or music or bodily movement or poetry or prose or anything that's dynamic and expressive—that's what's good for you if you're at all serious in your aims.[11]

According to Tennessee Williams, anything having to do with the life of man which is dynamic and expressive, or can be made to appear so, should be the subject matter of the playwright. It is only in this expression of man that the playwright finds truth and reality because of the magnification of these minute details.[12]

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[8]New York Times, Dec. 7, 1947, VI, p. 19.

[9]Williams, "Foreword . . . And Afterword," Theatre Arts Monthly, Aug. 1954, 38:34-5.

[10]Butcher, "Aristotle's Poetics," op. cit., p. 11.

[11]Williams, The Glass Menagerie, (New York, The New Classics New Directions, 1949), "The Catastrophe of Success," (first published in the New York Times, later reprinted in Story, and now included as an introduction to the edition), pp. xvi-xix.

[12]Rephrased in "The Timeless World of a Play," New York Times, Jan. 14, 1951, II, 1:4.

It is more difficult to discover what Williams means by organic. Aristotle used the word in connection with the unified action of the plot.[13] Another use of the word also may be found in the Poetics where Aristotle says that the poet represents not fact, but what might happen: what a certain person is bound to do or say in a given situation.[14] As Williams himself says, "I think of writing as something more organic than words, something close to being and action."[15]

Tennessee Williams has said very little about the heroes and heroines in his plays except to deny that he writes about frustrated people, saying there is nothing frustrated about anyone who loves with such white hot intensity that it alters the whole direction of his life.[16] Williams' dominating premise for the creation of a play is that there is need for understanding and tenderness and fortitude among and for individuals who are trapped by circumstances. Though the "Catastrophe of Success" was written to describe Tennessee Williams' own reaction to his sudden success and fame, it contains several explanations of possible tragic heroes which are worth examination.

> Life should require a certain minimal effort . . . . Nobody should have to clean up anybody else's mess in this world. It is terribly bad for both parties, but probably worse for the one receiving the service. . . . We are like a man who has bought a great amount of

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[13]Butcher, "Aristotle's Poetics," op. cit., p. 35.

[14]Ibid.

[15]Williams, "Person-to-Person," Cat On A Hot Tin Roof, (New York, A New Directions Book, 1955), Preface, p. viii.

[16]New York Times, Oct. 3, 1948, II, 1:5.

> equipment for a camping trip . . . but who now, when all the preparations and the provisions are piled expertly together, is suddenly too timid to set out on the journey but remains where he was yesterday . . . looking suspiciously through white lace curtains at the clear sky he distrusts. Our great technology is a God-given chance for adventure and progress which we are afraid to attempt. . . . Once you fully apprehend the vacuity of life without struggle you are equipped with the basic means of salvation. . . . The public Somebody you are when you "have a name" is a fiction created with mirrors and the only somebody worth being is the solitary and unseen you that existed from your first breath and which is the sum of your actions and so is constantly in a state of becoming under your own volition--and knowing these things you can even survive the catastrophe of Success![17]

A man who lets other people wait on him and clean up after him can never be a complete person. He must learn to work for himself. Those who are a part of the technological age should use what has been provided, not sit back and watch. People who do take advantage of life must realize that they can never stop working and struggling, for without conflict (the struggle of creation) a man is nothing and his life is empty. A man must continue to grow and develop or his life is of no value to himself or to others.

Williams writes about characters who are not just people with specific traits, but are personalities in given situations. Plot, therefore, is important only as the means of developing a character in a series of situations. Williams writes of specific instances in the lives of the persons portrayed.

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[17]Williams, The Glass Menagerie, (New York, The New Classics New Directions, 1949), "The Catastrophe of Success," Preface, pp. xvii, xviii.

Williams explained his attitude toward theme when he wrote:

> I have never been able to say what was the theme of my play and I don't think I have ever been conscious of writing with a theme in mind. . . . Usually when asked about a theme, I look vague and say, "It is a play about life." What could be simpler, and yet more pretentious? You can easily extend that a little and say it is a tragedy of incomprehension. [The phrase he used to describe A Streetcar Named Desire.] That also means life. Or you can say it is a tragedy of Puritanism. That is life in America. Or you can say that it is a play that considers the "problem of evil." But why not just say "life"? . . . The mysterious thing about writing plays about life is that so many people find them so strange and baffling. This makes you know, with moments of deep satisfaction that you have really succeeded in writing about it.[18]

The truth, the beauty, and meaning of life are the only themes Williams attempts. Many variations on these themes may be found in plays, but ultimately the one necessary theme for tragedy is an explanation of an attitude toward "life."

In the Foreword to Camino Real Williams sets forth his idea on how language should be used.[19] He says that everyone holds in his mind a great vocabulary of images which is the basis of all human communication. A symbol in a play can reflect an image and thus become part of the language, but it can be valuable only if it says a thing better than words. Images for the sake of images are of no value in writing. Thus, according to Williams, the imagery which each person holds in his mind must be the basis of communication, both on and off the stage.

Visual symbols are also evident in Williams plays. He writes specifically about such symbols and their environmental meaning in the

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[18]New York Times, Oct. 3, 1948, II, 1:5.

[19]Williams, "Foreword . . . And Afterword," op. cit.

introductions to his plays. For instance, in the preface to Summer and Smoke, Williams describes at great length the sky, even to mentioning the constellations to be seen in it during the course of the play. He prescribes that the interior and exterior sets of the play must be fragmentary, and extremely symbolic props are to be used.[20] The preface to The Glass Menagerie contains specific directions on the screen device, the music, and the lightning effects.[21] Many of the stage directions in Cat On a Hot Tin Roof contain specific descriptions of the scenic effects to be used and for what reason.[22]

Concerning styles of scenic representation, Williams makes a definite point:

> Expressionism and all other unconventional techniques in drama have only one valid aim, and that is a closer approach to truth. When a play employs unconventional techniques, it is not, or certainly shouldn't be, trying to escape its responsibility of dealing with reality, or interpreting experience, but is actually or should be attempting to find a closer approach, a more penetrating and vivid expression of things as they are.[23]

Williams believes that the style and form used in playwriting need not follow a specific or set pattern. A playwright may use whatever form and style he desires, as long as the selected method of writing enhances

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[20]Williams, Summer and Smoke, (New York, A New Directions Book, 1948), pp. viii-x.

[21]Williams, The Glass Menagerie, (New York, Random House, 1945), pp. x-xii.

[22]Williams, Cat On a Hot Tin Roof, op. cit.

[23]Williams, The Glass Menagerie, (New York, Random House, 1945), p. ix.

the truth of his theme. Only as scenery becomes a part of the truth of the play is it valid. If scenery is seen as separate from the play, then it is no longer part of the truth. Williams also believes that the purely realistic play is too academic, too photographic, and therefore too much on the surface. Reality is an organic thing which can be represented by the poetic imagination only through transformation into some form other than that which is on the surface.

In plays where he has required music, Williams has designated how it is to be used. For the most part, the music is a theme recurring through the whole play. However, in the preface to The Glass Menagerie Williams tells how he feels music should be used in this and other plays:

> It expresses the surface vivacity of life with the underlying strain of immutable and inexpressible sorrow. When you look at a piece of delicately spun glass you think of two things: how beautiful it is and how easily it can be broken. Both of these ideas should be woven into the recurring theme, which dips in and out of the play as if it were carried on a wind that changes. It serves as a thread of connection and allusion between the narrator with his separate point in time and space and the subject of his story. Between each episode it returns as reference to the emotion, nostalgia, which is the first condition of the play. It is primarily Laura's music and therefore comes out most clearly when the play focuses upon her and the lovely fragility of glass which is her image.[24]

According to Williams, music in drama should be an expression of the basic theme of that drama. It should serve to underline the basic ideas and connect them. It should be a recurring theme "which dips in and out of the play as if it were carried on a wind that changes" as ideas and emotions which center around a theme dip in and out in expression of that theme.

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[24]Ibid., p. xi.

Certain dramaturgical concepts of Tennessee Williams have been examined. (1) Plot is an important part of a play in so far as it develops the character in a specific situation. (2) The creation of character is the central point of dramatic writing. (3) The reflection of truth, beauty, and meaning of life is the theme of every play. (4) Language, melody, and spectacle must be used only as aids to the development of the theme.

Yet, in all of his comments, Tennessee Williams has not said what tragedy is or what makes a play a tragedy. He has explained the use of the elements of tragedy and thus, in a limited sense, defined tragedy. However, Williams does describe the effect of a play on an audience:

> It is, perhaps more than anything else, the arrest of time which has taken place in a completed work of art that gives to certain plays their feeling of depth and significance... . . Contemplation is something that exists outside of time, and so is the tragic sense. . . . In a play, time is arrested in the sense of being confined. By a sort of legerdemain, events are made to remain events, rather than being reduced so quickly to mere occurrences. . . . Plays in the tragic tradition offer us a view of certain moral values in violent juxtaposition. Because we do not participate, except as spectators, we can view them clearly, within the limits of our emotional equipment.[25]

In a play the truths and events of life are magnified and become larger than life; thus, the tragic sense which exists outside of time is magnified and brought to the fore. Williams goes on to say that because the audience is able to view these characters and events without time

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[25]New York Times, Jan. 14, 1951, II, 1:4. Printed under the title "Concerning the Timeless World of a Play," reprinted in Theatre Arts Monthly, May, 1944, 39:32-3+, title: "The Timeless World of a Play."

crowding the view, their emotions are released. Recognition, pity and love are allowed to show themselves, although outside the theatre these emotions are checked and suppressed. Therefore, a play must show the effects of time, and it must also magnify temporal events by partially existing outside of time (as all plays do to some degree). In addition, the tragic sense is felt when the magnification of events stimulates the audience to release, unchecked, emotions which at another time they would suppress. Perhaps in this it is possible to find an application of Aristotle's most puzzling of words, "magnitude," to our modern tragic writings. Though not the only modern playwright to hold this concept, Williams is the one who has analyzed and voiced it.

About playwriting in general, and why he writes as he does, Tennessee Williams remarks:

> Whatever the risk of being turned a cold shoulder, I still don't want to talk to people only about the surface aspects of their lives. . . . The discretion of social conversation, even among friends, is exceeded only by the discretion of "the deep six," the grave wherein nothing is mentioned at all. . . . Meanwhile!— I want to go on talking to you as freely as anyone else whom you know.[26]

Without reserve Tennessee Williams would express to his audiences in play form the convictions he holds on the truth of life.

In conclusion, it may be said that a tragedy to Tennessee Williams is a play that develops a character to its fullest extent in a situation that is an expression of the truth of life in the present time. It presents situations that grow out of events which have been magnified

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[28]Williams, Cat On a Hot Tin Roof, op. cit., pp. ix-x.

to the point where they show truth in its proper light. Character is the basis of writing, and plot is important only in so far as it develops the character in a situation which in some manner reflects the truth, beauty, and meaning of life. Style and form of a play must arise out of the situation and the character, while language, melody, and spectacle are only aids to the development of the theme.

Tennessee Williams insists, as did Arthur Miller, that a play must show the effects of passing time. Williams adds, however, that a play must also magnify temporal events by partially existing outside of time. In this manner an audience is able to see the truth of events and their own emotions are released.

CHAPTER VI

ELMER RICE

In 1930, Elmer Rice stated that his greatest interest was in people and in the arts in general and music in particular, rather than drama.[1] This appears to have been his personal motto throughout his playwriting career. He has had few encouraging words on the theatre of the twentieth century and just slightly brighter views on "Man" in this epoch.

During his first interview with the press at the age of twenty-one, Rice said that eventually he would write a sociological play, a play with a sermon in it and a moral to it because he believed that eventually the stage would replace the pulpit.[2] (This statement is comparable to Maxwell Anderson's view of drama as a religion as cited in Chapter I.) Nineteen years later, in 1933, in a letter to the editor of the New York Times on his play, We The People, he wrote what would seem to be a summation of his goal in writing the sociological play:

> It was written for the people who believe that the theatre can be something besides a place of entertainment and forgetfulness, that art can serve a useful function, that the stage is a legitimate form for the discussion in emotional and dramatic

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[1]Barrett H. Clark, An Hour of American Drama, (Philadelphia and London, J. B. Lippincott Company, 1930), p. 69.

[2]New York Times, Aug. 31, 1914, IV, 7:1.

> terms of problems that affect the laws and happiness of millions, that the theatre has a right to touch reality and to raise its voice in behalf of sociological idealism.[3]

To Rice, the theatre can and should be a medium of expression for the people in its own age. It should be a free medium with the right to say anything that the people want said.

Rice is the only one of the six playwrights under consideration who gives Freudian theories an unreserved vote of confidence. He feels that they have had much to do with his writing of the modern sociological play and his treatment of characters in his plays. The Freudian influence upon his thinking has helped him understand himself and have a better perspective upon the behavior of others. Although Rice says he never consciously applied Freudian theories, they have undoubtedly influenced him in choosing his subjects and treating his characters.[4]

Elmer Rice's pessimistic attitude toward the Broadway theatre from which he earned his living became evident in the early 1930's. At that time he said that the Broadway audience had too much influence in determining the kind of plays to be produced and that their tastes were either thoughtful nor discriminate. Rice felt they accepted only the light, stupid, and insignificant plays, probably because this was the diet handed them by producers. Rice also said that somewhere in America real theatre would develop, but not on Broadway.[5]

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[3]New York Times, Feb. 12, 1933, IX, 3:1.

[4]Sievers, Freud On Broadway, op. cit., p. 146.

[5]New York Times, Nov. 11, 1934, IX, 1:3.

Later, in 1935, Rice claimed that the dramatist was limited by the physical qualities of the theatrical medium.[6] The limitations were imposed by the business man, the audience, the actors, the stage-director, the scene designer, the electrician, the boot-maker, and the dramatist himself. Rice said that creating an illusion was almost impossible because of "psychological limitations . . . the restrictions which are placed upon the drama by the nature and peculiarities of a theatre audience."[7]

As with many other contemporary dramatists, technical elements play an important role in the production of Rice's plays. Rice, however, employed these elements only as they contributed to the basic premise of his plays.

Rice's conception of the scenic element is somewhat different from that held by the other playwrights surveyed. As the temple or palace was the architectural background of an ancient Greek play that determined or limited the action, so in a modern play the scenic element should be a compositional background in which the figures and characters work.[8] In 1915, Rice said, "When our playwrights come to the realization that the triumphs of dramatic art lie in the exposition of character and not in stage tricks, technical 'stunts' and 'novelties;' perhaps then and not until then we shall be able to take the theatre seriously."[9]

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[6]Elmer Rice, Two Plays, (New York, Coward-McCann, Inc., 1935), Introduction, pp. xii-xiv.

[7]Ibid., pp. xiv-xvi.

[8]New York Times, Mar. 31, 1940, VII, p. 6.

[9]"The Ideal Stage Situation," Theatre Magazine, Oct., 1915, 22:179+.

Since Rice wrote his first play, On Trial, as a stunt play, and The Adding Machine as an expressionistic play, and most of his serious plays in other than a realistic style, his statement seems rather out of line with his own practice.

In spite of his stated contempt for the theatrical medium, Rice continued to make a living on Broadway as a playwright and a director. In later years his comments on the theatre, for the most part, were restrained to a discussion of the hero. It was then that he developed his concept that exposition of character is the most important element in drama. Rice was always interested in the form used to convey the content of a play, but in later years he grew to believe more strongly that these elements are inseparable and that any form which reveals the significance of the content is that which must be used.[10]

In a discussion of the American theatre and the human spirit Rice compared the American attitude toward "Man" with attitudes demonstrated by people of past cultures.[11] His basic premise is that the playwright reflects the views of his own culture. In Greek times, man was exalted and the gods played a great and often intimate part in his life. The tragic end of a Greek protagonist was not defeat, but the reaffirmation of universal principles of human behavior. In Elizabethan times, though the gods were still dominant, man was beginning to be

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[10]New York Times, April 1, 1923, VII, 2:7.

[11]Rice, "American Theatre and the Human Spirit," Saturday Review of Literature, Dec. 17, 1955, 38:9+. The discussion of pp. 54-56, paragraph 1, of this thesis is based on this article.

proud of himself. By the middle of the nineteenth century political and scientific theories had altered man's opinion of himself in the universe. As man's world widened, his stature shrank.

> In terms of dramatic art it was no longer possible to picture him as a godlike creature, whose personal destiny was a matter of cosmic importance. It was possible, however, to substitute for divine justice the somewhat less exalted concept of social justice.[12]

This approach to playwriting may be compared to Eugene O'Neill's idea of replacing the Greek sense of fate with a modern psychological concept. (See Chapter II.)

Rice also said that because man was no longer considered divine his personal life was not important to the world. Yet, in relation to the social structure of the world today, man's importance and the importance of his relative actions have increased.

The twentieth century brought with it the new psychology which showed man that his conscious life was merely the surface manifestation of the network of impulses that were hidden in the often dangerous waters of the unconscious. It also brought two world wars and an emphasis on mental derangements. The playwrights became disillusioned. "The tragic hero, as protagonist, has almost ceased to exist. The figure of noble stature charged with high destiny, impelled by profound passion, has become obsolete."[13] The heroes of today's dramas are those beset with psychological problems, those who are the misfits of society.

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[12] Ibid.

[13] Ibid.

Rice added:

> In splitting the atom and splitting the ego we have unleashed forces that may destroy us, unless we find a synthesis that will employ atomic energy for peaceful uses, and psychic energy for restoring to man a belief in his own dignity and creative potentialities. If that happy time ever comes I think that the dramatists of the world, including those of America, will know how to celebrate the renascence of the human spirit.[14]

Though Elmer Rice criticized the American theatre for almost a half century and gave it little encouragement, he did give playwrights one approach to playwriting which may enable them to scale the heights of ancient tragedy when he said the divine justice of the ancient world may be replaced by the social justice of the modern world.

Like many of the twentieth century playwrights, Elmer Rice turned to the ancient Greek writers, the Elizabethan writers, and a variety of late nineteenth and early twentieth century writers for his theories on the drama.[15] From these he derived his own standards of judgment. In all the years of his playwriting career, he used many different styles, form and methods to express only one idea:

> That there is nothing as important in life as freedom and that the dominant concern not only of every human being, but of all of us as we function as members of society, should be with the attainment of freedom of the body and of the mind.[16]

Rice believes that every effort of playwriting has been centered around the attainment of freedom of life and living.

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[14] Ibid.

[15] New York Times, Dec. 25, 1938, IX, 3:3.

[16] Ibid.

Elmer Rice never set forth any definite ideas on what constitutes a good drama. However he did use examples from the ancient Greeks and the Elizabethans to show what he expected of modern drama.

> It seems to me that the situations which are most effective in the theatre are not those which excite thunderous applause, but rather those which by their compelling power hold the audience tense, leaving it at last hushed and subdued. . . . They occur most frequently in those plays which are fashioned in the convention of the Greek drama—tragic in substance, if not in form—that is to say in those plays which have for their theme the futile struggles of the individual against fate or destiny or, as we are accustomed to regard it now, against the weaknesses of his own nature. . . . The classics abound in such situations. We find them in nearly all of Shakespeare's tragedies. . . . In Ibsen, too we find numerous examples of this tragedy of the inevitable.[17]

Rice has said that what is most effective in theatre is the play which follows the Greek tradition of holding its audience by the compelling power of seeing the futile struggle of a human being against some opposing force. In his 1915 statement, Rice neglected to say that the audience feels the struggle to be a climb and the fall to be a victory. It was not until 1938 that he expressed the idea that attainment of freedom was the one essential premise in his own plays.[18]

In summary, Rice felt the tragedy of today must follow the basic formula of the Greeks and the Elizabethans with the structural emphasis placed on the exposition of character in the expression of sociological conflicts created by the culture of modern society.

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[17]"The Ideal Stage Situation," Theatre Magazine, Oct., 1915, 22:179+. (Compare his view on the situations which hold the audience with those of Tennessee Williams in Chapter V of this study, and his views on the tragedy of the inevitable with those of Eugene O'Neill in Chapter III of this study.)

[18]New York Times, Dec. 25, 1938, IX, 3:3.

Modern tragedy, to Rice, therefore, is a play which expresses in whatever form the playwright finds valid the development of a character in search of freedom of mind and body.

To Rice, modern tragedy consists of a character in sociological conflict either with himself or with his environment. The exposition of a character attempting to find a better way of life is the primary purpose of modern theatre. Fascination for the truth in the development of the character and sympathy for his goal holds the audience in what Rice calls sympathetic silence to the final judgment or curtain. Probably the most important concept Rice offers is that the ultimate judgment of the life and struggles of a character must come from social justice rather than divine justice.

CHAPTER VII

CLIFFORD ODETS

In the earlier years of his career Clifford Odets had little to say in favor of the fine arts in this country, but he has always believed the possibilities for artists of all kinds and has attempted to bring these possibilities to the fore. An interest in petty things is the first sign of decadence of an age in art, and Odets feels that trifles have been the main interest of the theatre in America. Yet, he adds, according to Burns Mantle, that great themes are ready and waiting, like gold nuggets on the ground. The playwright has only to discover them.[1]

In addition, Odets feels that this is a dangerous time to live, but it is a great time for writers if they will only place themselves in contact with the life around them. Civilization is becoming aware of itself, and the artist must be essentially interested in civilization. Odets believes that in this country there are many unexplored fields where dramatic themes can be found.

Having spent many years in Hollywood writing for the film industry he knows a great deal about the thematic trends of that medium. He thoroughly agrees with the ideas behind many of the motion

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[1]Burns Mantle, Contemporary American Playwrights, (New York, Dodd, Mead & Company, 1938), pp. 119-121.

picture productions. They have taken many facets of American life and many people with varied backgrounds and developments, and Odets says that, for the most part, the choice of themes of the movie industry follows the thought trends of the American public. Motion picture characters represent an idea of life which interests the public. His objection is that, for the most part, films, as they finally reach the public, do not tell the truth about people. Odets believes that this is what the stage must do. He adds:

> It is about time that the talented American playwrights began to take the gallery of American types, the assortment of fine vital themes away from the movies . . . present the genuine pain, meaning, and dignity of life within your own characters. . . . Here is the essential point: a playwright might follow the movie trend of themes with great profit. But in each he would have to tell the truth where the film told a lie, starting each time where the picture left off.[2]

Odets claims that if American playwrights were to pick their themes from the great variety available in American life, and their characters from among the American people, it would be to their benefit. As playwrights, however, they must tell the truth about these people, for the theatre must present the underlying truths present in their lives.

Despite the emphasis placed on the themes of plays and the thought processes used to develop these themes, Odets places more emphasis on the characters. Characters, says Odets, as quoted by Lorenzo Semple, are all important, and if they are developed properly and truthfully, the theme will be clear.

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[2]New York Times, Nov. 21, 1937, XI, 1:8.

> I can't see life divorced from theme. . . . I don't lay out plays—I lay out characters. . . . In one sense, any man is like all men; in another, any man is like some other men; and in a third, any man is like no other man. To write something that is true, that has meaning, you have to put all three levels on the stage at once. It's not easy, but there's your problem. And if you do manage to achieve it, there can't be any question of separating theme from character.[3]

Odets feels that the development of theme will be found in the development of character. If the truth is told about the character and if he is represented as accurately as possible, then the theme is automatically there.

A character, says Odets, must be developed on a universal level which links him to all mankind. Another dimension of the character must show him as part of his social culture. And another development of the character should reveal the traits that make him an individual. If these three facets are developed to their fullest extent, Odets says, according to the above quotation, that it then follows that the audience can identify the theme and its basic truth, and identify itself in relation to that character and that truth.

According to Clifford Odets, there are two methods of writing a play. One is the fabricated method in which the playwright sets up an outline and from this develops a play and a theme. This is the style most often used by playwrights. The other is the creative method in which the playwright lets a play grow from an idea and the character involved in that idea. This, Odets claims, is the best way, but also

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[3]Lorenzo Semple, Jr., "After Fifteen Years," Theatre Arts Monthly, Dec., 1950, 34:30.

the most exceptional way.[4] Whichever method is used, if the truth of the theme is brought out in the honest development of the character portrayed, then the greatness of the drama cannot be hidden.[5]

Odets warns the fabricator that he must develop his ideas with human truths in mind, not facts or theories developed from these truths (such as Freudianism). After the playwright has written the truth, or what he knows and believes to be the truth, then let those who wish come and analyze what has been written.[6]

For a more thorough explanation of the themes and characters which offer great possibilities for the modern American stage, Clifford Odets turns to his own work and explains his own method to Barry Hymans.

> All my plays deal with one subject: the struggle not to have life nullified by circumstances, false values, anything. People stand up and fight this—not in a vulgar economic sense—for a full, rich life. When their souls tell them where to go, they go.[7]

Perhaps in the last phrase can be seen Odets' view on modern tragedy. People guided by the truth in their own souls will spend a lifetime fighting and struggling for the life they believe is right. If a play embraces this idea, the audience will respond empathically to the struggle and the growth and whatever results.

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[4]New York Times, April 22, 1941, II, 1:5.

[5]Ibid.

[6]Sievers, Freud On Broadway, op. cit., p. 262.

[7]Hymans, "Twenty Years On A Tight-rope," op. cit.

Odets, like Elmer Rice, looks to many late nineteenth century and twentieth century playwrights for approaches in the development of ideas, but his practical methods come out of the Elizabethan age:

> Ibsen brought individual development to its historical point in his plays, but Shakespeare has more for our time. He was the great technician, the master dramatist. From him I have learned time. You know, in the third act of Paradise Lost [by Odets] a whole evening transpires on the stage in forty minutes, and it seems like a whole evening—Shakespeare did that perfectly. . . . It's really false and wrong, if you are alive to the times, to do a conventional three-act play today. It is really necessary to find a form to match the content.[8]

Odets feels that the techniques of Shakespeare are still important in modern American playwriting, and the effects he was able to create are those that must be used on the American stage. Odets' statement may be compared with two contemporaries, Tennessee Williams and Elmer Rice. Williams spoke at length of the "timeless world of a play," and Rice frequently mentioned that the form and content of plays should match each other and furthermore be inseparable.[9]

As for the heroes of the American stage, Odets contrasts them with the Shakespearean heroes. He seems to say that Shakespeare viewed life in terms of the lives of the people from the past. It is necessary today, says Odets, for playwrights to write of people in the present and of issues vital to these people. True, Odets adds, this prevents a perspective of the long range life, but it magnifies the immediate truths and brings the specifics closer to the audience.[10]

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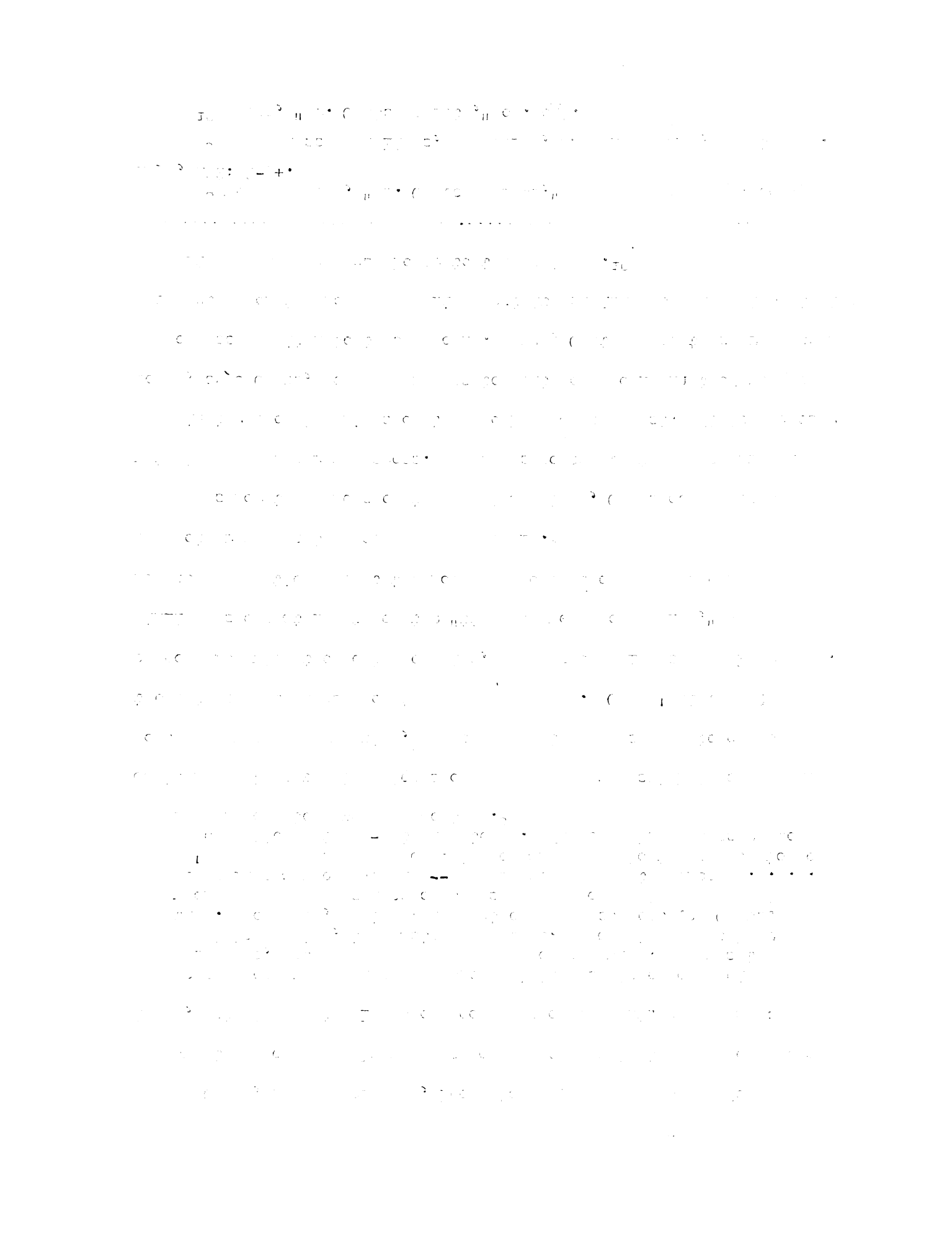
[8]Thomas Sugrue, "Mr. Odets Regrets," American Magazine, Oct., 1936, 122:42-3+.

[9]See Tennessee Williams, Chapter V, and Elmer Rice, Chapter VI.

[10]Sugrue, "Mr. Odets Regrets," op. cit.



Concerning Awake and Sing, Odets says that these people were middle-class and crushed by poverty and that is their tragedy; that what is trivial and commonplace to others, is a matter of life and death to them:

> They have no Macbeths or Hamlets. A pair of new shoes or a new dress spurs them on fully as much as his father's ghost spurred Hamlet, or his wife spurred Macbeth. What is the difference? Hamlet and Macbeth are figures of dignity, of greatness, marked for tragic ends by destiny. The Bergers in the Bronx are little people, mixed up and bewildered and marked for nothing. All they have is a longing, a vision.[11]

In this statement, Odets says that each of these people is spurred on toward a goal. In the case of the Shakespearean heroes the audience is able to see the tragic end. In the case of the Bergers the audience sees only the longing and the vision. Perhaps Odets means that this is what marks the modern tragic hero—a longing and a vision.

> The hero in Paradise Lost is the entire American middle-class of liberal tendencies. The enemy is unseen, nameless, but constant and deadly. . . . To write a slick three-act plot play about this slice of American society would be a lie from the start. For the Truth is that at present their lives have no beginning, no middle, and no end, no solution—all necessary for plot and story. They exist in time and space, with aspiration to be sure, but no forward movement. . . . They are too large in their reality and implications to be narrowed down to "the desire," the near satisfaction, the obstacle, the desire fulfilled![12]

Odets feels then that it is impossible to write a clear-cut drama using the middle-class American as a hero, because it is impossible to see their lives in the same perspective that Shakespeare was able to see

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[11]Ibid.

[12]New York Times, Dec. 15, 1935, XI, 3:1.

Hamlet and Macbeth and Sophocles to see Oedipus. Odets believes that it is not possible to narrow the lives of modern people down to one meaning. They exist in time and space. It is as if the playwright arrests them in time and space and magnifies their aspirations.[13]

It would seem that Clifford Odets is not looking for a great drama to be classified with the other great periods of drama. Instead he is looking for a modern American drama that will fulfill a need in the lives of the American people today.[14] He reserves for the playwrights and the theatres the right to use whatever methods they wish for the development of their characters and their interpretations of the truth.[15] Odets' recognition of Shakespearean method has already been noted. Note also his return to the Aristotelian elements of a play to say what should be in the American drama:

> Please allow us to continue to respect the men and women all around us and make the theatre serve an earnest examination of their lives and backgrounds. In interesting new theatrical forms. With poetic conceptions. With character understanding. With fresh dialogue. With love.[16]

Odets would have the theatre examine the lives of the people in this country with character understanding and with fresh dialogue in the language of the time and a feeling for the poetry in their lives.

According to Odets, modern tragedy in the American theatre is the dramatic form whereby a character, guided by the truth in his own

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[13]Ibid.

[14]New York Times, Nov. 21, 1937, XI, 1:8.

[15]Ibid., Dec. 15, 1935, XI, 3:1.

[16]Ibid.

soul, struggles for a life he believes in and is arrested in his development for a certain space of time in which his struggle and climb is magnified so that the truth of life may be viewed.

The effect on the audience is a by-product of Odets' essential purpose and desires in writing a play. Therefore the magnification of time is partially for the benefit of an audience, who then can recognize the struggle through an identification with the character.

CHAPTER VIII

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The term "tragedy" has had a variety of meanings since it was first coined in ancient Greek civilization. In order to perceive what tragedy is in the modern American theatre, the views of six selected playwrights have been analyzed. These playwrights are Maxwell Anderson, Eugene O'Neill, Arthur Miller, Tennessee Williams, Elmer Rice, and Clifford Odets. At the end of each chapter is a summary of the views of the playwright treated.

A cursory study of the individual playwrights does not reveal any outstanding points among them that could be combined and formed into a definition of tragedy for the contemporary American stage. However, there is to be found a common core of beliefs among the six playwrights which may become a definition or which, added to the differences in views, may become the basis for further study on the subject of tragedy in the contemporary American theatre. It is possible that the ideas and explanations of the playwrights' views seem vague and sometimes too general. This is because, for the most part, the playwrights themselves were not definite or specific in their explanations.

It is significant that the surveyed playwrights turned to the same periods in history for precedence of their theories. The great

age of Periclean Greece with Aristotle as its historian and interpreter is the basis for many theories of these playwrights. Shakespeare is used to corroborate the ancient theory and as an example of good dramaturgical methods. It is interesting to note that the Greek and Elizabethan theatres are often spoken of together. For style, form and concepts of the use of theatre today, the playwrights turned to the latter nineteenth century and twentieth century theorists and playwrights. Eugene O'Neill, Tennessee Williams, and Clifford Odets place more emphasis on the views of the latter nineteenth and twentieth century playwrights, while the other playwrights prefer the Greek and Shakespearean ideas.

Since the American theatre embraces many styles and forms of writing and production, there might be a question as to what form or style should be used in tragedy. Each of the men in this study has said that any style or form may be used in tragedy if that method is the best means of expressing the central theme of the play. Each playwright, however, has a favorite style or form which he prefers. Arthur Miller and Clifford Odets are the only two playwrights who do not directly censure the journalistic realism, or stark realism, of the period between World Wars I and II. The other playwrights say that this journalistic style should not be used for tragedy because basically it portrays only the surface realities of life. Drama which does not penetrate below the surface realities of life cannot be accepted as a valid approach to tragedy.

Language, rhythm, and melody are very closely associated in the modern theatre. Maxwell Anderson advocated poetry as the language of the modern theatre. The other playwrights agreed with him that poetry is an inseparable part of tragedy, but they do not agree with him on the specific use of poetic diction. However, the six playwrights do say that tragedy is poetry. Since poetry is the language of the emotions, truth and profundity, and tragedy is an expression of the truths of life, the two must be integrated. If poetry and tragedy are wholly integrated, then the rhythm and language of poetry will be that of tragedy. The language of poetry may be defined as verse, blank verse, or the language in which the emotions and the ultimate truths of life are expressed. The diction used depends on the style of writing which is the playwright's means of expression. It is in the style of writing that the approach to the poetic differs among the playwrights. However, as an expression of life and the emotions, the tragedy as a composition must be poetic in conception.

In the final analysis of each playwright's views, two things become prominent as to what comprises tragedy for these playwrights: character and theme. Everything in a play must revolve around the central theme. Tragedy is an expression of life. The central theme of tragedy therefore is life. It is not possible to portray all life in one play, but the play must be focused to reveal some truth or truths of life. Each of the playwrights in this study feels that theatre must be a part of the life of its own culture. For theatre to be a part of

today's American culture, it must speak in terms of what the people know or feel to be true today. In addition, since tragedy is the expression of the truth of life, it must become a part of the lives of people today by expressing life in terms the people consider true. Tragedy then must be an expression of the truths of today. The playwrights believe there are many aspects of life in America which are suitable themes for tragedy. The playwrights differ somewhat on the kinds of themes to be taken from American life, and whether these should be abstract or immediately applicable.

There may be question as to how a tragic theme is an expression of life. Each playwright has a different way of answering this, and some express it in more than one way. Anderson, O'Neill, Miller and Odets say it is the struggle of man to overcome life. All six playwrights say it is the struggle against forces which would suppress and annihilate man. All but Williams say it is man's struggle for his rightful place and a recognition of his own dignity. O'Neill and Odets are the only playwrights in this study who do not say it is the conflict of good and evil within man. Although Tennessee Williams refers to the conflict of morality and the good, there is no instance where he specifically refers to evil as the opposite of this good. All these ideas mean essentially the same thing. Man struggles or is in conflict with something that surrounds him and is a part of him, in order that he will not be overcome by the vacuity of existence without searching or striving for a goal. The most basic answer to the question of how a tragic theme is an expression of life was given by Anderson, O'Neill,

Miller, Rice, and Odets when they mentioned that this struggle might be man struggling against the animal within him to become more like a god, or attain spiritual significance, or aspire to a higher morality.

If life is to be expressed in terms of man's action against or for something, it follows then that the central character in a play must be someone whom the audience can understand as a symbol of Man. If the audience is to recognize truth in the character, then he must neither be a perfect man nor an evil man. He cannot be perfect because one of the necessities of tragedy, as brought out in the seven previous chapters, is that he be better, at least in a moral sense, at the end of the play than he was at the beginning. Though a character in a play may be evil and represent the opposite of truth, this type of character has not been accepted by these playwrights as a tragic hero. That the tragic hero must become a better person than he was indicates that there must be an essential morality connected with tragedy. What constitutes moral law is explained differently by each playwright.

In the explanation of how a tragic theme is an expression of life, an explanation of moral law is also involved, for as each type of struggle is resolved some moral law is revealed. It may be good triumphing over evil, right over wrong, truth over falsehood, enlightenment over ignorance, life over annihilation, or something of a similar nature. Essentially, they all mean the same thing. Some moral law must be involved in the struggle which the central character undertakes, in which an underlying truth is revealed.

Throughout history a tragic hero must have been of high rank or noble stature. This conception is actually a misinterpretation of Aristotle. There is nothing in the Poetics that says a man must be other than of good purpose, true to life, and yet appear to be better than he ordinarily would in life. All six playwrights in this study say that any man who is willing to accept the challenges that life offers and will strive for a goal which represents some betterment either mentally, physically, or morally, is capable of being a tragic hero. He is capable because, by accepting the challenge of life, he accepts the struggle. In the struggle to achieve his goal, the tragic hero represents the struggle of mankind. By throwing his whole being into the struggle, the hero achieves the stature of a man whom all men will venerate. Note, however, that while they accept this as true, Anderson, Rice and Odets say that it takes an exceptional person to fill this role.

As men struggle toward various goals in life, they must come to know or realize certain things about themselves and life, or their struggle will have been in vain. There is something in each man which causes him to learn these things by failing in some way. In tragedy this is called the tragic flaw. The tragic flaw may be anything which makes a man not only stop his struggle, but fall back. Yet, in tragedy, the surveyed playwrights say the character must learn, and in modern tragedy all of the playwrights, except Tennessee Williams and Eugene O'Neill, say that all elements of a play are centered toward the point

at which the truth is revealed, the scene in which the character's tragic flaw prevents him from going further in his climb toward a goal. At this point, when he has fallen back, he realizes something about himself or the world around him and he learns a truth of life. Through him the truth is revealed.

If the spectator is able to identify with a character, or recognize him as representative of some true life, yet understand him to be a person in his own right with something in him that makes him representative of the group as well as the individual, then not only is the character a tragic hero, but his struggles represent their struggles; his climb, their climb; his eventual fall, their possibility of fall; his learning, or recognition, their ability to learn and recognize.

The sociological attitude of the playwrights toward their characters is very important in modern tragedy. The attitude of the playwright thus affects the attitude of the audience. So, as the tragic hero struggles toward a goal, he questions what is around him in order to find a way that leads toward that goal. Arthur Miller says that in the questioning he must disrupt the security around him, and because he represents the people of the identified group, their own security is questioned and disrupted. This questioning of security makes the audience fear that what they held true is not true. As the character finds how to move toward his goal, the people watching also find out how. Here again the sociological attitude of the playwright affects the goals and the movements of the character. This attitude varies among the six playwrights.

According to the six playwrights, as the tragic hero's life centers toward his goal, as his mental and emotional drives are aroused from within him, the same drives are aroused from the audience through empathy. However, just how these drives are aroused and how much and in what way they affect the audience differs from one playwright to another. Though all of the playwrights consider their audience, the affect on the audience is usually of secondary concern. As brought out in preceding chapters, only Anderson and Miller consider this effect important enough to discuss at any length.

When the central character has reached the state where all his emotions and his mind are in full play on the point toward which he strives, something in him causes these pressures to be released and he falls back from the goal to which he has climbed, literally or figuratively. As the hero falls the compassion of the audience is aroused for this man that must fall and for all men that must have some flaw which prevents them from grasping for what they reach without some setback. The word compassion is used here rather than the pity that Aristotle uses, because the American playwrights, except for Arthur Miller and Tennessee Williams who say both emotions are involved, do not seem to agree that the audience feels pity, but rather compassion, which would mean that they feel with as well as for the hero. As a truth of life is revealed through the character who learns from his fall, the audience also learns. Anderson, O'Neill, and Miller feel strongly that as the learning makes clear the way toward the goal, another goal is seen beyond the first.

At this point the ultimate purpose of tragedy as seen by the six modern American playwrights can be seen. This purpose is two-fold. One side is a spiritual and emotional reaction, the other a physical and material one. The purpose of tragedy is the stimulation of men to keep on striving, and the exaltation of the spirit of mankind that he is capable of reaching for a higher goal. Because people may fear that what they have held to be true might possibly be wrong or not good, they may realize that there are better ways. They may be stimulated to work for these better ways, or to fortify the truths they hold already. As the compassion of people is aroused for the hero and what he represents in his fall, they may be stimulated to help others like him in the struggle and so become a part of mankind struggling for truth and a higher goal.

It has been said that tragedy is pessimistic. The six playwrights in this study would disagree vehemently. In essence, they say that the very idea that man does struggle, does attempt to reach a higher goal, is optimistic since there is hope he may reach it or he would not struggle. Tragedy shows men that they can accept the challenge of life and that they can climb and attain a higher goal by learning.

In conclusion, then, the exaltation of tragedy is that man is capable of striving and learning, that man is capable of seeing a better way to live, a closer way to the truth. The exaltation is felt also in the hope of tragedy that mankind may one day learn the ultimate truth of life, may learn the best way to live. Again, hope is aroused when man shows himself capable of rising above annihilation by struggling

to conquer life and to learn its truths. Because the tragic hero learns a truth when he falls, he can see the possibilities of a better goal than the one for which he was striving. As he can see this, so it is revealed to the audience. As they see that this man can look for better ways, they exalt in Man that he may and can attempt ever higher goals.

This, then, is a compilation of the views on tragedy of the six selected playwrights of the twentieth century American theatre. Eleven points for discussion form the basis for this compilation: (1) reference to historic dramaturgical ideas, (2) styles or forms, (3) poetry in tragedy, (4) character and theme as the primary elements in tragedy, (5) the tragic theme as an expression of life, (6) the tragic hero or character, (7) morality, (8) the revelation of truth, (9) the effect of tragedy upon an audience, (10) the purpose of tragedy, (11) the optimism or exaltation of tragedy. On some points the playwrights are in agreement, on others, they disagree. Yet, even in agreement, the similarity of the views does not always result in a definite conclusion or statement on tragedy which would entirely encompass the ideas of the individual playwrights.

The Introduction to the study stated that an attempt would be made to crystallize these views into a definition of tragedy for the modern American theatre. If this could not be done, then a common core of belief among the playwrights might be found which could be used as a basis for further study of tragedy in the modern American theatre. It was also stated that only the critical writings of these playwrights

would be considered. However, considering that most of the critical writings of these playwrights, except for Maxwell Anderson, were done in connection with their own plays, it is not feasible to try to create a definition on the basis of these writings alone. However, a common core of beliefs based on certain similarities in the critical writings of the playwrights has been presented. These writings having been considered, the next recommended step is that further research be done on modern tragedy by considering the plays of these six men, Maxwell Anderson, Arthur Miller, Eugene O'Neill, Clifford Odets, Elmer Rice, and Tennessee Williams, and, finally, that a project be undertaken in which both the plays and the critical writings are considered together. In this manner only will it be possible to find a valid definition of tragedy for the modern American theatre.

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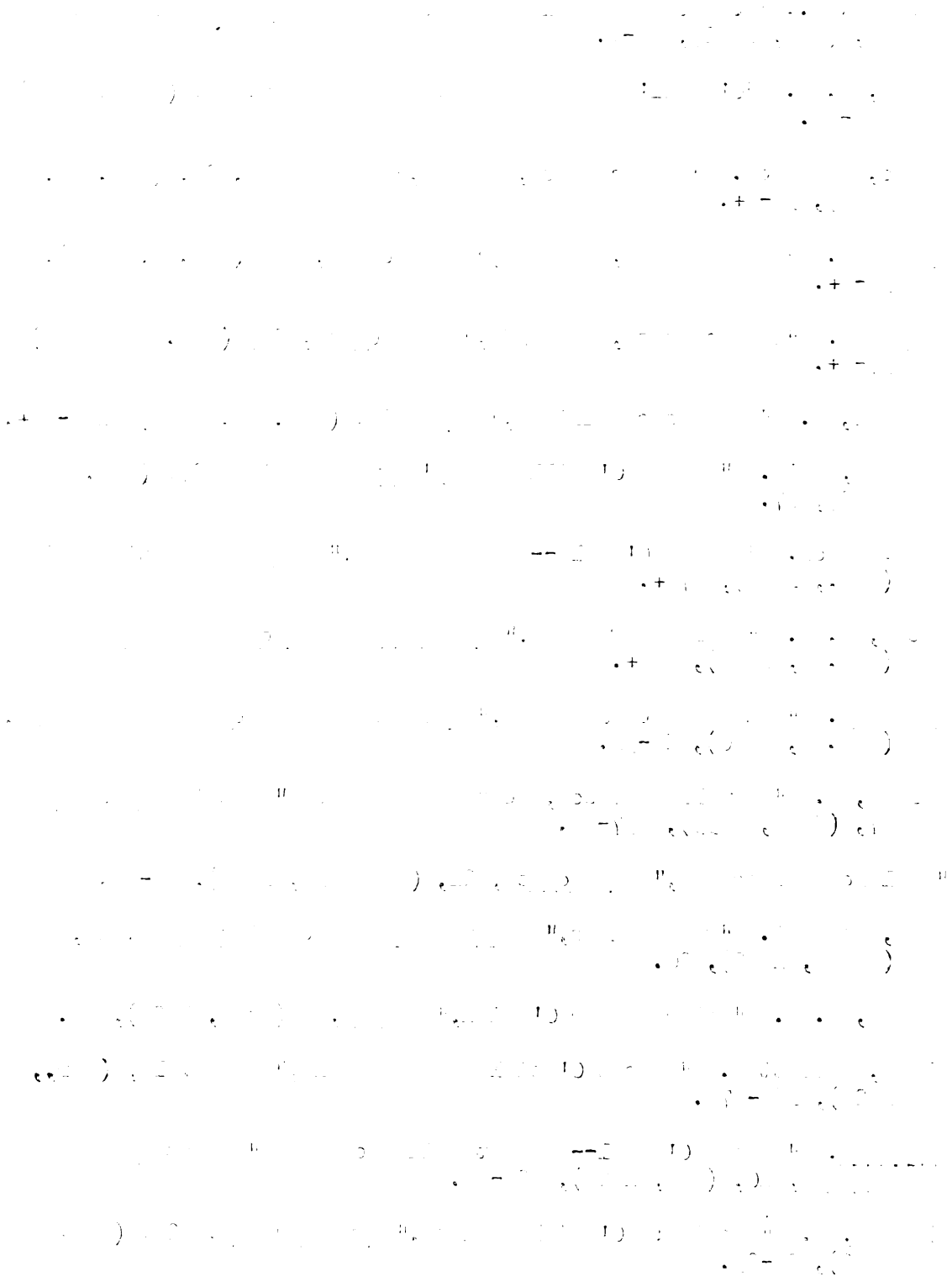

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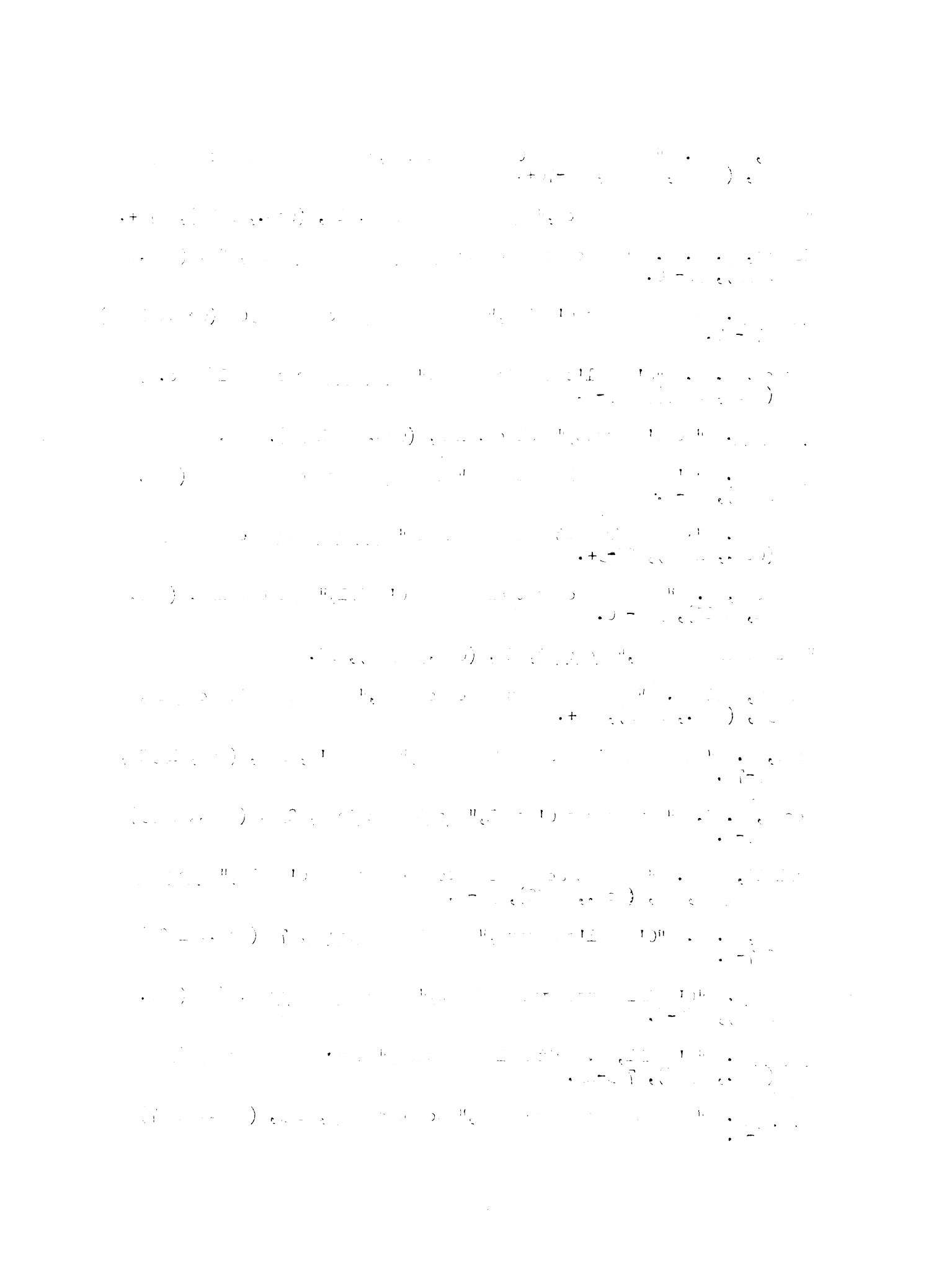

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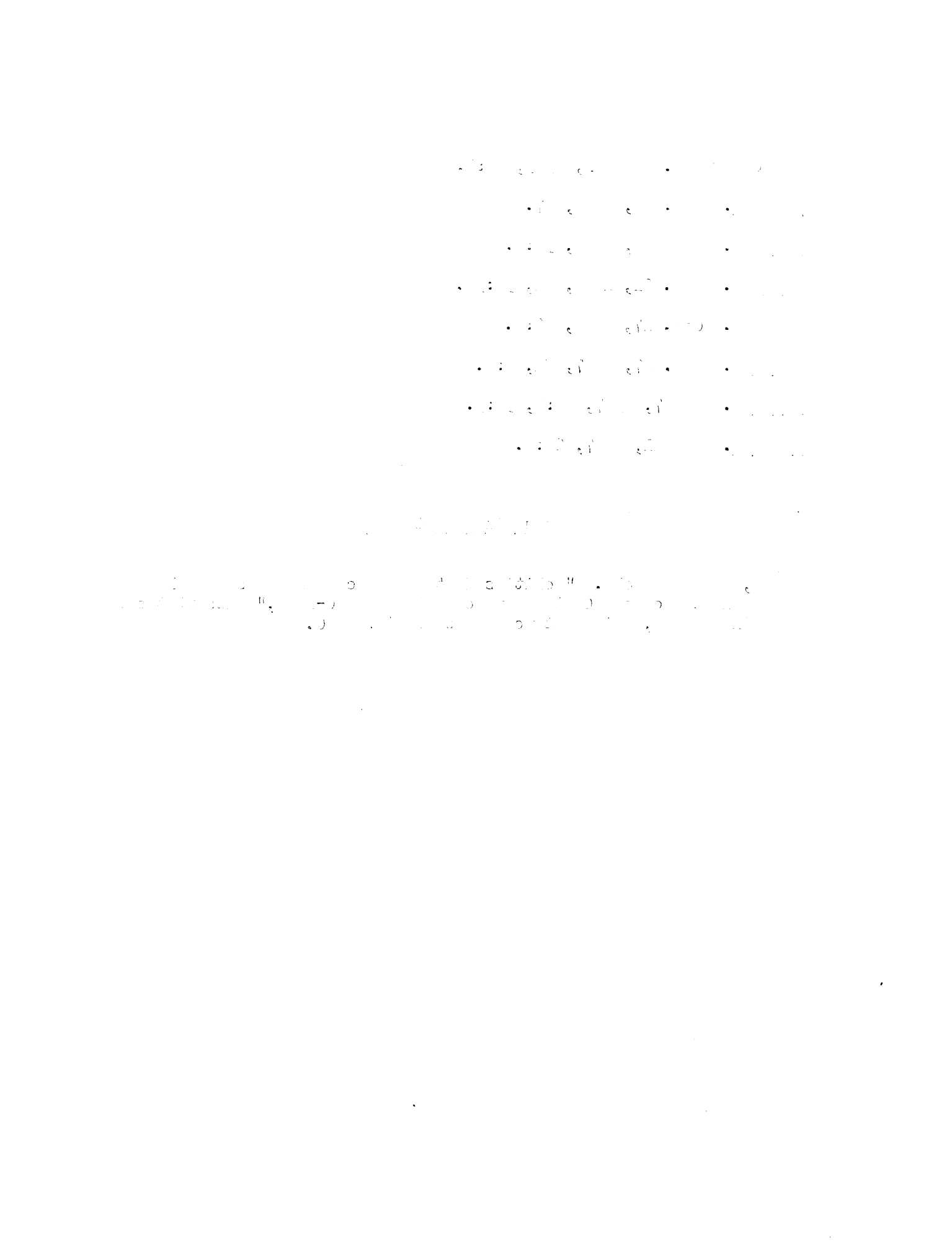

BIOGRAPHY

Born and brought up in Detroit, Michigan, Ellen Margaret Harrington graduated with "high distinction" from Central High School in January, 1952. She worked as a junior secretary for the Detroit Board of Education until September, 1952, when she entered Michigan State University as a Freshman majoring in theatre and television. During those eight months she helped in some little theatre productions in Detroit. Subsequent jobs between and during school years included waitress, clerk for the Security Commission, and research librarian for the Speech Department.

Aside from basic required courses, music, religions, philosophy, and languages were among those courses elected outside her major field. Within her chosen major she took courses in general speech and in radio and television announcing, direction and production. Theatre courses included acting, directing (which included detailed direction of two one-act shows) and technical theatre production.

Extra-curricular activities during her undergraduate years included membership in Alpha Omicron Pi sorority, Theta Alpha Phi, national dramatics honorary, Studio Theatre, and other speech organizations. Miss Harrington graduated in June, 1956, with a Bachelor of Arts degree "with honor" and that summer began work on her Master of Arts degree in Communication Arts.

In the fall of 1956, Miss Harrington was granted a graduate assistantship and was placed in the costuming and make-up department where she assisted in the teaching and execution of costumes and make-up for school productions. Her classwork for an English minor entailed courses in dramatic and nineteenth-century American literature. Her major subjects in theatre included theatre history, further technical and production-direction studies, seminars in scene design, communication arts, tragedy, comedy, and dramaturgy. She is a member of the Speech Association of America and the American Educational Theatre Association.

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