

A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY OF STYLE
IN SERIOUS AMERICAN DRAMA ON THE NEW YORK STAGE
FROM 1931 THROUGH 1941

THESIS FOR THE DEGREE OF PH. D.

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BY

JOHN E. CLIFFORD

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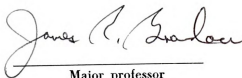
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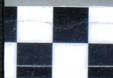
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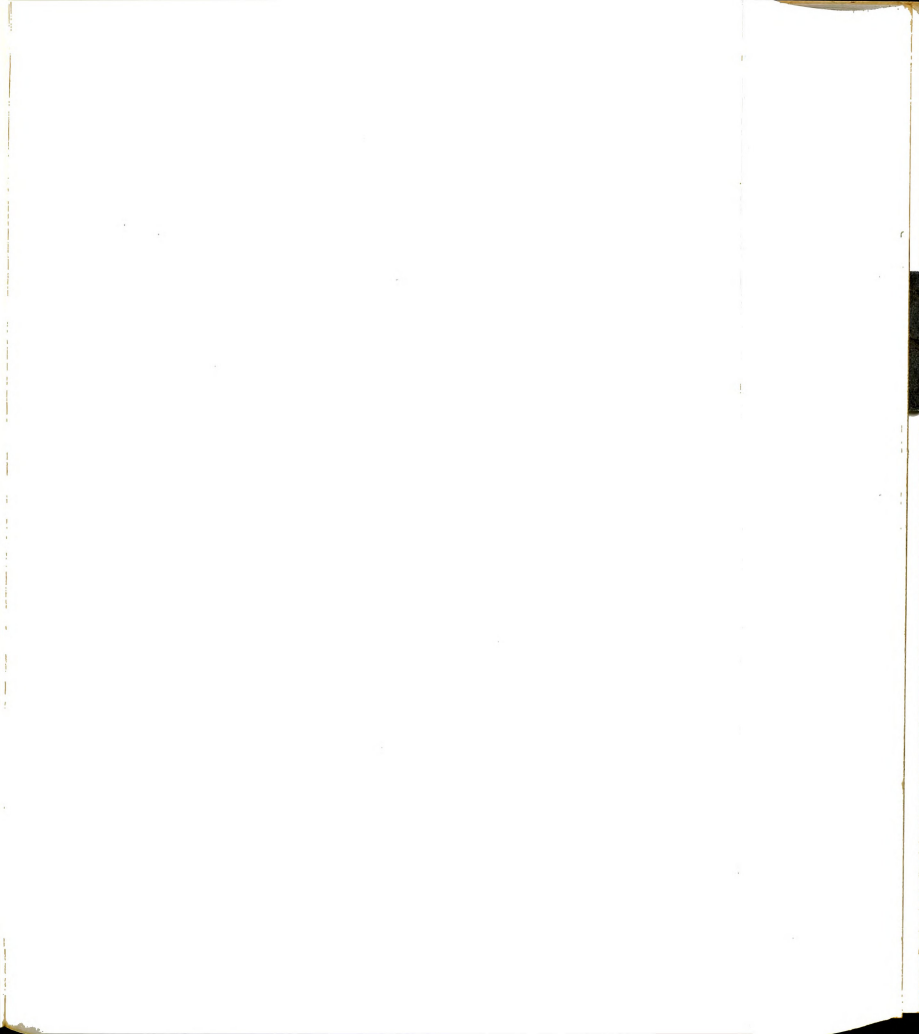


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ABSTRACT

A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY OF STYLE IN SERIOUS AMERICAN DRAMA ON THE NEW YORK STAGE FROM 1931 THROUGH 1941

by

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John E. Clifford

The purpose of this study was to describe modern styles in serious, successful American drama written and first produced on the professional New York stage from the 1931-1932 theatrical season through the 1940-1941 theatrical season. The method used to accomplish this purpose was to establish criteria for determining style in drama and to apply those criteria in a number of analyses of selected dramas from the 1930's.

Chapter III classifies six major modern dramatic styles. These are Realism, Naturalism, Romanticism, Symbolism, Expressionism, and Epic. Chapters IV through IX establish criteria for identifying the six dramatic styles in plays. The criteria were compiled from a large number of sources pertaining to the field of dramatic criticism, and consequently they reflect a majority opinion of drama and theatre writers of what constitutes the six major dramatic styles. Stylistic manifestations for each style were classified in the following six categories: (1) principle, a term encompassing the various concepts of idea, world-view, attitude, points of view, or philosophical attitudes upon which the style is based; (2) general characteristics, the overall impression of the style arising from the view of the play as a whole; and the form elements of (3) plot; (4) character; (5) language; and (6) theme. One chapter was devoted to each style, and the criteria were succinctly summarized at the end of each chapter.

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PREFACE

The purpose of this study is to describe style in serious, American drama written for the New York stage during the 1930's. It was originally conceived as being a part of a larger study which would attempt to chronicle style in American theatre from 1919 to the present. The idea for this larger study was jointly proposed to the Department of Speech by Charles E. Lauterbach, Anthony L. Kadlec, and this writer while in residence at Michigan State University in 1963. Department approval was granted to initiate this joint study, specifically for Mr. Kadlec to research style in setting and production during the 1920's, for Mr. Lauterbach to research style in American drama during the 1920's, and for this writer to research style in American drama during the 1930's.

I wish to acknowledge the assistance for Messrs. Kadlec and Lauterbach for their part in the original research and direction of this study.

I would further like to express my appreciation to Dr. John A. Waite, of the Department of English, Dr. Colby J. Lewis, of the Department of Radio-Television, and Dr. E. C. Reynolds, of the Department of Speech, for the many hours they devoted to reading and commenting on this study during the past three years. I am also grateful for the guidance given to me by Dr. John E. Dietrich who served as Director of the Guidance Committee for a year during the early stages of research and reporting; and to Dr. James R. Brandon, the Committee

Chairman, who, through his thoughtful criticism, encouragement, and moral support, has had a great deal of influence on both this study and its author.

Finally, I thank my family, my parents, my wife, and daughters, for their sacrifices, patience, and prayers.

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PART ONE

CRITERIA FOR THE IDENTIFICATION OF DRAMATIC STYLES

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Statement of Purpose

In 1891 the Theatre d'Arte was founded at Salle Montparnasse in Paris. This was the first theatre founded for the express purpose of promoting an anti-realistic theatre.¹ For the next fifty years the theatre was invaded by advocates and proponents of at least a dozen different anti-realistic styles.² As a result, it is extremely difficult to discover agreement among scholars concerning the dominant style of European theatre during this fifty year period.

In the professional American theatre it is equally difficult to discover critical agreement concerning the dominant style of twentieth century drama. If there is agreement, it is that theatre was anything but stylistically uniform. "The period of the past forty-five years, particularly the second half of it, has revealed a wider variety of plays than can be found in any other country in the world."³ John Gassner says that this diversity in style began around 1918 as Realism began to give way to a variety of new

¹Phyllis Hartnoll (ed.), The Oxford Companion to the Theatre (2d ed.; London: Oxford University Press, 1957), p. 484.

²Some of these were Impressionism, Epic, Surrealism, Futurism, Formalism, Constructivism, Dadaism, Expressionism, and Symbolism.

³Barrett H. Clark, "The United States," A History of Modern Drama, ed. Barrett H. Clark and George W. Freedley (New York: D. Appleton-Century Co., 1947), p. 654.

forms born during that second decade.

Ventures of variable value and doubtful permanence but of striking originality ensued after 1910 in a variety of styles carrying such labels as expressionism, constructivism, futurism, and surrealism⁴

The result of this was that the "Theatre became more fully aware of style than it had been for centuries."⁵ The old nineteenth century literal Realism became more "selective and expressive,"⁶ while at the same time European symbolism in a variety of new forms, achieved a certain "finesse" it had not been able to achieve in the past.⁷ So violent and diverse was this period of changing forms and variety of patterns that in retrospect it appears to Gassner as "a mosaic of forms and styles."⁸

In the view of Allardyce Nicoll this great change in form and the tremendous influx of European non-realistic styles upon the American stage during the third decade of the Twentieth Century present "a serious problem to anyone who tried to gain a perspective view of the stage from 1920 - 1940."⁹ Joseph Wood Krutch concurs, and goes even further by suggesting that any fruitful discussion of this period of American drama must not be undertaken in terms of its content nor its social or political concerns, but rather in terms of its styles and

⁴John Gassner, The Theatre in Our Times (New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1954), p. 7.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ibid., p. 9.

⁹Allardyce Nicoll, World Drama (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, n.d.), p. 759.

literary forms.¹⁰ Block and Shedd, in Masters of Modern Drama, are among others who concur in calling for studies dealing with style in order to understand modern drama.¹¹

The purpose of this study is to attempt such an understanding. Through a systematic examination of the style of serious, successful plays written for the professional American stage during the period 1930-1940 this study documents and clarifies that "mosaic" which Gassner sees. It documents, charts, and systematically follows the course of dramatic style in its "constant alteration,"¹² or, as Barrett Clark speculates, in its more "uniform pattern."¹³ Its aim is to describe the trends in the appearance of various and differing dramatic styles during the 1930's. The working hypothesis of the study, phrased as a question, is: In regard to modern dramatic styles, what were the trends in successful, serious American drama on the professional New York stage during the 1930's?

Definition of Terms

"Descriptive study" means the type of research broadly defined as a survey or normative approach to the study of conditions and/or phenomena. It includes the gathering of information, the analysis and summarization of the data, and the reporting of that data.

¹⁰Joseph Wood Krutch, American Drama Since 1918 (revised edition; New York: George Braziller, Inc., 1957), p. 25.

¹¹Haskell M. Block and Robert G. Shedd (eds.), Masters of Modern Drama (New York: Random House, 1962), p. 3.

¹²Gassner, p. 9.

¹³Clark, "The United States," p. 654. The pertinent citation is as follows: "It may be, of course, that to future historians the product of this time (1900-1945) will appear to be far more uniform in subject-matter and technique than it seems to us, but I do not think so."



In general, descriptive studies gather information and summarize it; the investigator selects his data from a certain area of interest and subjects these data to such counting, classification, or other analytical or grouping procedures as will allow for summarization or interpretation adequate for the purpose of the study.¹⁴

"Style" means the manner (or mode) in which the dramatist utilizes the various elements of dramatic construction available to him in his imitation of human action.¹⁵

"Serious American Drama" is used in this study to mean a tragedy or drama originally written for the commercial American stage. The criteria for the word "Serious" are taken from the classification given the plays in the series Best Plays (1880-1963) edited by Burns Mantle and Louis Kronenberger.¹⁶

The criteria used to determine plays which opened on the "Professional New York Stage" are based upon plays listed in "Statistical Summary of the New York Season" in the Best Plays series.

"Successful" in the context of this study describes dramas which were commercial and/or critical successes. A play was considered a commercial success when its length of run was over fifty performances. A play was considered a critical success if (1) it was judged by its reviewers at the time of its original production to be a worthwhile play; (2) it was singled out as a play of merit in the years following its production in the commentary of drama critics

¹⁴Thomas L. Dahle and Alan H. Monroe, "The Empirical Approach," An Introduction to Graduate Study in Speech and Theatre, ed. Clyde W. Dow (East Lansing, Michigan: Michigan State University Press, 1961), p. 175.

¹⁵For a more complete definition, see Chapter II.

¹⁶Burns Mantle (ed.), The Best Plays (Dodd, Mead and Company).

or historians; or (3) it received recognition by winning any major drama awards.

The period "1931 to 1941" includes all the New York theatrical seasons from the 1931-32 season through the 1940-41 season.

Limitations Imposed

The following limitations have been imposed upon this study:

1. Since this is a descriptive study of a phenomenon, there will be no attempt to explain causes, to search for effects, or to relate the findings to any outside environmental forces. It will describe only the stylistic conditions which existed on the New York stage during the thirties. In this sense it is descriptive, rather than interpretive or evaluative.

2. This study will examine only serious drama written for the professional American stage (as defined above).

3. Plays used in the study must have been "first produced professionally" during the period 1931 to 1941 as defined above. Revivals, works written and first produced prior to 1931, and plays from abroad, or translations, will not be included.

4. The majority of sources consulted for this study are from the broad area of drama and theatre. Historical, literary, and artistic sources are cited only when applicable or germane to discussions.

Significance

There have been a number of valuable histories of American Drama. These have been listed in the bibliography. The period 1930 - 1940, containing as it did the Federal Theatre Project, the Group Theatre, the beginnings of a tributary theatre, and "social realism" in subject matter, has been fortunate in obtaining detailed coverage in most

books on dramatic and theatrical history.

With the exception of John Gassner¹⁷ and Mordecai Gorelik¹⁸ there have been no books written on drama from the specific viewpoint of dramatic style; and further there is not a single book written on style in American drama during the 1930's.

The Gassner and Gorelik books study the changing style of both drama and production from roughly 1880 to the present. Both do an excellent job in documenting the "mosaic" or various styles, and ideas behind the styles, which have arisen in the theatre during the past 80 years. Their one central failing appears to be, first, a lack of a concrete, explicit criteria for the discovery of style in either drama or production; second, an expression of minority points of view in comparison with other writers; and third, a confusion in terminology, as is characteristic of most writers on style.

As a result, any even general knowledge of style in American drama in the 1930's must be gleaned from a variety of diverse sources. And while most of these sources will mention the general aesthetic style of a dramatist, a period, or a single play there is never any attempt to analyze in a systematic or detailed manner specific plays from a stylistic viewpoint.

As the bibliography indicates there were numerous articles written on style in American drama from 1910 to 1940. Most of these deal with specific dramatic or production problems, such as particular dramatists (themes, style, points of view, dramaturgy), critical

¹⁷John Gassner, Directions in Modern Theatre and Drama (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1965). This book is an expansion of his earlier Form and Idea in Modern Drama.

¹⁸Mordecai Gorelik, New Theatres for Old (New York: Samuel French, Inc., 1957).

analyses of types of plays (social plays, proletarian plays, expressionistic plays, etc.), and influences of European production and dramaturgy on American designers, directors, and dramatists. Also it is difficult to ascertain precisely what criteria are being used for the discussions of the various styles, and further, what is meant by style itself.

In view of these problems this study, based upon a systematic analysis of plays, and the use of definitive criteria for the discovery of stylistic elements in plays, will make a valuable contribution to our knowledge of American drama during the thirties. This descriptive study can make possible a number of other various studies on different aspects of style, such as studies of causes for stylistic changes and innovations; the relation between style in American and European drama, or American and European art; or the relationship which might exist between dramatic style and the American social and/or political climate.

In summary, the distinctive features of this study are, (1) the use of a consistent method to describe major dramatic styles,¹⁹ (2) an attempt to arrive at a general consensus concerning the make-up of particular styles,²⁰ and (3) an objective manner of selecting plays which takes into account both commercially and critically successful dramas.

Sources

Primary sources employed in this study consist of thirty-six

¹⁹See Chapter II.

²⁰The criteria employed for identifying dramatic styles are compiled from a large number of sources pertaining to the field of drama and consequently reflect a majority opinion of what constitutes a particular dramatic style.



plays selected from the period of 1931-1941. Of these, thirty-four have been published and the other two are in manuscript form.

A number of secondary sources were employed in this study.

The Burns Mantle editions of Best Plays from 1931-1941 were used for information on plays produced in a given year, including length of run, type, author, and other pertinent data. Books, journals, and magazines devoted primarily to the fields of drama and theatre were used in the development of criteria for describing dramatic styles. Sections of encyclopedias, dictionaries, and literary histories were used when the information contained in them had some bearing on the stylistic aspect of drama. Non-dramatic critical sources which were cited or recommended by authors in the field of drama and theatre were referred to for this study. In general, however, these sources proved to be of little value, since a survey of non-dramatic criticism indicated to the author that these writings usually did not attempt to describe stylistic manifestations. English or English translations were used exclusively.

Method of Research

In order to describe dramatic style as it existed in serious, successful American drama on the professional New York stage, the following research procedure was employed.

Design of Study

Briefly, the design of this study consists of four parts. The first part covers two aspects: establishment of a method for a consistent description of styles (Chapter II), and a classification and selection of major and minor dramatic styles (Chapter III). The second part establishes criteria for classifying six major dramatic

styles (Chapters IV - IX). In the third part, selected plays from the 1930's are compared to the criteria in order to determine the styles of the plays, and a yearly report of the comparison is made (Chapters X - XIII). The last part consists in drawing conclusions as to the trends in style of serious American drama on the professional New York stage during the 1930's (Chapter XIV). In an Appendix (Appendix II) each play read and analysed is listed, along with a listing (in chart form) of their major stylistic qualities.

Establishment of Criteria

Criteria for establishing descriptions of dramatic styles were developed in the following manner. Information from books and articles pertaining to the drama and theatre were examined and compared in order to determine generally accepted views on the traits of particular dramatic styles. These views were then presented in a form devised for this study which includes the principles upon which the style is based, the general characteristics of a style, and the manner in which stylistic form elements associated with drama are employed (plot, character, etc.). When there appeared to be an important and significant difference of critical opinion concerning what constitutes a stylistic trait, or when information appeared to be lacking in printed sources, additional commentary concerning these aspects was supplied by the author of this study.

Script Sampling

In order to examine style in serious drama on the New York stage during the 1930's, a number of actual scripts were analyzed. Since the number of serious plays produced on the New York stage during the period in question was so large, it was impossible to examine each one

in any significant detail. Therefore, a method of sampling was employed.

In consultation with the Communications Research Division of the Michigan State University College of Communication Arts a decision was made to sample four seasons. The seasons selected were 1931-1932, 1934-1935, 1937-1938, and 1940-1941 because these are statistically representative of the ten year period. Each serious drama opening on "Broadway" and running for a total of fifty consecutive performances or more in each of the selected seasons will be analyzed for its style, provided it received critical acclaim.²¹

Play Analysis Procedure

In order to describe stylistic trends in Chapters XI - XIV during a particular year, each play selected was analyzed as to stylistic manifestations in principle, general characteristics, and the form elements of plot, character, language, and theme. The analysis in each of these areas for each play consists of essentially two parts: first, an assertion as to the style of the particular element; second, support for that assertion through (1) referring back to the criteria in Chapters IV - X, and (2) through selected examples of that criteria as it is manifested in the play itself.

In assessing the style of a play equal value was given to each of the form elements as well as to the over-all principle and general characteristics. This procedure was followed so that an accurate picture of each play could be presented. The form elements of a play are not necessarily reflective of the principle of that play.

The following chapter describes in detail the method for describing dramatic style in plays.

²¹For a definition of "critical acclaim" see "Definition of Terms," supra.

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CHAPTER II

A METHOD FOR DESCRIBING DRAMATIC STYLES

The purpose of the following chapter is to explain the method employed in this study for describing dramatic styles. To attain this goal the word "style" must first be clarified. Section one will deal with the definition of "style" as it is used in this study; section two with the method for describing dramatic styles.

Definition of Style

For purposes of this study, style in drama is defined as a characteristic or distinctive way, manner, or mode of selecting, arranging, and emphasizing the elements of dramatic construction which is peculiar to a play or group of plays, and which at the same time distinguishes it from other plays. This is in no way a final or absolute definition, but serves only to identify the meaning of style assumed in subsequent discussions.

The above definition was derived by comparing a number of definitions of style found in general references, art histories, books on aesthetics, and works pertaining to drama. As such it is in fundamental agreement with generally accepted concepts of style. For example, Webster's Third International Dictionary defines the word "style" (as it pertains to aesthetics) as "a quality that gives distinctive excellence to something (as artistic expression) and that consists esp. in the appropriateness and choice of elements



(as subject, medium, form) combined and the individualism imparted by the method of combining." Hiram Moderwell, in The Theatre of Today, describes style as a "manner of executing a work of art, as contrasted with the work itself;"¹ and the art historian Janson writes that "style means the particular way in which the forms that make up any given work of art are chosen and fitted together."² In The Arts and Their Interrelations, Thomas Munro states that "a style is a distinctive or characteristic mode of presentation, construction or expression in art."³ Oscar Brockett contends that style "is a quality which results from a characteristic mode of expression or method of presentation" and "may be applied to the dramatic expression of a period, a nation, a movement, or an author."⁴ And finally, the Encyclopedia of the Arts says, "Starting with . . . [the] figurative sense, style means those characteristics of form which are peculiar to a certain work or a group of works and which at the same time distinguish it or them from other works."⁵

The essential points of agreement among most definitions of style are: (1) that it is a characteristic manner of executing a work of art; (2) that forms or elements are involved in determining

¹Hiram Kelley Moderwell, The Theatre of Today (New York: John Lane Co., 1914), p. 118.

²H. W. Janson, History of Art (New York: Harry W. Abrams, Inc., 1962), p. 36.

³Thomas Munro, The Arts and Their Interrelations (New York: The Liberal Arts Press, 1949), p. 379.

⁴Oscar G. Brockett, The Theatre: An Introduction (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, Inc., 1964), p. 44.

⁵Alois J. Schardt, "Style," Encyclopedia of the Arts, ed. Dagobert D. Runes and Harry G. Schrickel (New York: Philosophical Library, 1946), p. 974.

the manner of expression; and (3) that works of art may be grouped according to their styles. The definition of style adopted for this study attempts to include these generally accepted ideas.

A Method for Describing Dramatic Styles

The investigation of style in drama does not materially differ from an investigation of style in any other art. All such investigations depend upon a constancy in art whereby "direct acquaintance with an unanalyzed work of art will often permit us to recognize another object of the same origin, just as we recognize a face to be native or foreign."⁶ It is this constancy in art that may make possible the recognition of stylistic similarities in works of art, but "the single name given to the style of a period rarely corresponds to a clear and universally accepted characterization of a type."⁷

Furthermore, "styles are not usually defined in a strictly logical way" since their "characteristics . . . vary constantly and resist a systematic classification into perfectly distinct groups."⁸ Although perfection in the description and classification of styles appears to be impossible, "limits are sometimes fixed by convention for simplicity in dealing with historical problems or in isolating a type."⁹

The method employed in this study, then, makes possible an

⁶Meyer Schapiro, "Style," A Modern Book of Esthetics, ed. Melvin Rader (3rd. ed.; New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, Inc., 1960), p. 338.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Ibid.

orderly and systematic presentation of the commentary on dramatic styles found in written sources pertaining to the drama. As such, it is a framework for presenting the ideas and concepts of dramatic styles as expressed by drama critics and scholars, rather than a process for analyzing or investigating dramatic styles.

In brief this method is divided into three parts:

(1) principles, the over-all ideas upon which a style is based and which determines its development; (2) general characteristics, the qualities and impressions of a style which are apparent when a play is considered as a whole; and (3) form elements, the treatment of the parts of a play (plot, character, language, and theme) which make up the whole.

Principles of Style

Styles do not arbitrarily arise. They develop or change according to corresponding developments or changes in the philosophies, attitudes, and conditions of either the culture in which they appear or the art form of which they are a part. This contention is shared by most writers on drama and style.

Thomas Munro, for instance, writes that "trends in artistic styles are never independent, but parts of still larger cultural trends embracing all forms of thought and behavior; social, political, economic, religious, and scientific."¹⁰ A similar view is expressed by Theodore M. Greene when he states

No culture or society, . . . is static, and no individual artist, . . . is immune to cultural and social influences.

¹⁰Munro, p. 339

Societies and individuals alike are continually undergoing internal change, These changes in outlook are reflected in the emergence of new styles.¹¹

The same general view is voiced in connection with the more limited area of dramatic style by John Gassner. In Producing the Play he points out that "different styles arose in response to different points of view, intentions, and conditions."¹² He expands on this statement in Form and Idea in the Modern Theatre when he writes

. . . I relate the forms of modern drama to certain "ideas of the theatre"--that is, to certain conceptions of theatrical art and certain expectations from it. By "idea" I do not mean subject matter, but the view of theatre apparent in the play . . . , and the special esthetic aim pursued in the work It is often difficult to distinguish between an artist's view of theatre and his view of life, society, politics or religion Nevertheless, I employ "idea" to mean something larger than mere topic or opinion, I use the term to denote some specific way of conceiving the nature and use of theatre, which in turn helps to determine dramatic form and stage presentation.¹³

From these statements and others style is looked upon as being dependent upon and reflective of the outlooks, views, conditions, or ideas of its environment, whether it be that of the total culture or the more limited one of a particular art form, such as drama. The dependence of style on underlying cultural or aesthetic principles can be seen, for example, in the drama of ancient Greece. Here the dramatic style is influenced by the religious and philosophical concepts of the Athenian society. The idea that "necessity" is a determining

¹¹Theodore Meyer Greene, The Arts and the Art of Criticism (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1940), p. 383.

¹²John Gassner, Producing the Play, (revised ed.; New York: The Dryden Press, Inc., 1953), p. 53.

¹³John Gassner, Form and Idea in the Modern Theatre (New York: The Dryden Press, Inc., 1956), p. 4.



factor in the fate of man is reflected in the drama of the period. The unified structure of the plot, the consistency of character, and the regularity of the poetic dialogue can also be viewed as extensions of the Greek cultural ideals of proportion, harmony, and order.

In light of the above observations, it is deemed reasonable to begin the discussion of particular dramatic styles with a consideration of the ideas, points of view, or philosophical attitudes upon which the styles are based. For the sake of convenience, the word "principle" is used as a heading for this portion of style description, and is understood to be a general term encompassing the various concepts of idea, world-view, philosophy, attitude, and point of view.

Characteristics of Style

Although a knowledge of the principles underlying a style is helpful in understanding its development, the actual identification or description of a style depends upon an examination of its characteristics. In this study the characteristics of dramatic styles are separated into two groups, general characteristics and form elements.

This division into two groups is prompted by the remarks of Meyer Schapiro in his comprehensive essay on style and its description. He says that, while there is no established system for describing style, "in general the description of style refers to three aspects of art: form elements or motives, form relationships, and qualities (including an over-all quality which we may call 'expression')."14

14Schapiro, p. 338.

He believes these aspects to be the broadest, most stable, and most reliable bases for style description.¹⁵

Two of the aspects of art mentioned by Schapiro are covered in this study under the title of general characteristics. These aspects are qualities (including expression) and form relationships. The third aspect, form elements, is treated under the title of form elements.

General Characteristics.--Although Schapiro lists form elements first, and deems them quite important, he does not feel that a description of form elements alone is sufficient for delineating a style. He contends, "In order to distinguish . . . styles one must also look for features of an other order and, above all, for different ways of combining them."¹⁶ He points out that the elements which make up a style "seem to be marked by the expression of the whole, or that there is a dominant feature to which the elements are adapted."¹⁷ It is these "features of another order," "the expression of the whole," and "dominant features" together with the previously mentioned qualities and form relationships which are the general characteristics of a style.

For example, the historic dramatic style of French Neo-Classicism may be said to have an austere and artificial quality. Its overall expression can be described as one of reason and/or rationality with dominant features of decorum, elevation, and dignity. It displayed a

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 339.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 342



relationship of form elements in combining poetic expression and characters from the aristocratic classes, and a simple plot which adhered to the unities of action, time and place. This very relationship aids in the projection of the qualities of austerity and artificiality.

Another example of form relationship as a characteristic of dramatic style appears in the various uses of the soliloquy in drama. The fact that a soliloquy appears in a play is not as significant in identifying a style as is the particular relation the soliloquy has to the rest of the play. A soliloquy can be "constructive" in explaining the plot or relating off-stage events, or "reflective" in revealing a character's thoughts and feelings.¹⁸ In both instances the relation of the soliloquy to the structure of the play is more significant for determining the style of the play than the mere appearance of the soliloquy itself.

In summary, the general characteristics of dramatic style are described as qualities, expressions, dominant features, and form relationships. They are the overall impressions of the style arising from the view of the play as a whole.

Form Elements.--The most readily identifiable aspects of a style are those of its form elements. In drama these form elements are generally accepted to be those described by Aristotle in his Poetics. They are plot, character, language, theme, music, and spectacle.¹⁹ Of these only the first four will be included in the criteria for the identification of dramatic styles. Music is excluded

¹⁸Gassner, Form and Idea . . ., p. 171.

¹⁹Aristotle, "The Poetics," Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art, ed. S. H. Butcher (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1951), pp. 23-25.

because it "is no longer an invariable part of drama."²⁰ Spectacle is also excluded because its primary means of realization is in theatre production and is therefore not a major form element of drama.

The description of plot, character, language, and theme which follow below serve only to define what these form elements mean in terms of this study. In no way are they meant as an outline of how particular form elements will be discussed.

1. Plot is the structuring or patterning of the events of the play and includes such aspects as subject matter, action, conflict, point of attack, exposition, climax, and resolution.

2. Character is a term for the persons who appear in the drama and who carry out the dramatic action of the plot. The term includes the physical, mental, social, and moral aspects of these persons.

3. Language is the dialogue spoken by the characters. It imparts information, reveals character, and directs attention to the development of the plot.

4. Theme is the over-all meaning and significance of the action of a drama. Its aspects include the ideas, arguments, and thoughts expressed in a play.

Summary

This chapter has stated the definition of the word "style" operative in this study and outlined a method for describing dramatic styles. The operative definition is: Style in drama is a characteristic or distinctive way, manner, or mode of selecting, arranging, and emphasizing the elements of dramatic construction

²⁰Brockett, p. 26.



which is peculiar to a play or group of plays and which at the same time distinguishes it from other plays. The method of describing dramatic styles is based on the general concepts of stylistic investigation. It takes into consideration the principles which govern the rise and development of styles, the general characteristics of style (its qualities, impressions, and form relationships), and the form elements (plot, character, language, and theme) peculiar to dramatic styles.

CHAPTER III

CLASSIFICATION AND SELECTION OF DRAMATIC STYLES

This chapter has a threefold purpose. Its first purpose is to classify modern dramatic styles in an orderly fashion. The second purpose is to select those styles which are considered to be of major importance in modern drama in order that they may be analyzed according to the method discussed in Chapter II. The third purpose of this chapter is to discuss those modern dramatic styles which are considered to be experimental or minor in their influence on modern drama.

Generic Styles

One general way of classifying style in drama, is in terms of so-called "generic styles." The use of this term is simply to categorize all styles in drama as generally having either an "illusionistic" or non'illusionistic" manner of presentation. The illusionistic mode of drama is sometimes referred to by writers as the "representational" style of drama, in which a play is presented "in the manner and sequence of actual life."¹ Plays which are illusionistic are obviously aimed at representing normal and everyday human experiences in recognizable natural settings, with the characters speaking in ordinary-sounding conversation. The "non-illusionistic"

¹Gassner, Producing the Play, p. 54.

mode is called by critics the "presentational" style of drama, in which "the object is to project the play's content frankly and directly to the audience."² Plays which tend to be non-illusionistic depict an "abstract or conventionalized reflection of human activity, frankly artificial or playlike with little conformity to the way people actually behave or talk, and . . . the settings merely suggest real places instead of representing them."³

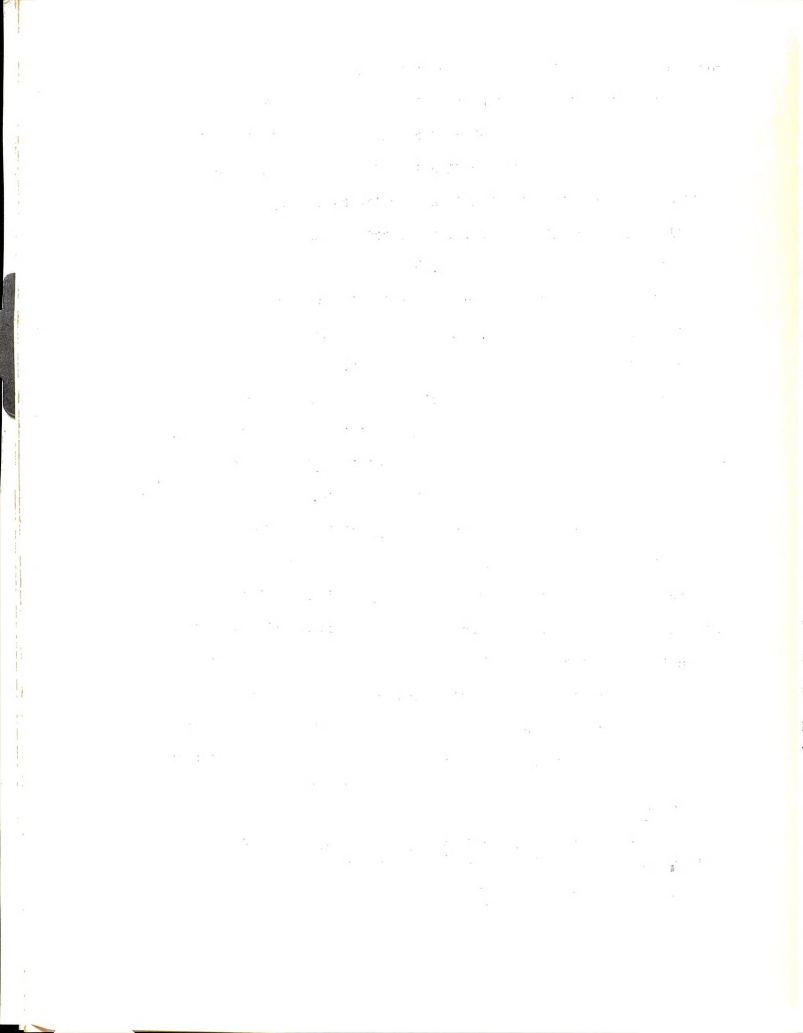
While this is a true picture of style, it is a gross over simplification of the problem, since there are many degrees and shades of "illusion" and "non-illusion" in Art. A truer picture is to use these two concepts, the generic styles, as two general overviews of dramatic style under which all specific dramatic styles may be classified. In this sense each specific style tends to be more or less "illusionistic" or "non-illusionistic."

One of the most popular terms used by critics to distinguish plays which are mostly non-illusionistic or presentational is "Theatricalism." Theatricalism is not a style of drama, but rather a theatrical or production tendency which attempts to make clear to the audience "that they are witnessing a play and not an excerpt from life."⁴ It also "exploits the resources of the theatre in methods and devices for communication other than direct representation, those which are distinctly of the theatre, either previously existent,

²Ibid.

³Curtis Canfield, The Craft of Play Directing (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1963), p. 29.

⁴Kenneth Thorp Rowe, A Theatre in Your Head (New York: Funk and Wagnalls Co., 1960), p. 215.



or newly invented or combined by the playwright."⁵

Theatricalism, as opposed to the generic style of "representationalism" has as its ideal "a theatre freed from all pretense of reproducing reality," even the reality of "imaginary" life projected in Symbolist drama.⁶ Theatricalist drama in production is "a happening in that real world which is the gathering of actors and spectators come together, the first to practice, and the second to watch, the act of undisguised and glorying make-believe."⁷ Its "reality" is dramatic action in terms of stage reality; "performance should be openly Histrionic."⁸

The staginess of the play will mean an exhibition of life in terms of the theatre Nor will the playwright . . . be bound by considerations of realistic, psychological, or some supernatural truth. His aim will be dramatic truth, and in embodying it forth on the stage, he will be free to treat his material---the elements of human character and action---in any fashion he may choose so long as his convention is made intelligible, is theatrical in nature, and lays no claim to be anything but a method of presentation.⁹

The drama which is written with this theatrical tendency is written for a stage treated as a platform for actors and not a picture frame to contain illusion. The stage and auditorium are united as the area of dramatic performance in order to establish the unity of player and spectator."¹⁰ The spectator, however, is not supposed to

⁵Ibid.

⁶Gassner, Directions in . . . , p. 145

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Ibid., 146

¹⁰Gorelik, p. 289

get lost in the spell of the play; "he is treated as the detached critical spectator for whom the show is being put on rather than the victim of an illusionist's trickery."¹¹

In keeping with its principles this theatrical tendency employs a variety of conventions which call attention to its "theatricality." The soliloquy is part of the technique of Theatricalism.¹² The spectator is also made aware that he is in a theatre watching a show by employing some techniques which Gassner terms misapplications of Theatricalism. These include "audience participation" (people "planted" in the audience who take part in the action of the play) and the use of imaginary props.¹³ Most of these theatrical techniques can be found in styles which are classified as being "non-illusionistic." The two mentioned above by Gassner, for instance, are techniques of Epic style, which is probably the most non-illusionistic, presentational, theatrical style.

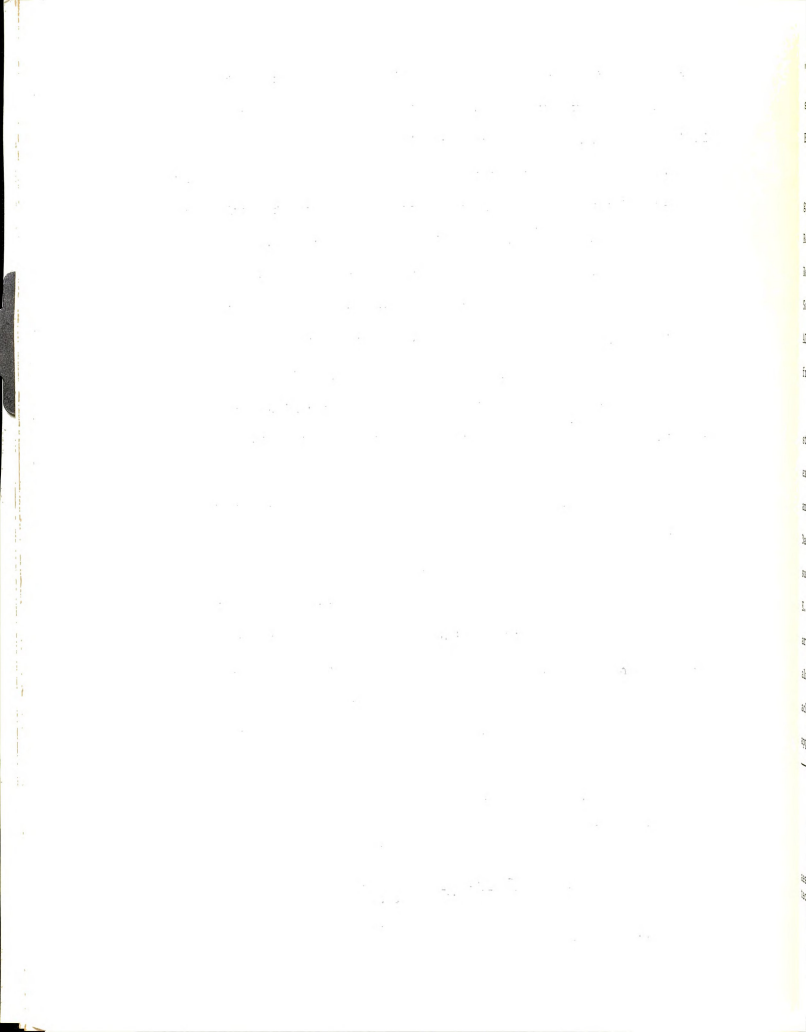
In summary, there are two general stylistic trends in drama. These are a tendency toward illusion, or a tendency away from illusion. Plays are generally classified as containing one of these tendencies, hence the generic styles of Representationalism ("illusionism"), and Presentationalism ("non-illusionism" or "theatricalism").

The specific dramatic styles which come under the heading of Representationalism are Realism, Naturalism, and Romanticism. The latter in its early development exhibited the attributes of a basic

¹¹Gassner, Directions in . . . , p. 146.

¹²Alan S. Downer, Fifty Years of American Drama, 1900-1950 (Chicago: Henry Regnery Co., 1951), p. 10.

¹³Gassner, Directions in . . . , p. 154-55



"presentational" style, but in modern times it has become "representational."¹⁴ The specific Presentational styles are Symbolism, Expressionism, Epic theatre, Formalism, Futurism, and Surrealism.¹⁵

Other stylistic terms often appear in connection with the generic Representational style. These are Impressionism, Selective Realism, and Socialist Realism. Impressionism¹⁶ and Selective Realism can be classified in the realm of production styles. Socialist Realism is too narrowly confined to modern Soviet drama. Although many dramas have been written in this style, they differ from Realism only in content, that of a socialist philosophy.¹⁷

Other terms sometimes identified with the generic Presentational style are Constructivism, Cubism, and Dadaism. These styles are excluded from further consideration in this study. Constructivism and Cubism are strictly production styles limited to scenic art. Dadaism in drama and theatre did not last long enough to provide a sufficient body of dramatic works from which a style might be derived. E. E. Cummings' Him and Gertrude Stein's Four Saints in Three Acts are Dadaism's best known American works, indeed, they alone constitute almost the entire canon of Dadaist drama. Any other Dadaist dramatic achievements remain obscure since "Dadaist theatrical work was apparently confined mostly to private entertainments."¹⁸ In view of

¹⁴Gassner, Producing the Play, p. 61.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 54.

¹⁶Impressionism is a term that applies to a mood, or to an aesthetic endeavour merely: there is no particular dramatic form or technique . . . associated with its aims. Nicoll, p. 794.

¹⁷See both Gassner, Form and Idea . . . , p. 12, and Nicoll, p. 812.

¹⁸Gorelik, p. 247.



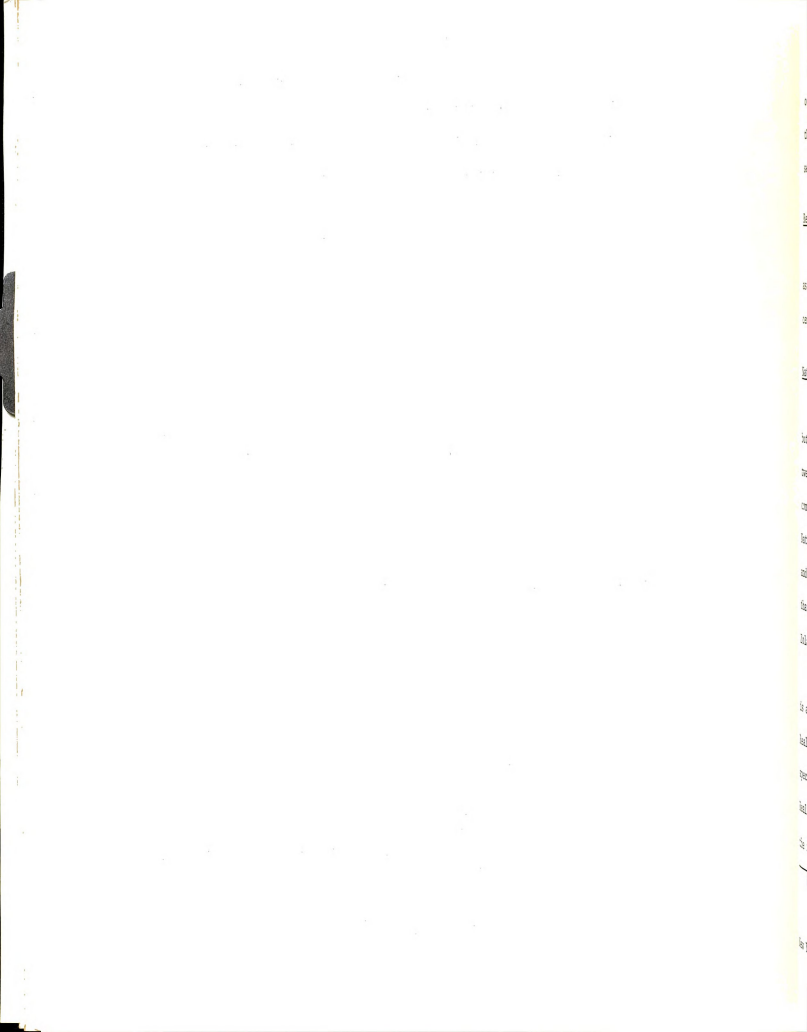
these facts, it is unprofitable to discuss Dadaism further.

After the exclusion of the above stylistic terms and movements for various reasons, the remaining dramatic styles are the representational ones of Realism, Naturalism, and Romanticism, and the presentational ones of Symbolism, Expressionism, Epic Theatre, Formalism, Futurism, and Surrealism. Although these are all recognizable dramatic styles they are not all of equal importance to this study. The following section is devoted to selecting the major dramatic styles which will be discussed and analyzed in later chapters.

The Dramatic Styles

In this study dramatic styles are considered to be major when general agreement among authors in the field of drama and theatre list them as dominant dramatic styles.¹⁹ They are also considered major because of the quantity of plays associated with them. A further consideration is their influence on modern drama, and a last consideration is the practical one of whether written sources are sufficient to justify or to make possible a full discussion of them in terms of principles, characteristics, and form elements.

¹⁹The works consulted for the determination of which styles are considered major are listed here. They are selected because they treat an entire range of dramatic styles and are not limited to the discussion of only a few or single styles. They provide an over-view of modern dramatic styles. These works are: John Gassner, Producing the Play (New York: The Dryden Press, Samuel French, 1940); Oscar Brockett: The Theatre: An Introduction (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, Inc., 1964); Fred B. Millett and Gerald Eades Bentley, The Art of the Drama (New York: D. Appleton-Century Co., 1935); Edward A. Wright, A Primer for Playgoers (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1958); Kenneth Thorp Rowe, A Theatre in Your Head (New York: Funk and Wagnalls Co., 1960); H. D. Albright, William P. Halstead, Lee Mitchell, Principles of Theatre Art (New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1955); Haskell M. Block, Robert G. Shedd, ed. Masters of the Modern Drama (New York: Random House, Inc., 1962); and Allardyce Nicoll, World Drama (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Co., 1949).



On the basis of the above considerations, the dramatic styles of Realism, Naturalism, Romanticism, Symbolism, Expressionism, Epic theatre, Formalism, Futurism, and Surrealism will be discussed in this section in order to determine which are Major Dramatic Styles.

Realism

Little discussion is needed to justify the selection of Realism as a major dramatic style. It is the dominant style in twentieth century playwrighting.²⁰

Naturalism

Naturalism is included as a major dramatic style in this study, but such an inclusion requires some clarification. An examination of twentieth century dramatic commentary reveals two distinct theories concerning Naturalism as a dramatic style. One theory is that Naturalism is only a heightened and intensified form of Realism, and not a separate, distinguishable style. The second theory postulates that Naturalism is a distinct style from that of Realism by virtue of Zola's theory of "scientific determinism."

Typical of the first group, those who believe that Naturalism is an extreme form of realism is John Gassner. According to him, Realism is the general style or tendency and Naturalism is the specialized, extreme style "developed by militant champions of Realism."²¹ He indicates that environment is a determining factor in the idea of Naturalism.²² To him this is not sufficient reason to

²⁰Brockett, p. 277.

²¹John Gassner, A Treasury of the Theatre, Vol. II (revised ed.; New York: Simon and Schuster, Inc., 1951), p. 4.

²²Gassner, Form and Idea . . . , pp. 66-67



distinguish Naturalism from Realism, since one of his criteria for Realism is also that environment and heredity are determinate factors in the formation of character and action. As a result his logical position is that Naturalism (as an adjunct of Realism) signifies only "a strict often extreme, mode of Realism . . . and a rather narrow dogma introduced . . . by Emile Zola."²³

The opposing view, that Naturalism in drama can be said to be distinct from Realism, agrees in part with the Gassner view. The differences between the two styles are in their principles and general qualities, while their similarities, or near similarities, are in their form elements. Heffner, for example, claims that Naturalism can be differentiated from Realism "not by a method, but as a philosophy of life and literature."²⁴ In practice it "extends and intensifies the methods of realism," but in idea it follows Zola.²⁵ Brockett advances an almost identical view when he writes, "Naturalism, however, went much further than realism, for it insisted that art must become scientific in its methods, and it placed greater emphasis on the idea that all behavior is determined by the forces of heredity and environment."²⁶ It is the thought of these writers that the extension and intensification of the realistic method is significant to warrant Naturalism's place as a separate style. Add to this its distinctive principles as formulated initially by Zola, and their

²³Ibid., p. 67.

²⁴Hubert C. Heffner, Samuel Selden, Hunton D. Sellman, Modern Theatre Practice (4th ed.; New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1959), p. 73.

²⁵Ibid., p. 74.

²⁶Brockett, p. 275.

view is that Naturalism is distinct enough to be separated from Realism.

In this study Naturalism is considered to be a separate and distinguishable dramatic style from Realism for the reasons expressed by writers adhering to the second view of Naturalism in the discussion immediately above. If Naturalism is indeed an extreme and strict mode of Realism, then these very extremes must be capable of identification. They become the distinguishing features of a naturalistic style.

Romanticism

Romanticism began as a dramatic style over a century and a half ago but continues as a "strong current of anti-realistic modern theatre" in such distinguished plays as those of Maxwell Anderson and Christopher Fry.²⁷ It is an even stronger current in many undistinguished plays in the guise of what Gorelik terms "pseudo-Naturalistic" (realistic) which he describes as "outwardly Naturalistic [realistic] but usually Romantic in content."²⁸ Despite some changes in emphasis and the inroads of Realism on its original conceptions, Romanticism is a distinct major modern dramatic style and is treated as such in this study.

Symbolism

Symbolism is regarded as one of the significant stylistic

²⁷Gassner, Form and Idea . . . , p. 127.

²⁸Gorelik, p. 489. Gorelik uses the term "Naturalism" to stand for what is usually termed "Realism". (See page 26 in his book, New Theatres for Old). This confusion is unfortunate but the quote from Gorelik aptly sums up an aspect of modern Romanticism.



departures from the more dominant Realism.²⁹ Several plays of such recognized playwrights as Maurice Maeterlinck and Henrik Ibsen are included in this style. Beyond this, Symbolism has had considerable influence in both drama and theatre.³⁰ For these reasons it is included in this study as a major dramatic style.

Expressionism

Expressionism is also regarded as a major dramatic style. Although primarily a German dramatic movement, it is identifiable in a number of works by American playwrights, notably Elmer Rice and Eugene O'Neill. Vestiges of this style still appear in plays such as Arthur Miller's Death of a Salesman.³¹ The number of plays written in this style is significant and critical commentary is plentiful.

Epic Theatre

Epic theatre is included as a major dramatic style. Since the term "Epic theatre" is so closely associated with the plays and theories of the German playwright Bertolt Brecht, it might be argued that the style should be considered experimental rather than major. However, Epic theatre style is not confined to Brecht alone. The "Living Newspaper" plays of the Federal Theatre Project are considered to be written in an Epic Theatre style,³² and Epic "tendencies" are

²⁹Brockett, p. 287.

³⁰Gassner, Form and Idea . . ., p. 127-130.

³¹Ibid., p. 13.

³²Brockett, p. 320, and Gorelik, p. 429.



discernible in many dramas in both America and Europe.³³ When these plays are added to the prolific works of Brecht a significant number of plays can be said to have been written under the influence of the Epic theatre style, at least enough to render the style as being more than experimental. Regardless of the number of plays, Epic theatre appears to be important to authors since they have discussed it often and at length. As a result considerable commentary exists for the formulation of criteria for the identification of Epic theatre as a major dramatic style. In addition there are plays being written today, during 1965 and 1966, which are written in the Epic style, or which exhibit many Epic characteristics. The current Broadway hit, The Royal Hunt of the Sun, contains many Epic techniques, as does The Persecution and Assassination of Jean-Paul Marat as Performed by the Inmates of the Asylum of Charenton under the Direction of the Marquis de Sade. There is also The Living Theatre Company of New York which since 1963 has produced dozens of plays written and performed in the Epic style. Some of the titles of these plays are: The Brig, Frankenstein, Smaller Pieces, The Landlady, and Mysteries.³⁴ And finally there is the Open Theatre which, influenced by Brecht and Antonin Artaud, have freely experimented with Epic techniques during recent New York seasons.

Because of the quantity of critical writings on the Epic style, the works of Brecht and Piscator, Frisch, the Federal Theatre Project, and contemporary dramatists Epic Theatre is included as a major dramatic style.

³³Gorelik, p. 407.

³⁴Saul Gottlieb, "The Living Theatre in Exile," Tulane Drama Review, XXXII (Summer, 1966), pp. 137-152.

1. The first part of the paper discusses the importance of the study of the history of the United States. It is argued that a knowledge of the past is essential for a full understanding of the present and for the development of a sound policy for the future. The author points out that the study of history is not only a means of satisfying a natural curiosity about the past, but also a means of developing a sense of responsibility for the future. He concludes that the study of history is a necessary part of a liberal education and that it should be made a compulsory part of the curriculum of all schools and colleges.

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4. The fourth part of the paper discusses the importance of the study of the history of the United States. It is argued that a knowledge of the past is essential for a full understanding of the present and for the development of a sound policy for the future. The author points out that the study of history is not only a means of satisfying a natural curiosity about the past, but also a means of developing a sense of responsibility for the future. He concludes that the study of history is a necessary part of a liberal education and that it should be made a compulsory part of the curriculum of all schools and colleges.

5. The fifth part of the paper discusses the importance of the study of the history of the United States. It is argued that a knowledge of the past is essential for a full understanding of the present and for the development of a sound policy for the future. The author points out that the study of history is not only a means of satisfying a natural curiosity about the past, but also a means of developing a sense of responsibility for the future. He concludes that the study of history is a necessary part of a liberal education and that it should be made a compulsory part of the curriculum of all schools and colleges.

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Formalism

Formalism as a dramatic style is discussed in any detail only by John Gassner in his Directions in Modern Theatre and Drama. Although the term appears occasionally in the commentaries of other authors, the style Gassner describes is not just his invention. Allardyce Nicoll in World Drama does not actually use the term "Formalism," but he does treat the same plays and authors that Gassner includes in his discussion of Formalism. In fact Nicoll appears to make a plea for what Gassner calls Formalism in the conclusion of World Drama.

If there is hope for a revival of dramatic power in our time, that hope is to be found mainly in the fact that in some quarters at least . . . formalized intensity is being welcomed. . . . when we observe what considerable steps in advance have been taken by the poetic play, when we see how the ancient themes are being given new meanings in modern works, and particularly, when we note how French dramatists are striving passionately to create a new foundation for tragedy, . . . we may well be justified in wondering whether a fresh glory is not near at hand . . . when we consider what important suggestions for the future have been variously exhibited by Murder in the Cathedral, Electre, and Eurydice we may perhaps be justified in letting our imaginations move forward with pleasant anticipation into the realm of the theatre to come. In certain circles, at least, a renewed interest in form--the be-all and end-all of dramatic art--is being born.³⁵

In view of the comments of such recognized authors as Gassner and Nicoll, it is reasonable to include a discussion of various experiments in dramatic style under the heading of Formalism. Gassner is the exclusive source since Nicoll's comments are too closely tied to criticism of individual plays to be useful in a general discussion.

John Gassner states that "if the word ("Formalism") has any semantic value at all, it is that of signifying conspicuously formal

³⁵Nicoll, p. 942.



play structure and artificially devised, hence, 'formal', characterization, action, and speech."³⁶ This concept of Formalism stems from its principles which are associated with Copeau and Yeats.

They had noble aims, these and other dreamers of stylized, more or less ritualistic, art: The spirit of man would be liberated by the very process of setting bounds--the bounds of art--to the imitation of an action and the imitation of conversation. Man would be magnified to the degree that action was purified of all but symbolic content, that characterization was refined into typicality, that speech was subjected to the jewelled yoke of formal utterance. Life on the stage would recover its antique grandeur to the degree that action was made ritualistic, characterization sculptural, and language ceremonial.³⁷

The concern for obvious form, the deliberate artificial treatment of character and language, and the search for a more or less ritualistic drama are the characteristics which tie together an otherwise diverse group of plays which include some of the works of William Butler Yeats, T. S. Eliot, and Jean Giraudoux.³⁸ Formalism in its diversity has not developed a style as much as it has employed stylistic devices such as the use of masks, choruses, "asides" or soliloquies, and narrators.

In summary, Formalism as a dramatic style is an attempt to produce a drama with more or less ritualistic qualities in order to recapture the imagined magnificence of historic classic styles. As such it is concerned with the projection of the formal structure of drama. It seeks an abstraction of character and language in order to heighten and dignify dramatic experience. It is deliberately presentational in its obvious use of conventions such as masks, choruses,

³⁶Gassner, Directions in . . . , p. 166.

³⁷Ibid., p. 165.

³⁸Ibid., pp. 167-171.



soliloquies, and narrators.

In its concern for form, its search for modern ritual art, and its use of historic conventions Formalism can be said to come nearest of all modern dramatic styles to historic Classicism. Gassner offers a provocative and stimulating argument to the effect that Realism has the essential character and qualities of Classicism.³⁹ It is not the purpose here to attempt to refute his argument, but to point out that the more obvious conventions and patterns of the classic style fit the principles and practices of Formalism. Indeed, since formalistic experiments are often patent imitations of classic style, the result could not be otherwise. According to Gassner, "In classical art the work stands in some fundamental relation to its age."⁴⁰ He claims this is true of Realism. Formalism, on the other hand, in its imitative capacity stands in relation to another and ancient age. It is, therefore, not a Major Modern Dramatic Style.

Futurism

Futurism, in its relatively brief existence, was championed by the poet F. T. Marenetti, the director Erice Prampolini, and others.⁴¹ It led to little of importance in the writing of plays. In the theatre, however, it "tended to lead in three directions: first, towards the substitution of 'mechanical' form in place of the current types of scenery; secondly, towards the subordination of the playwright to the director; and thirdly, towards an emphasis in action upon

³⁹Ibid., pp. 79-97.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 89.

⁴¹Gassner, Directions in . . . , p. 95.



physical movement."⁴²

Futurism aims to "express the marvelously dynamic nature of the machine."⁴³ Its "idea of theatre" is epitomized in "speed, power, and force."⁴⁴ In the Futurist Manifesto of 1909, the movements' advocates wrote, "We feel the need of delivering ourselves from old sensibilities, in order to create definitely the new plastic art of the machine."⁴⁵ In yet another declaration of principles, the Manifesto del Teatro Sintetico Futurista, Marinetti, Settimelli, and Corra called for a reformation of the theatre and drama.⁴⁶ They called for the exploitation of the straight line and the "synthetic" which is defined as the "ideal abstraction of typical forms."⁴⁷

From the ideas expressed in the manifestoes, the Futurists developed two major concepts: "the idea or sense of space based on appreciation of flat planes, and the idea or sense of function, wherein all romantic ornament was stripped away until only the essential remained."⁴⁸ Allardyce Nicoll elaborates on these concepts by stating,

Futurism is a destructive force in that it rejects the "beauty" of the past and endeavors to overthrow completely that romantic cult of loveliness which, in its eyes, is nothing but futile escapism. At the same time, it attempts

⁴²Nicoll, pp. 726-27.

⁴³Gassner, Directions in . . ., p. 109.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 111.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 95.

⁴⁶Rosa Trilla Clough, Futurism (New York: Philosophical Library, Inc., 1961), p. 144.

⁴⁷Nicoll, pp. 795-96.

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 796.



to be constructive by clamoring for a new art from which these romantic delicacies have been banished, an art which will reflect the mechanical civilization surrounding us. In place of the rounded line so characteristic of romantic artistry Marinetti boldly demands the straight line of girders and factories; in place of the haunting charms of the poetic he asks for a blatant, staccato form of expression that, if need be, will substitute mere sounds for the richer tones of the human voice.⁴⁹

From these concepts it is apparent that Futurism is not only opposed to the romantic but to the realistic and naturalistic as well.⁵⁰

The principles and concepts of Futurism resulted in the "synthetic" play which Rosa Clough describes as

a brief performance in which entire acts were reduced to a few sentences, and scenes to a handful of words. Only critical turning points were enacted and definitive statements uttered. No sentiments, no psychological development, no atmosphere, no suggestiveness. Common sense was banished, or rather replaced by nonsense. Stupidity, as such, was heralded as humor.⁵¹

In this "synthetic" drama traditional rules of dramaturgy and production were to be replaced by "dynamic improvisation". Thus a Futurist play, a 'synthesis' of many acts and scenes," did not require months of preparation; it was improvised and presented in a few minutes."⁵²

Futurism as an overall movement was most important in painting. Its greatest influence in the dramatic arts was in theatrical scenery and production.⁵³ Its only importance in drama appears as an influence on Expressionism.⁵⁴ Beyond these considerations, the movement is too

⁴⁹Ibid., pp. 726-727.

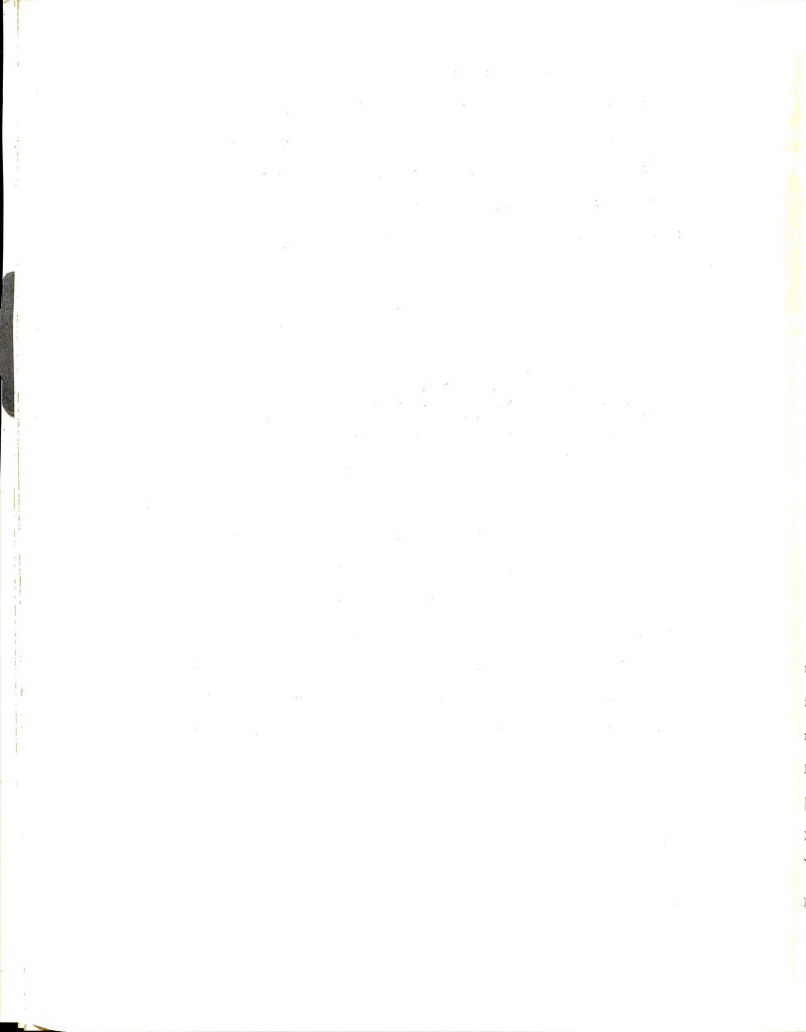
⁵⁰Ibid., p. 796.

⁵¹Clough, p. 55.

⁵²Ibid., p. 144.

⁵³Ibid., pp. 147-150.

⁵⁴Nicoll, p. 796.



limited to make any cogent evaluation of its dramatic style. For this reason Futurism can only be summed up briefly as a style concerned with machines and the mechanical; which attempted to emphasize function by removing all but the essentials of dramatic action, and thereby stressed the ideal abstraction of typical dramatic forms. As such it is anti-realistic, and is not a Major Dramatic Style.

Surrealism

Surrealism as a general movement in the arts exhibits a non-empirical tendency, and is based on representing dreams interpreted according to Freud's theories. This movement

maintains that there exists, and seeks access to, a "real", world that lies behind the artificial world of ordinary objects given in normal awareness. (It) argues that what is found on the conscious level is an arbitrary construct of mind, determined by habit and custom, and that the function of art is to recover and report the world as originally experienced and felt. (It) seeks to disintegrate the clear logical life of intellect, so as to search for its materials on the subconscious level, and discover there the true and primitive meanings that things have for us prior to the forms that we impose on them.⁵⁵

Surrealism has proven to be a provocative and controversial movement, but has failed to produce "any drama of merit," and is only important in playwrighting and production as a forerunner of other movements, or as an influence on other styles.⁵⁶ Except for Alfred Jarry's Ubu roi, Guillaume Appollinaire's Les Mamelles de Tiresias (The Breasts of Tiresias), and a limited number of plays by Jean Cocteau, Federico Garcia Lorca, and the Franco-Belgian playwright,

⁵⁵Iredell Jenkins, "Surrealism," Dictionary of Philosophy, ed. Dagobert D. Runes (New York: Philosophical Library, 1942), p. 307.

⁵⁶Brockett, p. 343.



Fernand Crommelynck, Surrealism has not been a widely imitated dramatic style.⁵⁷

The Surrealist Manifesto, penned in 1924 by Andre Breton, defined the movement as "pure psychic automatism by which it is intended to express, verbally, in writing or by any other means, the real process of thought.⁵⁸ This "process of thought" and the unconscious mind are the keys to the Surrealistic aesthetic. They attempted "to capture from consciousness the fugitive fantasies and images that issue from the unconscious without premeditation, recognizable origin or connection."⁵⁹ Some Surrealists were so extreme as

to plead that "art" should consist merely in (a) automatic writing or (b) the faithful recording of dreams; but the cleverer among the adherents of the movement . . . , allowed themselves to admit an element of the ordering imagination, without, however, abandoning their belief in the fundamental importance . . . , of the subconscious.⁶⁰

To the Surrealist, the best way to create art is "automatically" in much the same way that automatic writing is produced by spiritualists.⁶¹ For this reason, Surrealists shunned any deliberate procedure in art and sought their idea of "real" creativity in the subjective, the unpremeditated, and the inspired.⁶² They found the materials for artistic creation "in the poems and paintings of children and the insane, the scrawls 'doodles', which nervous people execute upon

⁵⁷Nicoll, pp. 773-776.

⁵⁸As quoted by Gorelik in New Theatres for Old, p. 255.

⁵⁹Rowe, p. 212.

⁶⁰Nicoll, p. 774.

⁶¹Gorelik, p. 255.

⁶²Ibid.



telephone pads, the antics of asylum inmates, the dreams of psychopaths and the vain and fugitive images which lurk in the dark corners of the normal mind."⁶³

Surrealist drama shares with the general movement the principle of seeking truth "by freeing the mind from rational control and activating the subconscious mind through a dreamlike state."⁶⁴ This principle leads the Surrealist dramatist to reject familiar reality, logic, rationality, coherence, and order. Instead he resorts to "inconsistencies, tricks, enigmas, startling juxtapositions, sophisticated anachronisms . . . , and, above all, fantasies."⁶⁵ For example, in Jean Cocteau's Orpheus Eurydice receives letters delivered by a mailman and Orpheus passes to the realm of Death through a mirror.⁶⁶

The following are further examples of Surrealistic practices in drama and theatre. In 1936 a Danish production of Kjeld Abell's musicomedy The Melody Was Lost featured Surrealistic devices.

A bouquet, bridal gown and silk hat drift across the stage. Mendelssohn's "Wedding March" floats raucously out to the audience, a stereoptikon from the rear of the stage repeatedly flashed pictures of second-rate honeymoon resorts while a toiled waiter drags a dinner table in and out. "I am Aurora", explains a chambermaid with the wings of an angel, who dusts off the morning sun just as the alarm clock rings and the curtain goes up on the Larson's little two-room apartment.⁶⁷

Also in 1936 the V and W Theatre in Prague produced another Surrealistic

⁶³Ibid.

⁶⁴Brockett, p. 343.

⁶⁵Gassner, Directions in . . . , p. 110.

⁶⁶Ibid.

⁶⁷Gorelik, p. 259.

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musicomedy titled Heaven and Earth. Gorelik describes its setting:

Ionic pillars ornament the classic facade, which is enlivened with strings of dried corncobs, a beehive and a bundle of rags; the columns, about to fall to pieces, are tied together with wire and twine. The interior consists of a single crumbling wall from which the wall paper is peeling off in shreds; it has a hole in the middle for the tin flue of a coal stove. When Jupiter is annoyed, rain, bricks, and plaster spatter down in front of this setting.⁶⁸

Lastly, there is the example of Salvador Dali's ballet, Bucchanale.

Although it is obviously not a drama, it does illustrate Surrealism on stage. Bacchanale, labeled a "paranoiac performance" by its creator,

centered rather casually around the mad King Ludwig II of Bavaria, Wagner's patron, The ballet took place before a backdrop on which was painted a huge swan made of cracked plaster with a classical pediment on its neck. Ludwig, chased by Death in the form of an umbrella, fell dead surrounded by a ring of umbrellas. In the interim there were dances by fauns with bushes as well as horns growing out of their heads. Prima ballerina was a dreamlike albino Venus in white tights.⁶⁹

From these examples, it is evident that Surrealism in theatre is anti-realistic, illogical, irrational, and perhaps incoherent. Yet, these very qualities are quite in keeping with the principles of Surrealism which postulate an avoidance of observed reality and rational process in creativity.

In summary, Surrealism is a minor movement in drama. It is based on a guiding principle that the function of the subconscious mind is the true process of thought, and that "reality" lies in the projection of the intuitions of the subconscious. Its general characteristics are seen as dreamlike action, irrationality, extreme

⁶⁸Ibid.

⁶⁹Ibid., pp. 255-256.

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subjectivity, and fantasy. The nature of the Surrealistic principle and the limited number of plays written in this style make it impossible to describe its treatment of form elements in drama. However, the style does employ such devices as inconsistency, enigmas, deliberate anachronisms, and surprising juxtapositions.

Summary

There are two generic style, Representationalism (or illusionism), and Presentationalism (or "conventionalism" or theatricalism). In the former, styles appear as Realism, Naturalism, and Romanticism; in the latter are classified the styles of Symbolism, Expressionism, Epic, Formalism, Futurism, and Surrealism.

The major modern dramatic styles, which will be discussed in this study, are Realism, Naturalism, Romanticism, Symbolism, Expressionism, and Epic.

The remaining styles which were discussed in the preceding paragraphs (Formalism, Futurism, and Surrealism) are labeled as experimental, or minor, for the following reasons: (1) they are not generally recognized by commentators as being important or as being widespread developments in dramatic styles; (2) plays written in these styles are few in number, often isolated or infrequent in appearance, and limited to the works of very few authors; (3) some styles have proved to be dead-ends, with little or no influence on subsequent playwrighting; and (4) the limited nature of the commentary available on these styles makes it, at best, difficult to analyze them completely in terms of principles, characteristics, and form elements. They will not be considered, therefore, in the following chapters.



CHAPTER IV

REALISM

Historical Background

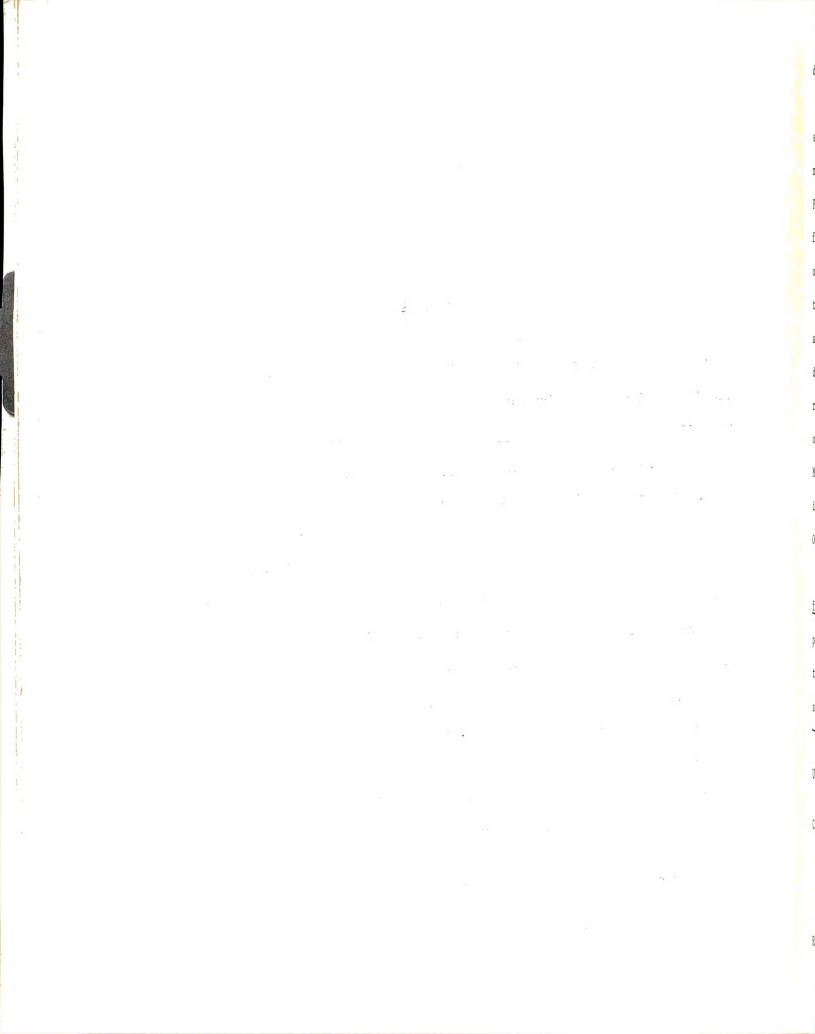
Although Eric Bentley maintains that "the historian will observe that there are realistic elements in the literature of all periods," the innovation of Realism as a dramatic style is generally credited to Emile Augier and Dumas fils, and is dated to their writings in the 1850's.¹ Although Le Fils Naturel, Dumas fils' first realistic play, was produced in 1855, it was not until 1868 that his "ringing call for an 'engaged' drama rather than dramatic legerdemain" was published.² Up to that time his drama exhibited several qualities which attest to his significance as an early realist. Among these qualities were his close study of character and setting, a concern with marital and social questions, and his use of prose dialogue.

In the face of the growing misery of man stemming from the Industrial Revolution and the growing urban centers of population, the artist began to reject the idealization of man as preached by the romanticist. Instead, after 1855, "observation, prediction, and control of society became the new ideals" in drama,³ based upon the

¹Eric Bentley, The Playwright As Thinker (New York: Meridian Books, 1955), p. 4.

²Gassner, Form and Idea . . ., p. 230.

³Brockett, p. 260.



development of psychology and sociology.

In theatrical production, however, there is a good deal of evidence that prior to 1850 a significant number of innovations were made that distinctly moved the theatre toward Realism in production. For example, credit is usually given J. R. Planche for being the first to move toward archaeological accuracy in his 1824 production of *King John*.⁴ But even before this historic date, Kenneth Macgowan tells us that "at the court theatre of Mannheim, Germany, in 1804, a stage designer joined pairs of wings that contained practicable doors or windows."⁵ Further, Macgowan quotes from Goethe's autobiography wherein Goethe inveighs against the French stage and its use of the box set.⁶ By 1831, seven years after Planche's *King John*, Madame Vestris was involved in the innovation of "surface realism in English decor,"⁷ and in 1841 she used the box set at the Olympic Theatre.⁸

Forty-four years passed from Planche's *King John* until Dumas fils published *Le Fils Naturel*. During these years Realism in production, having no counterpart in drama, was, to a great extent, the servant of Romantic drama. However, after 1860, the realistic spirit caught the dramatist. As a result, the second half of the

⁴A. Nicholas Vardac, *From Stage to Screen* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1949), xxi.

⁵Kenneth Macgowan and William Melnitz, *The Living Stage* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1955), p. 344.

⁶*Ibid.*

⁷Gassner, *Directions in . . .*, p. 299.

⁸Clayton Hamilton, *The Theory of the Theatre* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1939), p. 46.



nineteenth century was given over to Realism in drama.

It was the result -- or concomitant -- of the urbanization and mechanization of life, . . . of democratic reformism, of the new concern with the conditions of the people, . . . of the rise of the physical sciences which aimed at controlling nature by knowing its processes.⁹

In addition to this, and more significant, was the emphasis upon the biological sciences and the resulting development of psychology and sociology.

Principles of Realism

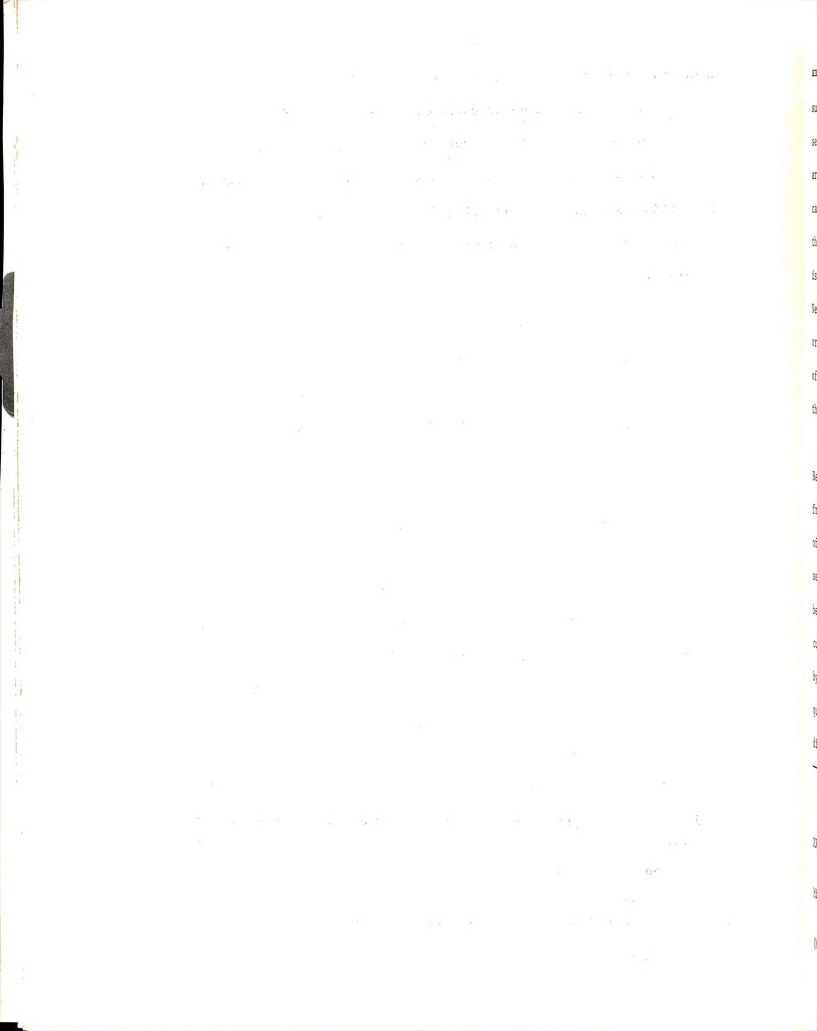
There appear to be two critical attitudes about the essential principles behind Realism. One is that the basic nature of the realist is to attempt a strict, rigid imitation of surface reality. The second view de-emphasizes this reproduction of observed reality, and instead places emphasis upon selectivity and a reproduction of contemporary human motives and character, which is not a part of surface, observed reality.

The first view lays stress upon the realist's duty to "repeat the very look of life." It is this theory which says that Realism sees truth as a reproduction of reality since it demands "a more or less literal picture of people and happenings."¹⁰ The test of Realism in this sense, according to Macgowan and Jones, "is the test of plausibility. Would men and women," they ask, "talk in this fashion in real life under the conditions of time, place, and action supplied by the playwright?"¹¹ Kenneth Thorpe Rowe would agree, and

⁹Bentley, p. 3.

¹⁰Kenneth Macgowan and Robert Edmund Jones, Continental Stagecraft (New York: Harcourt and Brace, 1922), pp. 4-5.

¹¹Ibid., p. 5.



answer that "truth to life" means "in external and particular detail,"¹² such as appears in Street Scene or the opening description of the setting in The Front Page. In this sense Realism is almost photographic art, or newspaper reporting. Its basis is parallel to what Henry James called "the emotion of recognition." Benjamin De Casseres illustrates this principle in his "Broadway to Date" column. "Legitimate realism is the attempt to put before an audience an exact reproduction of a New York street, a city-room in a newspaper office, a front line dugout, or a New York cigar store."¹³ This first view of the essential principle of Realism is held and promulgated by those critics who believe that there is little, if any, distinction between Realism and Naturalism.

There is a second view toward the essential aesthetic principle of Realism. This view is held by critics who see Realism as being distinct from Naturalism. It de-emphasizes the external, photographic nature of the style by stressing its "truth to life" aspect in a different sense. To them the "truth to life" aim is taken in the sense of being "true to the deeper motives of human character and the underlying currents of social development."¹⁴ Or as Stanislavski says (as reported by Hallie Flanagan after her tour of Russia) true to life means "the quality which exists inherently in any person or circumstance, as distinguished from any seeming or apparent quality."¹⁵ To these

¹²Rowe, p. 180.

¹³Benjamin de Casseres, "The Welter of Realism," Arts and Decoration, XXXV (October, 1931), p. 84.

¹⁴Sheldon Cheney, The New Movement in the Theatre (New York: Mitchell Kennerley, 1914), p. 35.

¹⁵Hallie Flanagan, Shifting Scenes in the Modern European Theatre (New York: Coward-McCann, Inc., 1928), p. 131.

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writers Realism is not "absorbed with the ephemeral exterior of the time in which we live;"¹⁶ but rather is concerned that "the people created by the dramatist shall be true to the nature of such people,"¹⁷ true to "the deeper motives of human character,"¹⁸ and sincere in theme, in treatment of story, and in technical construction.¹⁹

As to the differences between the two views, the most that can be said is that much of the confusion appears as a matter of terminology and word interpretation, especially in the case of the second view. Both views agree that Realism must be true to life. The first view sees this principle as meaning that Realism must be a photographic copy of the surface, externals of observed reality, and is hence very close to the view of the principle of Naturalism. The second view sees "truth to life" in less specific terminology. It is true to life in the sense of being

. . . true to the deeper motives of human character and to the underlying currents of social development; not in the sense of being photographically reflective of outer aspects and irrelevant details. It does not strain to be natural, and yet it is never unnatural. The mirror is not held up to life, but life is subjected to a rigid selective sense, and through that transformed into art.²⁰

The first theory seems clear; the second does not. John Gassner attempts to define the two positions, and hence the two opposing principles of Realism.

¹⁶Kenneth Macgowan, The Theatre of Tomorrow (New York: Boni and Liveright, Inc., 1921), p. 112.

¹⁷St. John Ervine, "The Realistic Test in Drama," Yale Review, XI (January, 1922), p. 287.

¹⁸Cheney, p. 35.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 73.

²⁰Ibid., p. 35.



There is a photographic realism, on the one hand, and a realism that recreates and gives significance to what is being observed and explained. Specifically, in theatre art there is, on one hand, the realistic technique; . . . a technique that makes a virtue of prose dialogue, of facsimile or near facsimile reproductions of life as if you had looked into the windows of somebody's apartment

And, on the other hand, there is a realism of the spirit, a way of sizing up life clearly rather than dimly, profoundly rather than superficially, honestly rather than sentimentally. This sort of realism is the only kind worth cherishing.²¹

This statement is typical in language of the remarks made by critics attempting to explain this second view of the essential principle behind the style of Realism. They are vague, ephemeral, elusive, and ambiguous. These critics want to say that Realism as an aesthetic style is composed of a guiding principle, which is not the "photographic" one, but a deeper, more "significant" one. They admit that this principle is based upon the premise that art must be "true to life and reality," but what is meant by "true," "life," and "reality" seems not to be what the critics of the first view mean by the same terms. The result of their attempts to explain these meanings appears as a welter of hazy and vague comments, and confused use of terminology.

The first view sees this aim as a merely photographic reproduction of observed reality, or of those things of which actual existence can be predicated, assuming real and reality to mean the sum total of those things to which actual existence belongs. The second sees "true to reality" as meaning something deeper, more significant, more spiritual, more true to the nature of reality,

²¹John Gassner, "The Playwright is not a Camera," Theatre Arts, XXXVI (March, 1952), p. 36.



i.e., those things on which possible existence and intentional existence can be predicated. This appears as more of an inner reality, or a concern not with depicting observed surface reality, but with portraying human life in all of its ramifications as it is. Realists, then, in this sense, portray true, contemporary human existence by creating real people, real events, real problems, real conditions, and real solutions. By real here is meant those things to which existence would probably belong, as opposed to those things to which existence could not probably belong. The problems are practical, not impractical; the solutions are probable, not improbable; and the characters are probable, not improbable. The test for this type of reality is not to ask whether or not the people would speak as they would in real life, but rather whether or not the dramatist has actually depicted people who are probable, events which could actually occur, and solutions which could be practical. If the dramatist is concerned with contemporary man and society, then he will reflect that concern by portraying contemporary man and society in contemporary, actual, real dramatic situations. This does not mean that only realists are concerned with man and society, but that he demonstrates his concern by portraying contemporary man rather than imagined or idealized man.

Realism in this sense has nothing to do with a photograph of observed, surface reality, but with something more important, real, actual life in present day society. Probability is the only key, not a photographic actuality. Critics who take this view of the first principle of Realism are always speaking of such dramatists as Shaw, Pinero, and the descendants in England of Ibsen and Strindberg. This is the "Ibsenite" Realism.



Evidently because the nature of this type of "truth" or "reality" which the critics see in existence does not lend itself to clear verbalization, the critics themselves are never quite clear as to the precise nature of the "truth to reality." But behind the words is a meaning for the concern for existing life, people, and problems. The technique of presenting this concern is not necessarily photographic, but suggestive through selection.

The confusion appears as a matter of terminology. Actually the basis for that appearance is whether or not Realism as an aesthetic style is merely concerned with depicting surface reality so that "the emotion of recognition" is all that is important, or whether there is more to life and reality than that which meets the eye. It is the second view which is overall aesthetically more logical and consistent within the broad scope and pattern of styles. In accepting this view one must also accept the failure of its adherents to be more specific in terms of its principle bases.

A second principle of Realism views heredity and environment as the two main factors which shape human character. Man is a product of the interactions of the physical attributes with which he is born, the conditions which surround him, and his will. "His physiology is as important as his intellect in determining his conduct."²² Although heredity and its effects appealed as subject matter to a number of dramatists, it was environment that held a special fascination for realistic playwrights.

It is the concept of environment "as a dynamic element of human experience" which marks the modernity of Realism. More

²²Hatlen, p. 144.



importantly, it is "the idea of the stage as an environment, rather than as simply or mainly a platform for acting, that effected fundamental changes in dramatic art."²³ Environment has a double influence on Realism. Content in Realism was affected by depicting the environmental factors as they influenced character, and the conventions of Realism were a result of treating the stage itself as environment.

Thirdly, the concern with scientific empiricism and the factors of heredity and environment are linked to a principle of Realism which embraces the idea of progress in improving human relations and behavior. This view stems from a philosophical-historical assumption which was augmented by Darwin's theory of evolution. "If man has evolved from an infinitesimal grain of being to the complex creature he is now, greater and greater improvement and inevitable progress seem to be clearly indicated."²⁴ "The notion of progress is essentially associated with the theory that science will necessarily continue to increase the sum of human knowledge, and the possibilities of human conquest in the world of Nature,"²⁵ Progress, although supposedly inevitable, was believed to be accelerated by applying scientific method to the various aspects of human existence.²⁶

The concept of progress requires some qualification in its

²³Gassner, Directions in . . . , p. 23.

²⁴Brockett, p. 261.

²⁵Hugh Sykes Davies, Realism in the Drama (London: Cambridge University Press, 1934), p. 94.

²⁶Brockett, p. 261.



relation to Realism. It is more aptly an assumption on the part of the realistic playwrights rather than a stated doctrine or program. Progress is implicit but not necessarily explicit. Realistic drama could demonstrate the operation and effect of progress directly but the idea of progress is more often implied in dramas which depict conditions which are in need of change. In such dramas, a supposedly objective picture of social difficulties and problems only reveals the status quo. The implication is that if some action were taken to deal with them, then the resultant change would lead to progress. It is also possible that realistic drama may be used as a stimulus to the society in general to make it aware of problems in order that it may turn its attention to them.

Characteristics of Realism

General Characteristics

In the previous section on the principle of Realism it was stated that two theories as to the principle of Realism were discovered. In accepting the second view, which states that Realism attempts to reproduce an "inner reality," a deeper verity, and displays an honest look at life, three general characteristics of Realism result. The first is a concern which realists show for contemporary life; the second is a selective technique in the portrayal of that life; and the third is an emphasis upon the form element of character. All three stem from the essential aesthetic principle of the style.

The first characteristic as determined by the guiding principle is simply that realistic authors are true to their own time. This is demonstrated by the general "humanitarian" spirit of their plays. By this critics seem to mean a desire to enlighten and emancipate



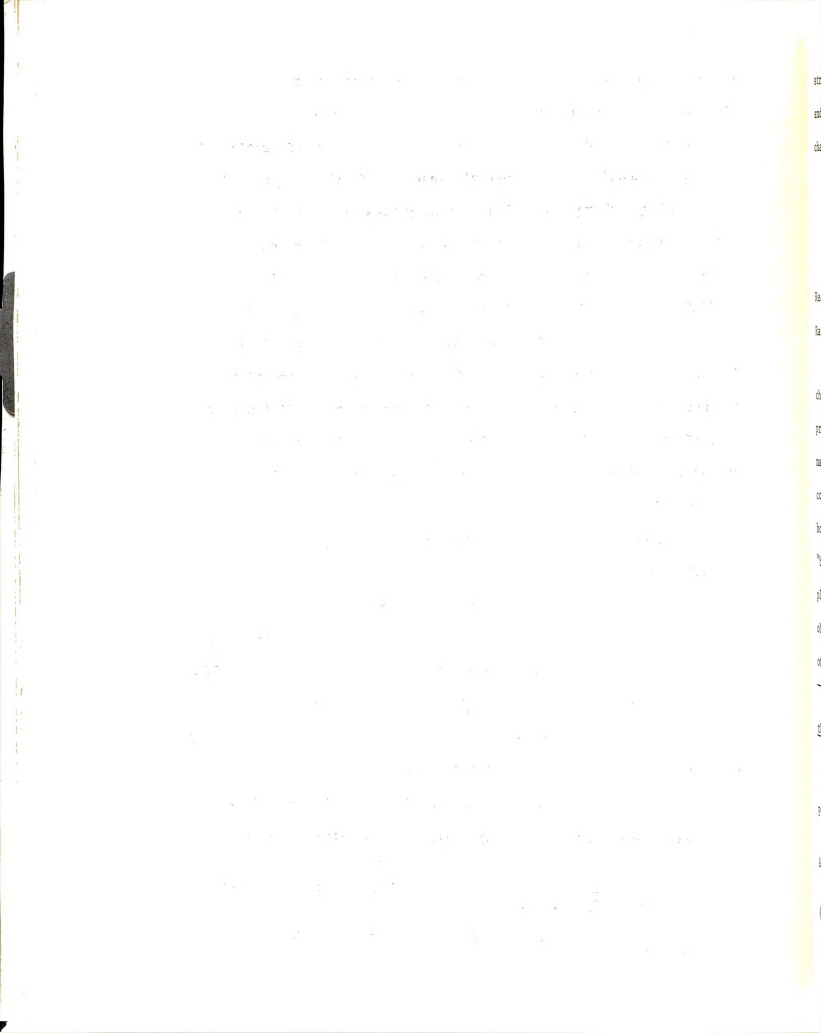
the human condition by presenting contemporary arguments and critically examining contemporary issues. Ever since A Dolls House and Ghosts this "social philosophy" has been steadily a major consideration of realistic dramatists. Galsworthy's Justice, Kingsley's Dead End, Shaw's Major Barbara, and Miller's All My Sons, for example, show this increasing concern for man's social plight. The concern here is with contemporary social, moral, and economic, and political conditions, and an interest in the improvement of those conditions.

A supplement to this is the factor of the "sympathetic interest" in the common, contemporary man which leads realistic dramatists to demonstrate an interest in the responsibility of the individual--to himself, to his fellow men as Ibsen and Miller did, and to his society. Society and the common man are seen as interesting and important in their own right.

The second general characteristic exhibited by Realism is its selective or illusionistic technique. In order to present the "deeper motives of human character" it appears that it "is essential that the audience accept the picture as true."²⁷ This is accomplished by the suggestion of reality rather than by its actual photographic depiction through a process of selection. As Richard Corson says, the picture of life presented in the theatre must "give the impression [*italics mine*] of being the real thing without including the infinity of unnecessary and confusing detail one might find in real life."²⁸ This view does not either by implication or necessity negate the

²⁷Mary McCarthy, "Realism in the American Theatre," Harper's, CCXXIII (July, 1961), p. 49.

²⁸Richard Corson, "Styles of Scene Design," Dramatics Magazine, XIX (1947-48), p. 5.



striving of the realist toward a depiction of the outer elements and details of reality. It merely makes this pursuit a secondary characteristic. It is the illusion of reality that is sought.²⁹

We must always remember, of course, that realism, does its work by careful selection of and emphasis upon the salient, characteristic aspects of these various locales. The scene is really not complete in its detail, although it must be complete enough so that, to the eye of the audience, it appears as the real thing.³⁰

Realism pictures life, "but not in stark photographic detail. Rather it selects, arranges and discards."³¹

An emphasis on the form element of character is a third general characteristic of Realism as a dramatic style. In Realism "the principal object of imitation is always man; description of the material world, construction of plot, are thus subsidiary and contributory to character portrayal."³² Realism attempts to present both people and action that are familiar to the audience but the "best realistic plays emphasize characterization rather than complicated plotting."³³ Because of Realism's imitation of details of the observable world, the realist commonly "is driven to an exacting study of the surface manifestations of character."³⁴ In its form relationships,

²⁹Willard J. Friederich and John H. Fraser, Scenery Design for the Amateur Stage (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1950), p. 185.

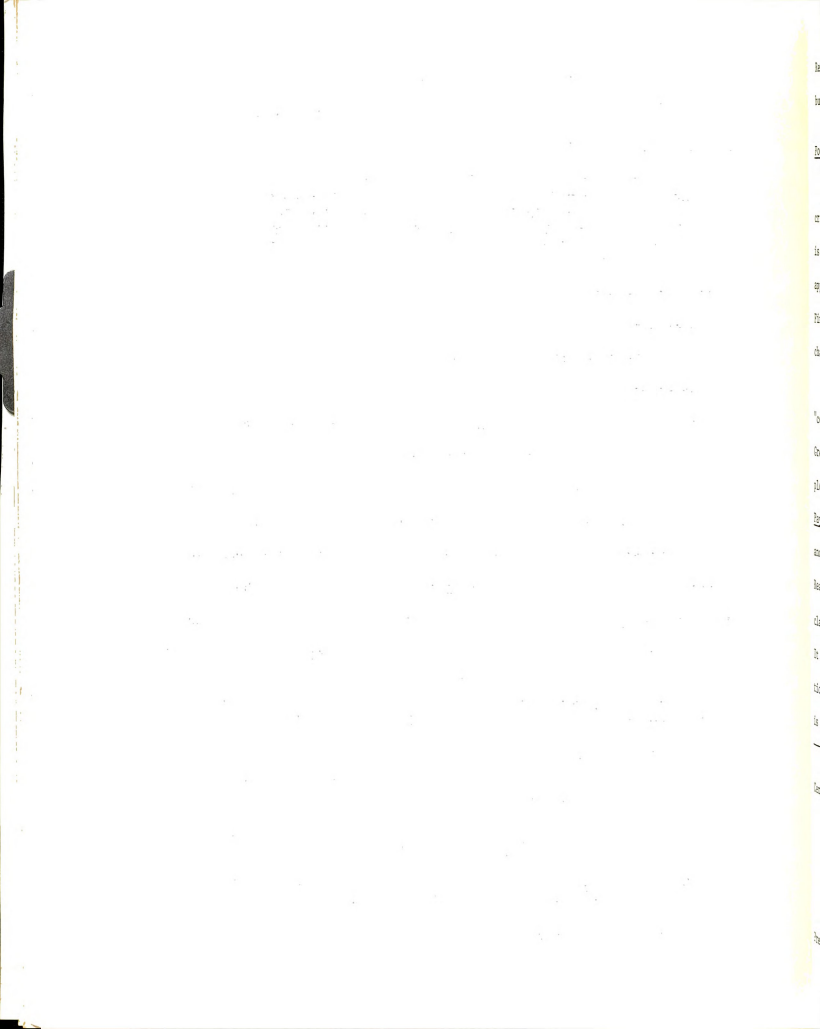
³⁰Ibid., p. 9.

³¹Edward A. Wright, A Primer for Playgoers (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1958), pp. 89-90.

³²Theodore H. Hatlen, Orientation to the Theatre (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1962), p. 145.

³³Lodwick Hartley and Arthur Ladu, Patterns in Modern Drama (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1948), pp. 8-9.

³⁴Millett and Bentley, p. 150.



Realism emphasizes the element of the psychology of character development, but not to the point where other elements lack relative importance.

Form Elements

Plot.--The primary plot quality of Realism, according to critics, appears to be a structural compactness. A secondary quality is the technique of the late point of attack; and a third characteristic appears as an attempt to reduce theatrical conventions to a minimum. Finally the use of contemporary story material appears as the final characteristic.

The general technique of Realism, according to Cheney, is a "compactness of form that has not been known since the time of the Greeks."³⁵ Gassner agrees that compactness is a quality of realistic plots, and attributes this to "organic means" as in Juno and the Paycock, rather than "by means of tricks and devices."³⁶ (Tricks and devices, says Cheney, are melodramatic, and are "foreign to Realism."³⁷ Because of this compactness and concentration Gassner claims that Realism has the essential character of "modern classicism."³⁸ It is characterized by "careful construction, exposition, and motivation."³⁹ It sometimes adheres closely to the three unities, "for it is likely to be economical in its shift of time and place and to the

³⁵Cheney, p. 36. (It might be pointed out that Seventeenth Century neo-classic drama also had characteristics of compactness.)

³⁶Gassner, Directions in . . ., p. 35.

³⁷Cheney, p. 45.

³⁸Gassner, Directions in . . ., p. 86.

³⁹Charles W. Cooper, Preface to Drama (New York: The Ronald Press Co., 1955), p. 140.



use of a single plot."⁴⁰

The primary plot characteristic, then, appears as a general structural compactness. By this is meant that the drama tends to adhere to a unity of place and action, and that action is usually pared down to a psychological crisis. In addition the realistic dramatist tends to be extremely careful and consistent in the assigning of motives and in the natural assimilation of exposition into the rising action.

A secondary plot technique appears to be the employment of the late point of attack. Mary McCarthy indicates that the plot tends to concentrate the action at the moment of crisis.⁴¹ This late point of attack, also mentioned by Gassner, creates Realism's "retrospective method of playwrighting,"⁴² another cause for the tendency toward compactness in realistic plays, as for example A Dolls House.

A final, comprehensive, characteristic of plot structure in Realism appears to be the attempt to reduce theatrical convention to a minimum,⁴³ in order to emphasize illusionism.⁴⁴ Cheney indicates that one of these techniques is the weaving of exposition into the rising plot action,⁴⁵ as Ibsen does so well in Ghosts, for example. Rowe adds that the exposition is also less apparent if it

⁴⁰Ibid.

⁴¹McCarthy, p. 46.

⁴²Gassner, Directions in . . ., p. 32.

⁴³Rowe, p. 181.

⁴⁴Gassner, Producing the Play, p. 62.

⁴⁵Cheney, pp. 75-6.



is worked into the dialogue with apparent naturalness.⁴⁶ Millett and Bentley indicates that another illusionistic characteristic is the omission of high complications of plot and climaxes, and the de-emphasis of the "big-scene."⁴⁷ And Gassner says that a further de-theatricalization convention is the elimination of soliloquies and asides.⁴⁸

Finally many critics indicate that the plot material in Realism should be from contemporary life. Cooper, for example, claims that contemporary life should be the source for all plot material,⁴⁹ and Gassner goes further by saying that the treatment of the character's contemporary environment as a factor in the determination of human conduct and destiny is also a quality of story material in Realism.⁵⁰

Character.--A survey of criticism reveals two distinctive views about the nature of the treatment of character in Realism.

Because Realism is concerned with the here and now, the first view claims that Realism attempts to present types of people (often representative) who are normal to the contemporary background,⁵¹ as in much of Ibsen. Rowe adds that, while the characters must be contemporary and normal to the contemporary background, one or more of them, particularly the protagonist, may be in some manner exceptional to the contemporary situation, "but within reasonable

⁴⁶Rowe, p. 182.

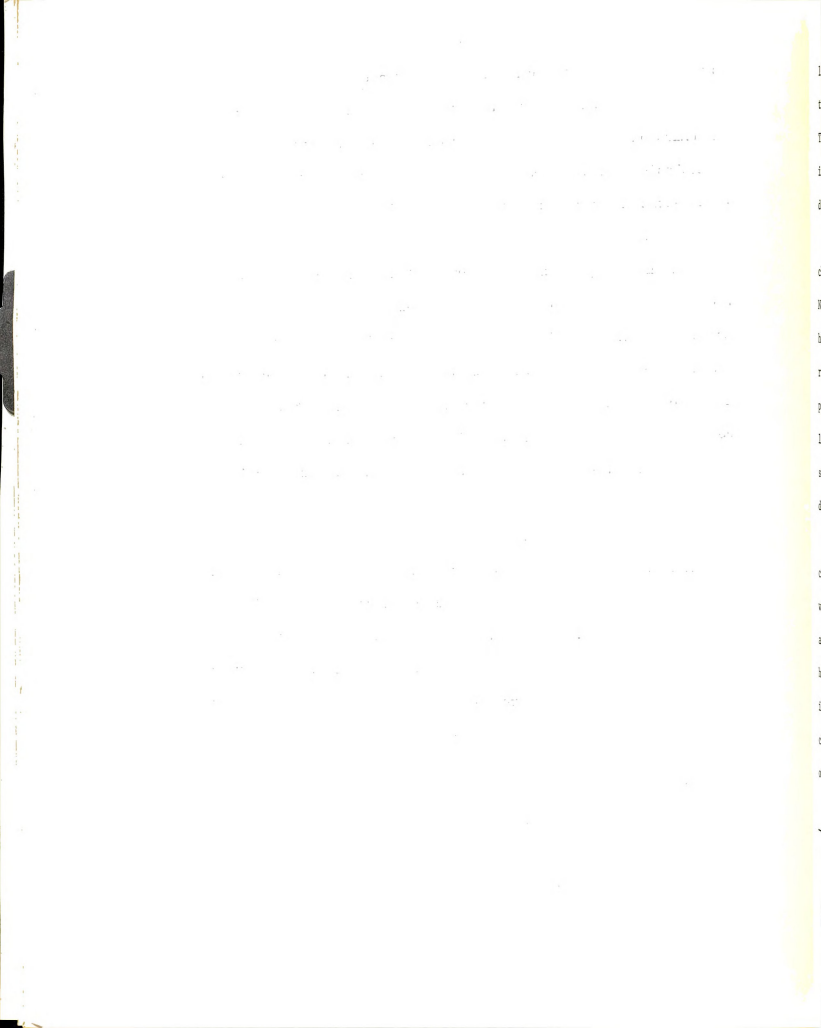
⁴⁷Millett and Bentley, pp. 148-49.

⁴⁸Gassner, Form and Idea . . ., p. 30.

⁴⁹Cooper, p. 140.

⁵⁰Gassner, Form and Idea . . ., p. 37.

⁵¹Rowe, p. 181.



limits."⁵² In addition most critics agree that realistic characters tend to be more complex than in the older dramas of Romanticism. They are "composites of a large number of varying and contradictory impulses."⁵³ These characters are often individualized with some deep psychological insight.

The second general view about the characteristics of realistic characters is held by those critics who view Realism as synonymous with Naturalism. These commentators view human personality as a product of heredity and environment. Millett and Bentley, for example, see realistic characters as "helpless and futile victims of impulses and powers which they cannot control."⁵⁴ Gassner, another critic who likes to equate Realism and Naturalism, goes even further when he says that environment is the "prime determinant of human conduct and destiny."⁵⁵

The essential point of confusion in the critical description of character in Realism is this role played by heredity and environment, which is often confused with that of Naturalism, a confusion not adequately clarified by any significant body of criticism. There is, however, a means of distinguishing the use of heredity and environment in Realism and Naturalism when the nature of the relation between character and heredity and environment is examined in the light of mutability.

In Naturalism the relation is immutable. The emphasis on

⁵²Ibid.

⁵³Millett and Bentley, p. 150.

⁵⁴Ibid.

⁵⁵Gassner, Directions in . . ., p. 37. (Italics mine.)



scientific determination dictates that a character's actions and reactions are fixed or restricted by heredity and environment. In essence, the character is a part of the total environment, capable only of actions predetermined by his birth and background. In Realism this relation is dynamic, mutable. The character should appear to be a natural part of his heredity and environment, but his actions are not entirely controlled by them. The character has a choice of actions. This choice, while often conditioned and influenced by environment, is not an inevitable result of it. In other words, the naturalistic environment produces singular, immutable responses to stimuli, while the realistic one may evoke a number of responses which provide the character with a choice of actions. These resultant actions may change aspects of the character, his destiny, or the environment itself.

Language.--Prose is generally considered to be a mandatory characteristic of Realism.⁵⁶ The dialogue is natural, and colloquial. In addition the dialogue should be functional, with individualizing speech patterns and dialects, and even personalized details of human interest.

Theme.--The word which most appropriately describes the thematic concerns of realists is "humanitarian." Realists depict a general spirit in their plays which is a deep concern for contemporary social problems, and contemporary individual human problems.⁵⁷ Cheney calls

⁵⁶See, for example, Gassner, Treasury of the Theatre, p. 3; Wright, pp. 89-90; Millett and Bentley, p. 150; Cooper, p. 140; and Rowe, p. 183.

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this general concern a "sympathetic interest in the common man."⁵⁸ With this interest, realists strive to change contemporary life by demonstrating the responsibility of man alone for his current plight. Particular thematic concerns are more specifically: individual man's psychological problems; man's responsibility to provide ethical relationships with his fellow men; man's responsibility to social institutions; society's obligation toward each individual man; and the problem of individual family relationships; and social, political, and economic protest.

Summary: Criteria for Identification of the
Dramatic Style of Realism

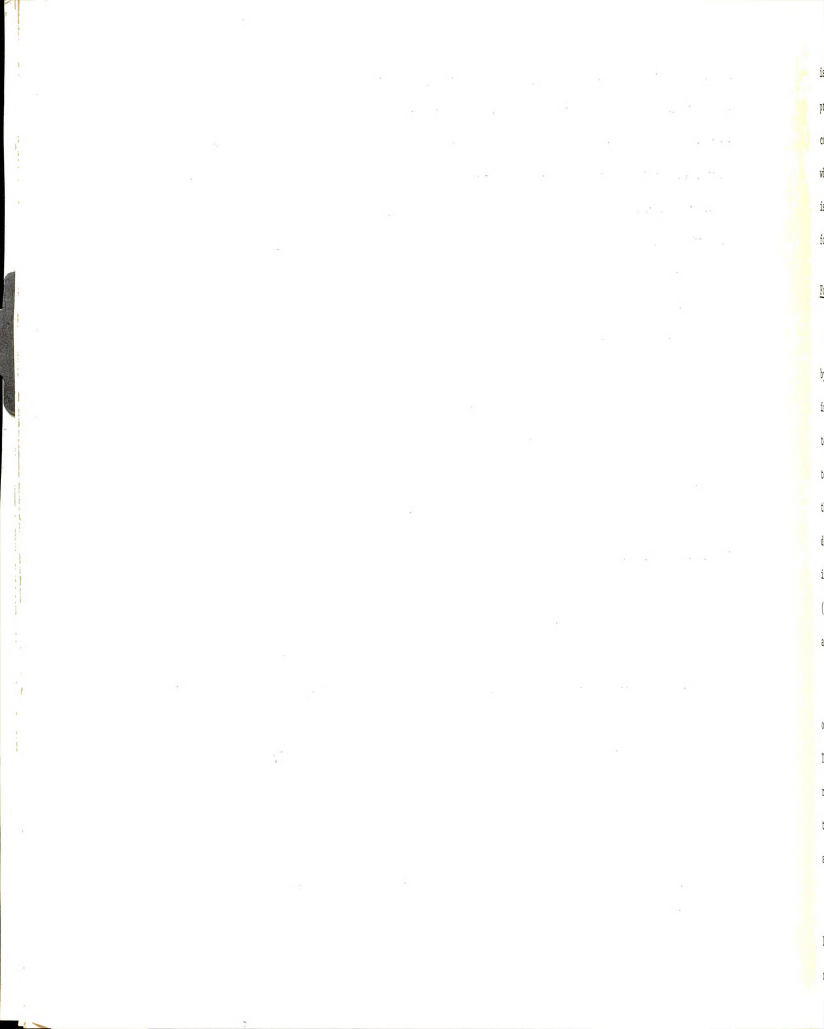
Principle

The essential principle of Realism is to de-emphasize the strict, photographic reproduction of reality, and instead to place emphasis upon selectivity and a reproduction of human motives and character, life, and humanity. It attempts to be "true to life," by selecting, arranging, and manipulating observable facts to reveal hidden or general truths. Further realism is concerned with the objective treatment of heredity and environment as major influences on human character. It is also linked to an idea of inevitable progress which can be speeded up by social action based on the methods of science.

Characteristics of Realism

General Characteristics.--The essential quality of Realism

⁵⁸Cheney, p. 38.



is a concern for the honest portrayal of contemporary life, its problems, people, and solutions. Realists demonstrate a humanitarian concern for humanity, society, life, and the creation of characters who are true to the nature of real (probable) human beings. Realism is illusionistic, through a selective technique, and emphasizes the form element of character.

Form Elements

Plot.--The plot structure of realistic plays is characterized by a compactness of form, careful construction, and an attempt to integrate the exposition into the rising action. The realist attempts to suggest reality through careful selection, rather than by an attempt to photograph surface reality. Other structural characteristics are the late point of attack, which leads to a "retrospective" method of dramaturgy, and attempt to reduce theatrical conventions to a minimum in order to be as illusionistic as possible; and the use of contemporary (current) sociology, economics, religion, psychology, science, love and marriage problems, and politics as the essential subject matter.

Character.--Characters in Realism are contemporary (current), and often composites of a large number of varying and contradictory impulses. They are not idealized, but drawn as contemporary psychoanalysis might reveal them. These characters usually appear to be a natural part of their heredity and environment, (are not controlled by them), and are strongly influenced by them.

Language.--The language (dialogue) of Realism is always prose. It is natural and colloquial when characterization or background requires it.



Theme.--Realistic plays demonstrate a "humanitarian" concern for contemporary man and society. Their themes usually revolve around responsibility, man's responsibility to himself, his family, his fellow men, and his society and its good, or society's responsibility to its individual members.



CHAPTER V

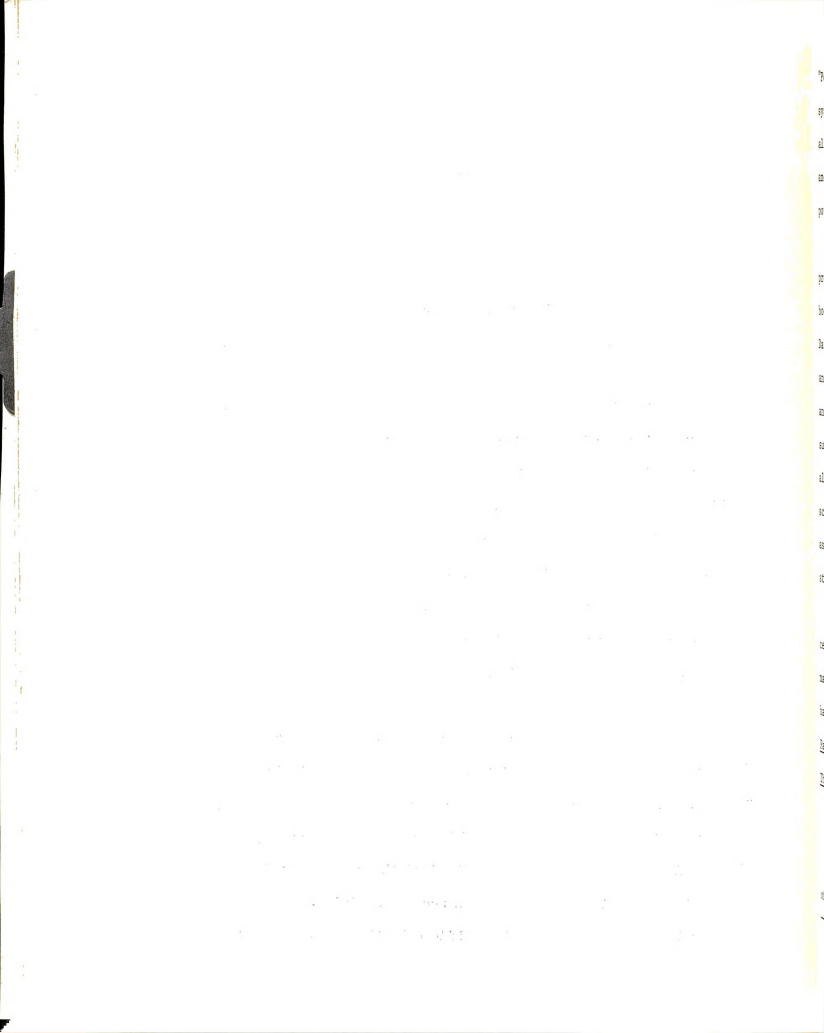
NATURALISM

Historical Background

In 1881 Emile Zola, then at the zenith of his literary career as a novelist, published his collection of essays on the theatre called Le Naturalisme au theatre. For thirty years prior to that event dramatists such as Augier, Sardou, Scribe, Dumas fils, Hebbel, Turgenev, and Ostrovsky had been wrestling with the techniques of Realism. Henrick Ibsen had written Pillars of Society, The Doll's House, and Ghosts; he had perfected nineteenth century Realism; and he had overthrown the shallow themes of the "well-made play." And then, as Realism's grip on the drama became strong, Zola rose with his theories of Naturalism as they apply to the theatre.

Although Zola's theoretical writings were the key to the subsequent development of the naturalistic form in drama and the novel, the contemporary historical source of Zola's thoughts appear far more important as an immediate and as a continuing influence upon Naturalism. These major influences upon Zola were essentially (1) Auguste Compe's "Positivism," (2) late nineteenth century biological, sociological, and psychological theoretical developments, and (3) the advancing interest in science and medicine.

By 1855 Auguste Compe, in a philosophy that came to be known as



"Positivism," called for the improvement of social ills through a system of observation and experimentation "precise enough to explain all happenings in terms of natural cause and effect."¹ The observation and experimentation called for by Compté was to be limited to contemporary sensual phenomena.

In addition to Compté the most immediate influence upon Zola was probably the sociological and ethnological theories promulgated in books by Herbert Spencer, Claude Bernard, and especially Charles Darwin's The Origin of the Species. To men such as these heredity and environment became the primary determinants in human character and action. Man, as a result, is conditioned not by himself or a supreme being, but by the natural laws which condition and govern all of nature. The answer, then, to man's social problems lay in science and material philosophies, since man was no longer viewed as being immortal or an individual but as another mass object for study and control.

But it was Zola who related much of this later nineteenth century thought to the drama, and within twenty years after his manifesto dramatists like Brieux, Strindberg, Hauptmann, and Wedekind had written such "naturalistic plays," called for by Zola, as The Father, The Three Daughters of M. Dupont, Miss Julie, The Weavers, The Rats, and The Awakening of Spring.

Principles of Naturalism

Springing from this rapid development in the formal fields of sociology, psychology, and science Emile Zola formulated the

¹Brockett, p. 261 (*Italics mine.*)



essential principles of Naturalism. In Le Naturalisme au théâtre he called for the return to nature and to man. He asked for direct observation, exact anatomy, and the depiction of "what is" in works of literature.² Greatly influenced by the famous physician and savant Claude Bernard's Introduction à l'Etude de la Médecine Expérimentale, Zola preached that a naturalist is a man with a native gift for science who has taken to art. He called for a "stage of observation,"³ as in the biological sciences, and for "surroundings to determine characters."⁴

The principle of Zola's naturalistic theory in philosophy was that "man is merely a creature of brute compulsion."⁵ In form elements and techniques he called for the return to the source of science, to the study of nature, to the anatomy of man, to the painting of life, in an exact reproduction.⁶

To proceed by analysis was the key to Zola's technique.⁷ The key to his philosophy was the thesis that man is primarily an animal whose emotions can be submitted to the same laboratory tests as chemicals; and the strict mechanistic, physiological, and deterministic view that heredity and environment mold man's fate.⁸

²Emile Zola, "Naturalism on the Stage," The Experimental Novel and Other Essays, trans. Belle M. Sherman (New York: The Cassell Publishing Co., 1893), p. 115.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid., p. 143.

⁵Herbert J. Muller, The Spirit of Tragedy (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1956), p. 275.

⁶Zola, p. 143.

⁷Ibid., p. 114.

⁸Gassner, Directions in . . ., p. 67.

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In summary, the essential principle of Naturalism seems to be a scientific analysis of humanity through direct observation, and the treatment of characters as being determined by their heredity and environment. Or, in Rowe's words "the . . . identification of the dramatist with a scientifically objective investigation and documentation of human life, with emphasis on the minute and cumulative detailing of environmental factors."⁹

Characteristics of Naturalism

General Characteristics

The resultant general characteristics exhibited by Naturalism in drama are (1) the application to human life on stage of Zola's principle of scientific determinism, and (2) the "slice-of-life" or so-called "peep-hole" characteristic of writing and production.

The first evident characteristic is that naturalistic dramas lean toward a belief in the control of human beings by heredity and environment. An example of this first characteristic in practice can be seen in August Strindberg's The Father and Miss Julie, and Maxim Gorki's The Lower Depths. In each of these plays the author examines humanity as an object, a pitiful object at that, of scientific investigation. The quality of heredity as a social and psychological prison is prominent in the two Strindberg plays. In The Lower Depths Gorki emphasizes cumulative effects of man's environment on his social status and view of life. The result is a deterministic view, in which the victims are helpless and unable to escape, or hope for salvation.

⁹Rowe, p. 186.



One member of Zola's movement suggested that plays appear as a "slice-of-life." "By this he meant that a dramatist should transfer to the stage as faithfully as possible a segment of real life."¹⁰ This general characteristic is clearly manifested in the form elements of plot structure and dialogue, where the dramatist attempts to eliminate as far as possible the conventions of dramatic technique. In structure the dramatists attempt a certain "formlessness," and in language the employment of every-day prose. These attest to the general characteristic of the "slice-of-life" characteristic.

John Gassner summarizes these two characteristics of Naturalism in drama in Producing the Play. He characterizes the concepts as a "peep-hole" theory in which events and characters on stage are "non-theatrical."

The effort to create verisimilitude attends to every detail, and the details will be as unsavory as the author's intentions and the law allow. Naturalism, moreover, pretends to complete objectivity; it attempts to observe character, environment, and situation with detachment as well as scientific correctness.¹¹

Form Elements

Plot.--An overwhelming majority of critics view naturalistic plots as having the illusion of formlessness, or at least as simpler and less complicated than realistic ones. The purpose of the naturalist is to disregard all sense of form and technique in his pursuit of verisimilitude. As Zola argued:

the action must be natural, not contrived. Thus he did not build climaxes or thrilling curtains. He

¹⁰Brockett, p. 276.

¹¹Gassner, Producing the Play, pp. 62-3.

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simply put characters in situations and observed them.¹²

Grebanier, in another typical statement, admits that though naturalists do show a certain respect for formal plotting, "the tendency of this school of playwrighting has been toward formlessness."¹³ The origin of this naturalistic characteristic in plot structure is, of course, Zola.

When we have gotten rid of the child's play of a plot, the infantile game of tying up complicated threads in order to have the pleasure of untying them again . . . we shall then enter into perfect analysis.¹⁴

What Zola is obviously referring to here in his statement about "tying and untying complicated threads" is the practice of the authors of the so-called "well-made plays." This statement, along with the object of Naturalism to capture in drama "a corner of nature," or a "slice of life," leads critics to the conclusion that obvious complicated plotting can hardly exist in Naturalism, "for such action is not often a real part of life."¹⁵

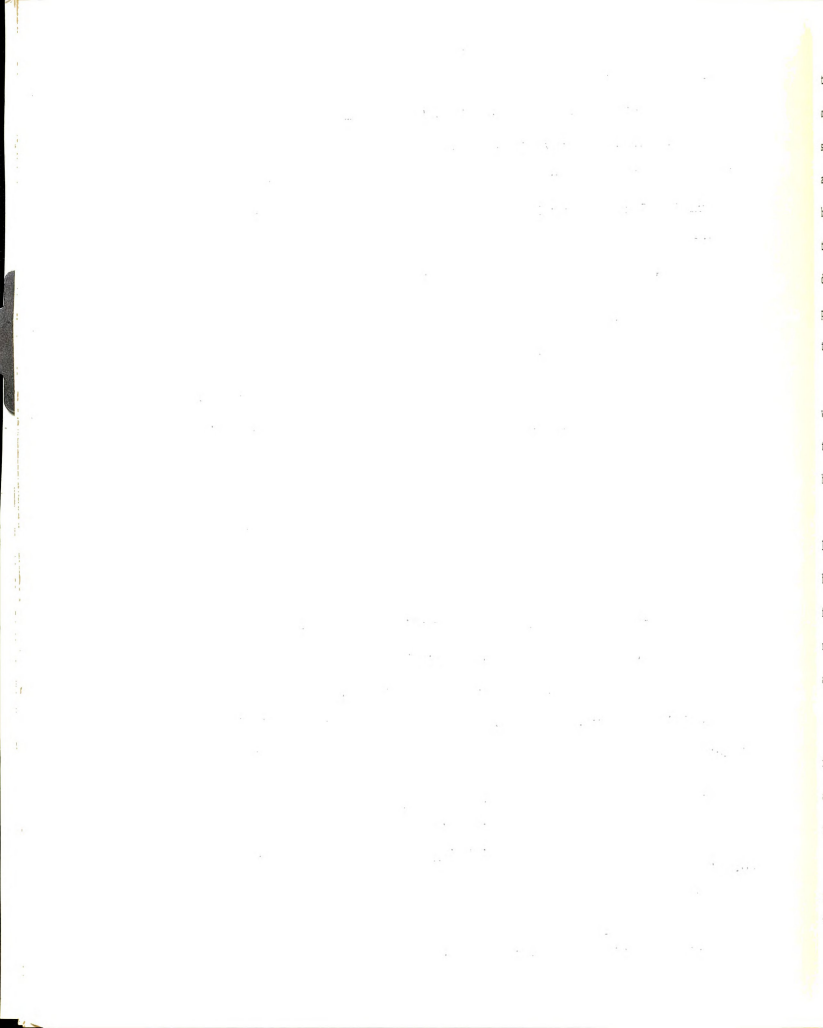
The precise meaning of this tendency toward "formlessness," as seen by the critics, appears as a comparative judgement. It seems to refer to the external structural characteristics of the dramatic technique only. This does not mean that naturalists see life or action as containing no form. It means that in comparison to the highly structured (as Gassner says, almost classical) dramatic technique of

¹²Theodore W. Hatlen, Orientation to the Theatre (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1962), p. 160.

¹³Bernard Grebanier, Playwrighting (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1961), p. 305.

¹⁴Zola, p. 150.

¹⁵Lodwick Hartley and Arthur Ladu, Patterns in Modern Drama (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1948), p. 9.



the "well-made" realistic play, Naturalism is not as highly structured, or at least a direct attempt is made to imply a free, less highly structured drama. The intent is to give the impression that all the action on stage is "just happening" without any interference or planning by the dramatist. The essence of this characteristic must be that in their attempt to produce a slice of life, the naturalistic dramatist does not object to sacrificing the appearance of design, or more properly "the artificialities of dramatic form."¹⁶ The reason for this appears to be that these "artificialities" are not natural.

But, being a work of art, and being composed by a dramatist working within the confines of the conventions and limitations of the theatre and of dramatic form, every drama must be structured and have some form.

In summary, naturalists, in their quest to produce a "slice of life," attempt to suggest that their plots are not highly structured, but free, loose, and natural. This is not to say that in actual fact these dramatists do not structure and form their plots. But rather it is to say that they wish to hide that structure so as to appear as natural as possible, such as in real life.

Character.--Dramatic criticism appears to define two characteristics of naturalistic characters: (1) they are usually "characterless" and drawn from the lower levels of society; (2) they are subject to the deterministic laws of heredity and environment.

Kenneth Thorpe Rowe claims that Naturalism shows a marked tendency toward the selection of characters from the lower levels of

¹⁶Rowe, p. 186.

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society; people who are lower than human types.¹⁷ This selection is a result of a break with tradition, and the artistic need for clarity. Naturalists objected to the stage hero of the romantic tradition because he "no longer represented anything in actual life."¹⁸ Up to the time of the naturalistic movement, except in scattered instances, "the lower middle and working classes . . . had not been truly represented on the stage."¹⁹ Naturalism found a relatively fresh supply of subject matter and character in the lower classes of society.

The "characterless" nature of such characters is clearly described by August Strindberg in his preface to Miss Julie. His reason for "making my people somewhat 'characterless'" is that "a character . . . (signifies) a man fixed and finished."²⁰ Whereas his characters should be vacillating, disintegrated, "conglomerations of past and present . . . bits of books and newspapers, scraps of humanity, rags and tatters."²¹

There is nothing in Zola's original manifesto on the theatre to indicate that characters must be of the lowest order of society, yet partly for the sake of novelty and partly as a response to the social democratic movement of the times, naturalists tend to set forth

¹⁷Rowe, p. 186.

¹⁸Allan R. Thompson, The Anatomy of Drama (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1946), p. 90.

¹⁹S. A. Rhodes, "France and Belgium," A History of Modern Drama, p. 245.

²⁰August Strindberg, "Preface to Miss Julie," Six Plays of Strindberg, trans. Elizabeth Sprigge (New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1955), p. 64.

²¹Ibid., p. 65.

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the life of the lower middle-class and of the underworld.²² In the present century the dramatists use "characters from city tenements and the underworld, from industrial environments, from peasant life and folk life, from commerce and business,"²³ as in Elmer Rice's Street Scene or Gorki's The Lower Depths.

In addition the lower classes with their less sophisticated reactions to life and emotion were more ideally suited to the demonstration of environmental cause and effect. It is feasible that naturalists could show the influence of heredity and environment on any level of society, but the characterization of members of higher levels of society would necessitate including qualities of education, culture, and rationality. These qualities would then tend to obscure or complicate the expression of environmental cause and effect. It appears simpler to choose members of a level of society closer to nature to clearly indicate the effects of heredity and environment.

The second feature of naturalistic characters is that they must show "human life to be the product of material causes acting according to natural law."²⁴ For in Naturalism characters should act independently of the volition of the dramatist in accord with the law of nature and environment, as do the characters in The Lower Depths, for example.

A final characteristic found in a survey of dramatic criticism is the use of the collective hero. It is maintained by a number of critics that in some instances naturalistic practice produced plays

²²Frank W. Chandler, Aspects of Modern Drama (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1929), pp. 33-4.

²³Heffner, Seldon, and Sellman, p. 75.

²⁴Hartley and Ladu, p. 19.

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with a "collective rather than an individual hero,"²⁵ as in Hauptmann's The Weavers. The reason for this use seems to flow directly from the principle of Naturalism, namely that man does not operate in life as an individual, but rather merely as another mass object for study and control. In the theory of scientific determinism individuality and the individual response to stimuli are not important, since man's behavior is determined by factors beyond the individual's control. This characteristic seems to be a very minor one, and nowhere is there an author who will state this as an absolute characteristic. Therefore, the most that can be said is that there may be times when the naturalist will use a collective rather than an individual protagonist.

In summary, Naturalism uses characters from the lower classes of society who are dominated by their heredity and environment. Zola did not want sentimental characters, but rather "a play which presents . . . living characters taken from real life."²⁶ In his essay on the novel this central concern for the development of characters can be seen clearer.

We consider that man cannot be separated from his surroundings, that he is completed by his clothes, his house, his city, and his country; and hence we shall not note a single phenomenon of his brain or heart without looking for the causes of the consequence in his surroundings.²⁷

Language.--"What I want to hear on the stage," says Zola, "is the language as it is spoken every day."²⁸ Basically naturalistic

²⁵Gassner, Directions in . . . , p. 60.

²⁶Zola, p. 155.

²⁷Zola, "The Novel," The Experimental Novel . . . , p. 232.

²⁸Zola, "Naturalism . . . ," p. 154.

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²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Strindberg,

³²Ibid., p. 69

dialogue is written with a more phonographic technique than the realistic technique, and it also appears, quite often, crude, vulgar, and socially unacceptable. Zola would rather see more "elasticity, and greater naturalness" than that of simple Realism.²⁹ By that he means that

. . . if we cannot produce on the stage a conversation with its repetitions, its length, and its useless words, at least the movement and the tone of the conversation could be kept . . . the best style on the stage is that which best sets forth the spoken conversation . . .³⁰

August Strindberg, again in his preface to Miss Julie, advocated departing from traditional "well-made" dialogue "by not making my characters catechists who ask stupid questions in order to elicit a smart reply."³¹ In addition his comment mirrors Zola's, by asking for "real-life" talk in plays.

I have avoided the symmetrical, mathematical construction of French dialogue, and let people's minds work irregularly, as they do in real life where, during a conversation, no topic is drained to the dregs, and one's mind finds in another a chance cog to engage in. So too the dialogue wanders, gathering in the opening scenes material which is later picked up, worked over, repeated, expounded and developed like the theme in a musical composition.³²

Theme.--There appears to be two dominant themes in Naturalism:

- (1) the influences upon man of the forces of heredity and environment,
- and (2) a suggestion of a pessimistic view of the world and humanity.

The first type of themes are quite evident, springing directly from the essential principle of Naturalism, and seen in the dramatist's treatment of character. Of these type of themes Gassner says, "Men . . .

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Strindberg, p. 68.

³²Ibid., p. 69.

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³³Cassner, A 7

³⁴Rowe, p. 187

³⁵Cassner, Di

³⁶Chandler, p

behave as they must; that is, their heredity traits and their instincts shape and determine their character and frequently overpower their reason and moral scruples."³³ Among plays which reflect this type of naturalistic dogma are Hauptmann's Before Sunrise, Strindberg's Dance of Death, and Schnitzler's Reigen.

In order to evoke these dominant themes, Naturalism displays a marked tendency toward an emphasis, with brutal frankness, on the physical, the sordid, the unpleasant,³⁴ on degradation, disease, and sexual license.³⁵ This type of emphasis leads directly to themes of pessimism, in which the dramatists' scientific look at the lowly in this world is a look without hope of faith for a change for the better.

Although the naturalist may be an optimist or at least a meliorist, one with faith to believe that the race through struggle may yet achieve earthly salvation, the fact remains that many naturalists appear to be pessimists. Their insistence is upon the evil that exists rather than upon the good for which they long.³⁶

An example of this type of morally degenerate emphasis is Ancey's La Dupe, where there is a hero who is a pauper, wife-beater and embezzler. He morally destroys his wife, who is bound to him by a sexual mania. Chandler states that these particular sensational experiences are the naturalists' substitute for the romanticists' use of imagination. For this reason, "the naturalist is prone to dwell upon crime, vice, squalor, the misery of the fourth estate, primitive instincts in primitive people, or else morbid passions in

³³Gassner, A Treasury of the Theatre, II, p. 3.

³⁴Rowe, p. 187.

³⁵Gassner, Directions in . . ., p. 68.

³⁶Chandler, p. 34.

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³⁷Ibid., p. 33

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⁴⁰Strindberg,

people of the higher classes."³⁷

The use of such themes and instances of morbid emphasis has drawn much adverse criticism of Naturalism. There is an attempt to justify these themes by viewing Naturalism in the historical context as a "response to the social democratic movement of the times."³⁸

It (Naturalism) disdains nothing, however ugly, that can stir the feelings to an appreciation of human conditions as they exist. Specifically, Naturalism recognizes the unnatural in our social structure and does not hesitate to emphasize it, to the end that dissatisfaction may incite to the building of a new structure more closely in accord with the laws of nature.³⁹

Even Strindberg felt the lash of such criticism, and implied a "social" purpose in writing Miss Julie.

That my tragedy depresses many people is their own fault. When we have grown strong as the pioneers of the French revolution, we shall be happy and relieved to see the national parks cleared of ancient rotting trees which have stood too long in the way of others equally entitled to a period of growth -- as relieved as we are when an incurable invalid dies.⁴⁰

Such naturalists, while passionately disturbed at what they see, reflect little hope in the ability of man to rise above such evils.

Summary: Criteria for Identification of the

Dramatic Style of Naturalism

Principle

The essential principle behind Naturalism is Zola's philosophy

³⁷Ibid., p. 33.

³⁸Ibid., p. 34.

³⁹Ibid., p. 34

⁴⁰Strindberg, pp. 62-3.

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of scientific determinism, and the premise that human characters are a product of and controlled by their heredity and environment. The dramatist, in his portrayal of humanity, seeks to investigate and document his subjects as objectively as possible.

Characteristics of Naturalism

General Characteristics.--There are two resultant characteristics of Naturalism in drama based upon the principle as revealed by Zola. These are (1) the application to human life on the stage of Zola's principles of scientific determinism, and (2) the "slice-of-life" quality in writing and production.

Form Elements

Plot.--Naturalistic plots are formless, or at least attempt to present the surface observation of being formless. They attempt to indicate that what they are presenting is a "slice of life" which is natural and has not been formed or controlled by the dramatist. The subject matter for the plots are usually brutal, morbid, pessimistic, and dwell upon vice, the squalor of the poor, and misery.

Character.--Characters in Naturalism are usually drawn from the lower levels of society, and are subject to the deterministic laws of heredity and environment. Occasionally there might be a collective hero; and according to Strindberg his characters are "characterless."

Language.--The dialogue in Naturalism is a more phonographic Realism. It contain repetitions, useless words, and all of the techniques of real, actual human conversation.

Theme.--The do

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Theme.--The dominant themes in Naturalism are a concern for the influence upon humanity of heredity and environment. In addition, these themes appear pessimistic since the characters who are caught up in their deterministic influences usually have no hope of escape.

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CHAPTER VI

ROMANTICISM

Historical Background

Although the term "romantic" had been applied to the literature of a variety of periods and individual writers, since the days of Homer, including William Shakespeare and subsequent Jacobean dramatists, Romanticism in drama actually began as a solid movement in the late eighteenth century.

The beginning of the movement is marked by Goethe's Goetz von Berlinchengen, produced in Germany in 1773.¹ In general, after developing in Germany, Romanticism next appeared in England, then in France, and finally it became an influence on all the major national dramas of the western world. For purposes of clarity, the following outline of the development of the Romantic style in drama is reported in terms of national movements.

Germany

Goethe's Goetz von Berlinchengen belonged to the Sturm und Drang phase of German Romanticism, a phase which ended by 1784.² A second phase of German Romanticism, contemporaneous with Sturm und Drang,

¹Gassner, Directions in . . . , p. 390.

²Ralph Tymms, German Romantic Literature (London: Methuen and Co., Ltd., 1955), p. 10.

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³Ibid., p. 29

⁴Wicoll, World

but outlasting that phase, was marked by the dramas of Goethe, Schiller and Kleist. Schiller contributed The Robbers (1778) and Don Carlos (1783). In 1788, Goethe added another major work to the movement, Egmont. This was followed by Schiller's Wallenstein trilogy (1798-99), Maria Stuart (1800), The Maid of Orleans (1801), and William Tell (1804). Heinrich von Kleist (1777-1811), while usually not ranked as important as Goethe and Schiller, wrote some notable Romantic dramas, the best known of which are Penthesilea (1808) and The Prince of Homburg (1809).

The first part of Goethe's most significant drama, Faust, appeared in 1808. In this same general period, the Romantic style was also employed by other German literary figures, especially in the plays of Zacharias Werner, and the "book-dramas of Tieck, Armin, and Brentano.³ The publication of Goethe's second part of Faust in 1832 was one of the last significant works in the German Romantic movement. Romanticism as a major movement declined but did not completely die out.

England

Throughout the first half of the nineteenth century English writers attempted to establish a vigorous Romantic drama, but "failed to produce greatness in the romantic dramatic form."⁴ Some of England's most renowned poets, Byron, Shelley, Tennyson, and Browning, directed their talents to writing Romantic drama. Byron's Manfred (1817) was one of the first noteworthy English Romantic plays. Three years later, Shelley's The Cenci and Prometheus Unbound were completed but were

³Ibid., p. 298.

⁴Nicoll, World Drama, p. 412.

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⁶Ibid.

denied stage production; and a lesser literary figure, James Sheridan Knowles, did achieve some success with the production of his Virginus. A year later, Byron again failed at Romantic drama with Sardanapolis. Perhaps the most vital of the English Romantic dramas were Edward George Bulwer-Lytton's The Lady of Lyons (1838) and Richelieu (1839) which held the stage continuously well into the twentieth century, as Walter Hampden played it most recently in 1925 at the Old Colonial Theatre. Robert Browning's indifferently received Pippa Passes (1843) and A Blot on the 'Scutcheon (1846) were late contributions to the English Romantic movement in drama.

France

The birth of Romanticism in French drama was most clearly indicated by Victor Hugo's preface to his play Cromwell (1827), in which he rejected Neo-classic principles and outlined a program for Romantic drama.⁵ Alexandre Dumas père's Henri III in 1829 was the first Romantic play to see production, but it was the success of Hugo's Hernani in 1830 that established Romanticism as a major movement in French drama.⁶

During the 1830's, Hugo, Dumas père, and other French playwrights produced Romantic drama of note. The Tower of Nesle by Dumas père appeared in 1832. In 1834, Alfred de Musset added Lorenzaccio and No Trifling with Love to the movement. The following year, Alfred de Vigny's best known play, Chatterton, was produced in France.

For all its vigor, the French Romantic movement was doomed to

⁵Gassner, Directions in . . ., p. 391.

⁶Ibid.

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⁷Richard Moo
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be short-lived. The complete failure of Hugo's Les Burgraves in 1843 signalled the end of Romanticism as a major movement in France.

As a minor part of French drama, Romanticism appeared from time to time in such plays as Musset's A Door Should Be Shut or Open (1845) and the extremely popular Cyrano de Bergerac (1897).

America

Throughout most of the nineteenth century, American drama and theatre were highly imitative of English and European models. While American drama was not wholly Romantic, it was strongly influenced by the Romantic movement from abroad. Two of the most highly regarded native American plays written up to 1870, Robert M. Bird's The Gladiator (1831) and George Henry Boker's Francesca da Rimini (1855), were Romantic tragedies.⁷

Romanticism as a dramatic style continued in America well into the twentieth century in the form of historical drama. Notable examples of this were Maxwell Anderson's Elizabeth the Queen, Anne of a Thousand Days, and Mary, Queen of Scots.

Romanticism and Melodrama

A part of the overall history of Romanticism in the drama, but important enough in this study to warrant a separate discussion, is the relationship of Romanticism to melodrama. In 1919, Irving Babbitt stated in his famous book, Rousseau and Romanticism, "Nothing is easier than to establish the connection between emotional romanticism and the prodigious efflorescence of melodrama, the irresponsible

⁷Richard Moody, America Takes the Stage (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1955), p. 200.

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⁸Irving Babb
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⁹Maurice Will
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¹⁰Hicoll, Wor

¹¹Jacques Bar
Doubleday and Co.,

¹²Cassner, A

quest for thrills, that has marked the past half century."⁸ This connection existed almost from the beginning of Romanticism in drama. The generally acknowledged founders of melodrama (the German, Kotzebue, and the Frenchman, Pixerecourt) were contemporary to the initial Romantic dramatic movements in their respective countries, and often imitated them.⁹

Allardyce Nicoll notes that in the years between 1830 and 1850 melodrama changed its settings and characters from the feudal, to the rural, to the urban. In other words, melodrama became more closely connected with its contemporary environment. However, melodrama "remains romantic in the basic sense of the term, only as it passes from the world of the past to the world of the present; it sheds medievalism and becomes material."¹⁰

Melodrama and Romanticism are not only closely linked in modern drama, but also both have been highly influenced by Realism. As Jacques Barzun observes, "Realism often appears side by side with an agreeable make-believe which I have termed 'secondhand romanticism'"¹¹ John Gassner makes a similar observation when he states, "A meretricious, vulgar romanticism has, besides, been present everywhere in our century, as in other times. It masquerades as prose realism and tries to cheat with false notions."¹²

⁸Irving Babbitt, Rousseau and Romanticism (New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1919), p. 189.

⁹Maurice Willson Disher, "Melodrama," Oxford Companion to the Theatre, pp. 525-528.

¹⁰Nicoll, World Drama, p. 485.

¹¹Jacques Barzun, Classic, Romantic, and Modern (New York: Doubleday and Co., 1961), p. 106.

¹²Gassner, A Treasury of the Theatre, II, p. 259.

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¹⁴Ibid., pp.

For purposes of this study, Romanticism is considered to be a single dramatic style encompassing two variant forms of a basic style. The variants depart slightly from the principle, general characteristics, and form elements of Romanticism. However, in order to facilitate discussion of these variants in subsequent sections of this chapter and in the actual identification of the plays which constitutes the second part of this study, the variants will be referred to as: (1) "historical" Romanticism (denoting an imitation of historic Romantic styles such as Elizabethan, German, or French, or romantic plays on historic subjects); and (2) "secondhand" Romanticism (denoting melodramatic plays which are basically Romantic, but which resemble prose realism, and have as their principle the guiding idea of excitement, thrills, suspense, and pure entertainment).

Principles of Romanticism

The principles or basic ideas which underlie the dramatic style or Romanticism can be traced back to the development of Romantic philosophical theories in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Though several theories were formulated, all had in common a search "for a new system of explaining the nature of reality and the duties of man."¹³ These theories also shared an opposition to a concept of the universe as a perfectly functioning mechanism created by a supreme being and operating according to immutable laws.¹⁴

In the general concepts of Romantic theory, God is not perfect

¹³Morse Peckham, "Toward a New Theory of Romanticism," Romanticism: Points of View, ed. Robert F. Gleckner and Gerald E. Enscoe (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1962), p. 216.

¹⁴Ibid., pp. 215-216.

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¹⁵*Ibid.*, p. 2.

¹⁶Brockett, 1

¹⁷*Ibid.*

¹⁸Redell Jer
p. 272.

¹⁹*Ibid.*

nor is His universe a perfect mechanism. Rather God is imperfect, but is becoming perfect through a constantly creative evolutionary process.¹⁵ Similarly, the universe, because God created it "out of himself so that he might more easily contemplate himself,"¹⁶ is undergoing the same evolutionary process. Thus in Romantic theory the universe is conceived of as organic, growing, and changing rather than mechanical, static, and fixed.

A second principle of Romantic theory is the assumption that everything in existence is a part of everything else.¹⁷ Since everything in the universe has a common origin in that it was created by God out of himself, it follows that God, nature, and man are all interrelated.

The world of nature is one manifestation of Spirit; man is another and a higher such manifestation, for in man Spirit seeks to become conscious of its own work. The metaphysical process is the process by which the absolute seeks to realize itself, and all particular things are but phases within it.¹⁸

A third principle of Romantic theory is that truth is not derived through reason, but through intuition. "Reason, being artificial and analytical, is inadequate to the task of comprehending the Absolute God; knowing is living," and nature must be approached "through inspiration, longing, and sympathy."¹⁹ The artistic or poetic experience is seen as a form of knowledge. "It is fundamentally

¹⁵Ibid., p. 217.

¹⁶Brockett, p. 224.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Iredell Jenkins, "Romanticism," The Dictionary of Philosophy, p. 272.

¹⁹Ibid.

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²⁰Albert Geras
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²¹Babbitt, p.

²²*Ibid.*, p. 4

²³Brockett, p.

²⁴Babbitt, p.

the intuition of a cosmic unity: the intuition that the universe is not an unintelligible chaos, nor a well-regulated mechanism, but a living organism, imbued throughout with an idea which endows it with its unity, its life, and its harmony."²⁰

The concepts governing Romanticism in drama and the other arts stem from the Romantic philosophical theories discussed above. These concepts include original genius, the reliance on emotion and intuition as the prime means of apprehending reality, the inherent goodness of nature and primitive man, freedom of the individual, the rejection of established rules for creating art, and the depiction of the particular and the strange.

"The conception of original genius" underlies the whole movement of Romanticism.²¹ "Genius may be defined as imaginative perception of the universal,"²² or as "an innate ability to grasp intuitively the greatness of the universe."²³ The artist is most often the possessor of genius and his creativity springs "spontaneously" from the depths of his soul.²⁴ Thus Romantic art is based on intuition rather than reason. Romanticism in art then

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. . . . It reasserts the primacy of feeling, imagination,
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²⁰Albert Gerard, "On the Logic of Romanticism," Romanticism: Points of View, p. 230.

²¹Babbitt, p. 80.

²²Ibid., p. 41.

²³Brockett, p. 224.

²⁴Babbitt, p. 51.

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²⁵Jenkins, p.

²⁶Rabbitt, p.

²⁷Ibid., p. 4

²⁸Ibid., p. 1

²⁹Ibid., p. 8

³⁰Ibid., p. 6

restraints, either artistic or social.²⁵

Since Romanticists stress the intuition of genius as the true basis for knowledge, they regard rational thought and all that is associated with it as artificial and false. "The conscious analysis that is needed if one is to establish orderly sequences and relationships and so work out a kingdom of ends is repudiated by the Rousseauist (Romanticist) because it diminishes wonder, because it interferes with the creative impulse of genius."²⁶ The Romanticist also rejects Christian and classical disciplines because they, too, artificially control the expression of genius.²⁷ The Romanticist maintains that man can only know the truth of his nature by the "free expression of his ordinary self."²⁸ The Romanticist seeks "to shake off the trammels of tradition and reason in favor of free and passionate self-expression."²⁹

The distrust of rational thought and its consequences led to another principle of Romanticism in art, the turning to nature for the discovery and expression of truth. The Romantic "return to nature" is based on Rousseau's idea of spontaneity, that is, "genius resides in the region of the primitive and unconscious and is hindered rather than helped by culture."³⁰ This principle can also be traced to the fundamental idea of Romantic theory, that everything in the

²⁵Jenkins, p. 273.

²⁶Babbitt, p. 51.

²⁷Ibid., p. 46.

²⁸Ibid., p. 128.

²⁹Ibid., p. 80.

³⁰Ibid., p. 65.

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³³Jenkins, p

³⁴Babbitt, p

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universe shares a common origin. Thus, a "study of any part may lead to a glimpse of the whole."³¹ But, since nature as a part of the universe is not subjected to the artificialities of civilization, and is therefore, closer to the original creations of God, "the more suitable it is in the search for truth."³² For these reasons, Romanticism exhibits "an intense interest in nature, and . . . attempt (s) to seize natural phenomena in a direct, immediate, and naive manner."³³

Related to the Romantic "return to nature" is the principle of the inherent goodness of man. This fundamental assertion of Rousseau's philosophy postulates that man is naturally good, but that he is led into evil by an artificial and corrupt society. Society, with its limits and rigidities, conflicts with man's desire for freedom of action which leads to unhappiness. "Only get away from an artificial society and back to nature and the inner conflict which is but a part of the artificiality will give way to beauty and harmony."³⁴ In the principles of Romantic art, primitivism is "idealized as a condition in which man was free to follow the dictates of his conscience without economic and political strictures."³⁵

A final principle of Romanticism, that of revolt against established political, social, and aesthetic orders or traditions, is linked to the concepts of original genius and primitivism. The

³¹Brockett, p. 224.

³²Ibid.

³³Jenkins, p. 273.

³⁴Babbitt, p. 130.

³⁵Brockett, p. 224.

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³⁶Woody, p. 2

³⁷Brockett, p

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰Jenkins, p.

⁴¹Brockett, p

possessors of "genius", according to Romantic theory, must be free to follow their intuitions of truth. The freedom to do so is hampered or denied by established laws. Similarly, "artificial" society interfered with or corrupted the supposed "goodness" of the primitive way of life. The result was a revolt against existing social and political structures. Romanticists protested against "inherited laws and customs, rules of conduct for life and art, and the barriers which would bind."³⁶ The "equality of man and the freedom of action became battle cries of the new movement."³⁷ This principle of revolt was clearly manifested in the American and French revolutions of the late eighteenth century.³⁸

In the arts the Romantic search for freedom in expression resulted in the rejection of the traditional Neo-classic rules. Genius was believed to be in conflict with these rules which were regarded as too confining.³⁹ Romanticism was in continual opposition to classicism, whose formalities it treated as fetters.⁴⁰ Genius was able to make its own rules, to discover new forms which "would allow the maximum freedom in expressing the infinity of creation."⁴¹

As part of the search for new forms, Romantic artists began the practice of depicting the particular, the strange, and even the grotesque. Since truth cannot be arrived at by rational standards

³⁶Moody, p. 2.

³⁷Brockett, p. 224.

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰Jenkins, p. 273.

⁴¹Brockett, pp. 224-225.

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⁴⁵Ibid.

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or "norms" but can be seen in the infinite variety of creation, Romantic artists sought to "encompass the infinite variety of things."⁴² They maintained that art should concern itself with the particular and concrete, observing and reporting accurately the feelings aroused by nature.⁴³ In addition to depicting the particular and concrete, Romantic art presented the strange and grotesque. Victor Hugo, in particular, advocated a union between the grotesque and the sublime, "the body and the soul, the beast and the intellect."⁴⁴ According to Hugo, the contrast of opposites would enhance beauty and make art truer to common experience.⁴⁵ The pursuit of strangeness also served to "break up the smooth and tiresome surface of artificial decorum."⁴⁶

Characteristics of Romanticism

General Characteristics

Although Romanticism is the oldest of the modern dramatic styles and has therefore undergone a number of changes in some of its particular elements, plays can be identified as belonging to this style by virtue of five general characteristics common to Romantic drama. These characteristics are: (1) a tendency away from actuality which includes qualities of remoteness and escape; (2) an emphasis on

⁴²Ibid., p. 224.

⁴³Jenkins, p. 273.

⁴⁴Victor Hugo, "Preface to Cromwell," trans. George Burnham Ives, European Theories of the Drama, ed. Barrett H. Clark (revised ed.; New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1947), p. 369.

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶Babbitt, p. 55.

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⁴⁷Rowe, p.

⁴⁸p. W. M.
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⁴⁹Tymins, p

emotionality and subjectivity; (3) an insistence on freedom and a corresponding rebellion against strictures which limit the individual's acting according to his desires; (4) a predilection for depicting the particular, the strange, and the grotesque; and (5) a concern for nature and uncivilized man.

First of all, remoteness and escape are grouped together as aspects of a general tendency away from actuality in Romanticism. Both of these aspects have in common a removal of dramatic action from everyday reality as most human beings experience it. Undoubtedly, this characteristic can be traced to the Romantic principle of freedom in artistic creation, however it might be more accurate to say that it is a result of the practices of Romantic playwrights.

Remoteness as a characteristic of Romanticism in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries was largely confined to "a return to the medieval and renaissance worlds for subjects and settings and in spirit."⁴⁷ For example, one of the "most characteristic features of the French Romantic drama" was an "historical reconstruction of the life, customs, and institutions of the Middle Ages."⁴⁸ This same feature is noted in German Romantic drama,⁴⁹ and in modern plays which use history as subjects. Remoteness remained an almost indispensable quality in Romanticism even after the French and German movements, but it was expanded to remoteness in place and culture

⁴⁷Rowe, p. 178.

⁴⁸F. W. M. Draper, The Rise and Fall of the French Romantic Drama (New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., n. d.), p. 131.

⁴⁹Tymms, p. 6.

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⁵¹ Heffner, S

⁵² S. A. Rhod
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⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Tynms, p.

⁵⁵ Reeve, p. 1

as well as in time.⁵⁰ Today remoteness may also be seen as remoteness within a culture in view of a tendency in modern "second-hand" Romanticism in which the adventures of secret agents, detectives, soldiers of fortune, and others whose lives and experiences are removed from the experience of ordinary human beings are portrayed.

Romanticism in practice exhibits the qualities of "escape literature" as part of its tendency away from actuality. Heffner, Selden, and Sellman observe that "Romanticism tends to create an ideal dream world, a never-never land of the imagination. The persons who inhabit this world are equally idealized and colored by imagination."⁵¹ The French Romantic drama of the early nineteenth century "proved to be a complicated pattern of passionate characters, extravagant contradictions, lofty declamations, and unbelievable intrigues."⁵² The Romantic French stage was filled with such imaginative and escapist fare as "moonlighted or stormy scenes," "galloping horses," and "clashing swords."⁵³ Escape was also noted as a feature of the German Romantic drama in which the return to the Middle ages in content and spirit "expressed a retreat from the present, a deliberate turning away from everyday reality in favour of an idyllic dream."⁵⁴ In modern usage Romanticism is used to describe plays that provide "the audience an agreeable period of escape from reality into a world more exciting or pleasantly ordered."⁵⁵ In

⁵⁰Millett and Bentley, pp. 139-49.

⁵¹Heffner, Selden, and Sellman, p. 76.

⁵²S. A. Rhodes, "France and Belgium," A History of Modern Drama, pp. 235-236.

⁵³Ibid.

⁵⁴Tymms, p. 1.

⁵⁵Rowe, p. 179.

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⁵⁶Ibid., p. 1

⁵⁷Ibid., p. 1

⁵⁸Willett and

⁵⁹Ibid.

⁶⁰Heffner, S

⁶¹Bruce Carp
Inc., 1929), p.

⁶²Ibid.

such plays the element of escape is heightened through the use of "exotic settings" and "the pursuit of the spectacular and the sensational in situation, characterization, and emotion."⁵⁶

An emphasis on the emotional and subjective aspects of human behavior is a second general characteristic of Romanticism. From the discussion of the principles of Romanticism it can be seen that the reaction of the German and French Romantic playwrights against the "emotional restraint and formal rigidity of the preceding new-classicism" caused a "turning inward on individual personal consciousness and experience as the knowable reality and a mirror of the universal."⁵⁷ This resulted in a condition in Romantic drama where the element of emotion takes precedence over the element of reason and the passion for fidelity for fact."⁵⁸ Indeed, there appears to be "an idealization of the instinctive and non-rational powers" of the human mind.⁵⁹ This emphasis on emotion and feeling is also noted by Heffner, Selden, and Sellman.⁶⁰ Bruce Carpenter, in his book The Way of the Drama, states that "the coldly logical or matter-of-fact has no part in romance;"⁶¹ "the emotional or spiritual element in romance should exceed the intellectual."⁶²

The emotional side of human behavior was emphasized in French

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 180.

⁵⁷Ibid., p. 178.

⁵⁸Millett and Bentley, p. 139.

⁵⁹Ibid.

⁶⁰Heffner, Selden, and Sellman, p. 77.

⁶¹Bruce Carpenter, The Way of the Drama (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1929), p. 134.

⁶²Ibid.

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⁶³Praper, p.

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 1

⁶⁵Byms, p. 1

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⁶⁷Rowe, p. 1

⁶⁸Ibid.

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Romantic drama. It was the practice of the Romantic playwrights to "show us their protagonists at the zenith or nadir of their lives" where "these leading figures are seen at the last extremity of an emotion or passion."⁶³ One of the "most characteristic features of the Romantic drama" was the treatment of love as "an overmastering passion, upon which, and upon which only, the action of the drama must be built."⁶⁴ A similar emotionality is characteristic of German Romanticism.⁶⁵

Thirdly, Romanticism is involved with the idea of freedom and a corresponding opposition to any limitation of the freedom of the individual. The Romantics' revolt against classicism resulted in an "enhancement of the freedom of the individual"⁶⁶ and a "freedom of form and expression in variety and content."⁶⁷ For the most part, the Romantic revolt involves "assertion of [the] individual in thought and expression against the reduction of rule and order,"⁶⁸ but, in some instances, it represents "a defiance of aesthetic and sometimes moral authority."⁶⁹

The characteristic demand for freedom in Romanticism was apparent in the Sturm and Drang phase of German Romanticism as an expression of exaggerated individualism.⁷⁰ Later, German Romanticism continued to

⁶³Draper, p. 118.

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 131.

⁶⁵Tymms, p. 18.

⁶⁶Millett and Bentley, p. 139.

⁶⁷Rowe, p. 179.

⁶⁸Ibid.

⁶⁹Millett and Bentley, p. 139.

⁷⁰Tymms, p. 18

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⁷²Ibid., p.

⁷³Draper, p

⁷⁴Ibid., p.

⁷⁵Rhodes, p

⁷⁶Nicoll, p

insist on" unrestricted individualism and subjectivism in art."⁷¹
This freedom of the individual implied "the refusal to seek formal regularity, and to subordinate emotion to intellect."⁷² Expressive of political revolt and individualism can be seen in Goethe and Schiller, especially Goetz von Berlichingen, Egmont, and Don Carlos.

German Romanticism preceded a similar flowering in the French Romantic drama. As F. W. M. Draper says in his book, The Rise and Fall of the French Romantic Drama,

The same freedom which the Romantic writers demanded for themselves they allowed to the creatures fathered by their own imagination. No conventions, no moral laws which have been found to make for human happiness did they abstain from flouting in novel, poem, or play.⁷³

Aspects of political rebellion were also seen in Romantic plays that presented the poorer classes demanding equality with the higher classes, disparagement of the nobility, and even deliberate attacks against the monarch.⁷⁴

Romanticism has as its fourth general characteristic a pre-occupation with the portrayal of the picturesque and the strange. Earlier Romantic authors took pride in their "faithfulness to picturesque detail and local color."⁷⁵ This cultivation of the presentation of detail led ultimately to realistic drama.⁷⁶ The desire to disclose the wonder and mystery of life led to an interest in the strange, the

⁷¹Ibid.

⁷²Ibid., p. 20

⁷³Draper, pp. 240-41.

⁷⁴Ibid., p. 286.

⁷⁵Rhodes, pp. 235-236.

⁷⁶Nicoll, p. 409.

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⁷⁷Prosser Hall
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⁷⁸*Ibid.*

⁷⁹*Ibid.*, p. 34

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⁸¹*Ibid.*

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Prosser Hall Frye prefers to call this characteristic "a fondness for the striking and unusual,"⁷⁷ or "a susceptibility to irregular beauty."⁷⁸ He explains the development of the characteristic by saying that

. . . , the writer who looks upon literature as a function of life, . . . -- such an author may succeed in producing the characteristic waywardness and "wonder" of nature. In this view the idiosyncratic as possessed of superior actuality, tends to become the exclusive subject of representation. Individualization, not typification is the desideratum. The strange, the irregular, the unusual engross a correspondingly larger share of attention. The exception rather than the principle comes to be the rule.⁷⁹

The portrayal of the strange and unusual is inclusive enough to cover the strangeness associated with evil, whether physical or psychological.

"The romanticist found it possible to invest with something of glamour even the physically and morally deformed."⁸⁰ Associated with the depiction of the strange and mysterious in Romanticism is an "appeal to the irrational or superrational; madness, hallucination, magic, witchcraft, and ghosts."⁸¹

As has already been noted in the discussion of the principles of Romanticism, Hugo, in his "Preface to Cromwell," advocated the inclusion of the grotesque as a part of the subject matter of drama. His suggestion was followed in many French Romantic plays, but the portrayal of the strange and unusual was not limited to the grotesque. The French

⁷⁷Prosser Hall Frye, Romance and Tragedy (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1961), p. 35.

⁷⁸Ibid.

⁷⁹Ibid., p. 345.

⁸⁰Millett and Bentley, p. 140.

⁸¹Ibid.

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⁸²Draper, p.

⁸³Lyons, p. 1

⁸⁴Ibid., p. 7

dramatists, under the influence of the novels of Sir Walter Scott, also employed such unusual or strange content as "disguises," "duels with rapier, poniard and cloak," "superstition and the supernatural," "murders," "concealed trapdoors, secret rooms and passages," "dungeons," "alchemy, sylphs, gnomes, salamanders, naiads, [and] undines."⁸²

German Romantic drama, too, displayed a concern for the strange and unusual. Authors devised bizarre situations because strangeness was not only attractive in itself but demonstrated "detachment from the inherited classicist rules of congruity and harmony."⁸³ They showed "an inconsistent sense of realistic observation in recording bizarre details from life and behavior."⁸⁴

The fifth and last general characteristic of Romanticism as a dramatic style is the treatment of nature and man living close to nature. This characteristic is a logical extension of the importance of nature in the principles of Romanticism. Nature and primitive man are unspoiled by civilization and therefore supposedly are the best links with original creation and universal truth. This concept leads to dramas "about unspoiled men living in primitive times or for those who were in rebellion against the false restraints of society."⁸⁵

In Romanticism, nature is often more than a mere background for a play; it is a means of projecting the thoughts and moods of the author and his characters. In the French Romantic drama, the inspiration of nature is seen in the use of the detail of rural scenes, parks,

⁸²Draper, p. 52.

⁸³Tymms, p. 19.

⁸⁴Ibid., p. 7.

⁸⁵Brockett, p. 224.

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and river banks, but nature is more than a background when a murder is framed by the rugged shoreline and lightening furrows the heavens or when lovers meet on a serene summer night lighted by the moon's first rays.⁸⁶ In these instances nature is conveniently reflective of man's actions. In German Romanticism the attitude toward nature is markedly subjective. Romantic authors "saw very much what they wished to see, and distorted, blurred, in short "romanticized", the world of physical appearances so as to obtain a projection of their own inner world of fantasy and dreams."⁸⁷

Since, for purposes of this study, two types of Romanticism have been noted, some comments on the identification of the general characteristics as they apply to each type are in order. Regardless of whether Romanticism in drama is "historical" or "secondhand," a play in the Romantic style has a tendency away from the intellect and an emphasis on emotion. "Historical" Romanticism is more likely to show a concern for nature and be involved in the ideas of freedom and rebellion. Opposition to social and moral codes is more common in "secondhand" Romanticism than opposition to political and economic restrictions. Depiction of picturesque detail appears in both types of Romanticism, although it may not be obvious in "secondhand" Romanticism, since plays of this type are at least superficially realistic. The depiction of the strange and mysterious does not absolutely need to

⁸⁶Georges Pellissier, The Literary Movement in France During the Nineteenth Century, trans. Anne G. Brinton (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1897), p. 110.

⁸⁷Tymms, p. 26. This subjectivity in German Romanticism is apparently connected with later German experiments in Expressionism. It differs in that it does not distort surface reality nor follow the supposed psychological reality of Expressionism. The fantasy and dreams of the German Romanticists were usually possible but improbable rearrangements of everyday reality.

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⁹⁰Ibid.

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⁹³Draper,

be present in either type, but this characteristic commonly exists. Strange and mysterious events in "secondhand" Romanticism often have "rational" explanations, while in "historical" Romanticism the appearance of the supernatural or mysterious may be accepted as a convention. The concern for nature and/or uncivilized man is more common in "historical" Romanticism.

Form Elements

Plot.--Plots in Romanticism are "characteristically loose in their construction" and are "free in their use of elapsed time and shifts in place."⁸⁸ "The essential characteristic of the structure of romantic drama is the substitution of the diversity of time, place, and action . . . for the unities of time, place, and action."⁸⁹ This allows the Romantic playwright a "freedom in the selection and presentation of his material that is denied the strict classicist."⁹⁰ The best examples of Romantic plays adhere to a unity of action,⁹¹ but they are not "constrained to follow a single plot;"⁹² that is, the subplot is used frequently. In early nineteenth century French Romantic drama, playwrights claimed to be free from the "unities," but in practice they were not disregarded entirely. Playwrights did not observe the unity of place but were less free in violating the unities of time and action.⁹³

A second feature of the plot structure in Romanticism is the

⁸⁸Cooper, Preface to the Drama, p. 139.

⁸⁹Millett and Bentley, p. 141.

⁹⁰Ibid.

⁹¹Carpenter, p. 134.

⁹²Cassner, Producing the Play, p. 61.

⁹³Draper, p. 116.

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⁹⁴Gassner, P.

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⁹⁸Draper, p.

⁹⁹Ibid., p.

¹⁰⁰Stuart, p.

¹⁰¹Draper, p.

mingling of the serious and the comic. Gassner terms this practice as breaking a "unity of tone."⁹⁴ This mixture of the serious and the comic is also noted by Thomas Dickinson and Millett and Bentley.⁹⁵

There are some secondary features of structure in Romantic drama, such as the use of a chronological structure and many scenes.⁹⁶ In keeping with a chronological structure, the point of attack is early in the story which results in an "exposition in action" that largely replaces narrative exposition.⁹⁷

The French and German Romantic plays have some characteristic features that may sometimes appear in other nations' Romantic plays. Rapid action, for example, is a commonplace in the French drama.⁹⁸ Along with this rapid action, there is often an illogical sequence of events; "scenes are usually a succession of surprises, recognitions, unforeseen and unforeseeable events, conceived in the manner of melo-drama."⁹⁹ In many instances the plot "leaps forward by means of overheard conversations and actions beheld by concealed personages."¹⁰⁰ French Romantic drama often employs prologues or epilogues to carry "the story a step onward or backward."¹⁰¹

⁹⁴Gassner, Producing the Play, p. 61.

⁹⁵Thomas H. Dickinson, An Outline of Contemporary Drama (Cambridge, Mass: The Riverside Press, 1927), p. 8; and Millett and Bentley, p. 142.

⁹⁶Cooper, p. 139.

⁹⁷Donald Clive Stuart, The Development of Dramatic Art (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1928), p. 511.

⁹⁸Draper, p. 171.

⁹⁹Ibid., p. 118.

¹⁰⁰Stuart, p. 509.

¹⁰¹Draper, p. 119.

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¹⁰²Stuart, p.

¹⁰³Ibid.

¹⁰⁴Ibid., p.

¹⁰⁵Draper, p.

¹⁰⁶Willetts

¹⁰⁷Rowe, p.

¹⁰⁸Moody, p.

¹⁰⁹P. L. L. L.
York: The Macmillan

¹¹⁰Gassner,

Other features of the plot in French Romantic drama were the retention of the five-act form in which each act was a unity "ending with a climax and a striking final line,"¹⁰² rare change of scene within the act,¹⁰³ and "thrills arising from remarkable situations."¹⁰⁴ Lastly, the French Romantic dramatists made "frequent use of the soliloquy."¹⁰⁵

The content of Romantic drama is concerned with the "glamorous, exciting, and admirable."¹⁰⁶ It also includes "exotic settings and the pursuit of the spectacular and sensational in situation . . ."¹⁰⁷ Closely tied with this is an emphasis in content on "the curious, the strange, and the mysterious."¹⁰⁸ There may even be some amount of realistic detail present in the content.

. . . , Romanticism is only partly opposed to Realism; its true enemy is the hackneyed and humdrum present, whether squalid or academic -- a very different thing. Snatches of realism remain very welcome to Romantic sensationalists, especially as an escape from the starched dignities of Classicism.¹⁰⁹

Lastly, nature often figures in the content of the plays. It is sometimes even the "wild and untamed" nature in man.¹¹⁰

¹⁰²Stuart, p. 508.

¹⁰³Ibid.

¹⁰⁴Ibid., p. 509.

¹⁰⁵Draper, p. 52.

¹⁰⁶Millett and Bentley, p. 143.

¹⁰⁷Rowe, p. 180.

¹⁰⁸Moody, p. 2.

¹⁰⁹F. L. Lucas, The Decline and Fall of the Romantic Ideal (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1937), p. 47.

¹¹⁰Gassner, A Treasury of the Theatre, I, p. 500.

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¹¹²Wright, p

¹¹³Stuart, p

¹¹⁴Ibid.

¹¹⁵Draper, p

¹¹⁶Cooper, p

Character. - - In both "historical" and "secondhand" Romanticism characters exist in an environment and atmosphere removed from everyday life.¹¹¹ They represent "the idealistic and imaginative side of man."¹¹² As a result, characters in Romanticism tend to be "very strange individuals in strange circumstances."¹¹³ "We know them; but we do not know anyone like them"¹¹⁴ They are recognizable human types, but are removed from ordinary human experience.

In both types of Romanticism, emotion plays an important part in the development of character. This emotional aspect of character was developed in early French and German Romanticism, and is still discernible in modern Romanticism. For example, French Romantic dramatists created characters with traits of extreme sensibility whose "abandonment of emotion" did "more credit to their hearts than their good sense," and which often took the form of self-pity, a fondness for telling of their mental sufferings.¹¹⁵ Romanticism in general is prone to portray characters who are "slaves of passion, ambition, jealousy, melancholy, avarice, [and] lust."¹¹⁶

Complexity of character is another attribute of Romanticism. In "historical" Romanticism, "characters are conceived . . . as a complex product of a rather considerable variety of impulses, moods, motives, and emotions."¹¹⁷ Protagonists, especially, are "likely to

¹¹¹Millett and Bentley, p. 141.

¹¹²Wright, p. 88.

¹¹³Stuart, p. 510.

¹¹⁴Ibid.

¹¹⁵Draper, pp. 237-240.

¹¹⁶Cooper, p. 140.

¹¹⁷Millett and Bentley, p. 142.

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118 Cooper,

119 Carpenter

120 Draper,

121 Millett

122 Carpenter

123 Ibid.

124 Draper,

125 Ibid.

be complex in characterization" and even minor characters "may be individualized out of proportion to their dramatic purpose."¹¹⁸ However, in "secondhand" Romanticism "there is not time for highly individualized characterization" and the persons in the play "are cast into types like melodrama figures."¹¹⁹ It is possible that type characters may appear in "historical" Romanticism, but if they do they are usually quite complex types.¹²⁰

Characters in "historical" Romanticism are usually of "royal or noble blood."¹²¹ Although not always "conventionally heroic," they are at least "fashioned on noble proportion."¹²² In "secondhand" Romanticism, characters are not usually of the aristocracy, but even here "the commonplace man is not a suitable figure" for a leading character.¹²³ Characters in this type of Romanticism usually have some attribute which sets them apart from ordinary human beings.

Certain typical figures are connected with both "secondhand" and "historical" romantic drama. Earlier romantic writers developed the characters of the Byronic hero and the outcast from society. Both are depicted as suffering under despair and ennui.¹²⁴ Both have lives affected by a wrong or a crime they committed in the past.¹²⁵

¹¹⁸Cooper, p. 139.

¹¹⁹Carpenter, p. 131.

¹²⁰Draper, pp. 237-240.

¹²¹Millett and Bentley, p. 141.

¹²²Carpenter, p. 130.

¹²³Ibid.

¹²⁴Draper, p. 219.

¹²⁵Ibid., p. 225.

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¹²⁶Ibid., p.

¹²⁷Ibid., p.

¹²⁸Ibid., p.

¹²⁹Ibid.

¹³⁰Ibid., p.

¹³¹Ibid.

¹³²Ibid., p.

¹³³Ibid., p.

¹³⁴Wright, p.

Both are very emotional beings, prone to self-pity.¹²⁶ Both are often endowed with a mysterious past.¹²⁷ About the only difference between them is that the Byronic hero wars against "Fate" or a personal enemy, while the outcast from society "is in revolt against the society which has wronged him."¹²⁸ A third traditional figure, especially in "second-hand" Romanticism, the romantic criminal, is an offshoot of the outcast from society.¹²⁹

Heroines in Romanticism are often non-entities, lacking in color and personality.¹³⁰ Some female protagonists are "monsters of vice, . . . of ambition, and heartlessness."¹³¹ Still other female characters in earlier Romantic plays have many of the attributes of the Byronic hero.¹³² A last female type is the "weak woman" who is caught up in adultery and "powerless before her passion."¹³³ This last type, while not unique in drama (i.e., Medea and Phaedra), appears frequently in "secondhand" Romantic drama.

Language. -- Language in Romanticism is "beautiful and reflects life as we should like to imagine it but would rarely experience it."¹³⁴ Prosser Hall Frye characterizes the language of Romanticism as having

¹²⁶Ibid., p. 225.

¹²⁷Ibid., p. 230.

¹²⁸Ibid., p. 232.

¹²⁹Ibid.

¹³⁰Ibid., p. 118.

¹³¹Ibid.

¹³²Ibid., p. 231.

¹³³Ibid., p. 295.

¹³⁴Wright, p. 88.

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135Prye, p.

136Gassner,

137Cooper, p.

a "predilection for the coruscations of style -- for the glittering word and phrase, for the exotic and exquisite epithet."¹³⁵ John Gassner states that Romanticism

may employ considerable lyricism, . . . , but the lyricism does not conform to a strict pattern like the classical choruses; it is not formal. Its dialogue is ideal (characters express their thought and emotions as they would if they were endowed with a poet's faculties), the emphasis being placed on expressiveness rather than verisimilitude. To this end, all the non-illusionistic devices of the soliloquy, the aside, the direct commentary are used freely and without any attempt to justify their presence realistically.¹³⁶

Charles Cooper writes that "there is an imaginative and orotund quality to the dialogue Poetic diction, flights of fancy, soliloquies and asides, rhetorical set pieces of poetic reflection . . . are the common features of the romantic dialogue."¹³⁷ Soliloquies, when used, are usually reflective rather than constructive.

The above descriptions of language in Romanticism are applicable to "historical" Romanticism, but "secondhand" Romanticism, because it is influenced by Realism, utilizes prose in its dialogue. This prose dialogue is usually quite close in quality to that of Realism, but in some instances it may tend toward ornateness and lyricism. It is mainly functional and serves to advance the plot or to reveal character. Otherwise the language of "secondhand" Romanticism attempts not to call attention to itself, but tries to pass for an approximation of ordinary conversation. Soliloquies and asides sometimes appear in this type of Romanticism, but when they do there usually appears to be some attempt to justify them realistically.

¹³⁵Frye, p. 35.

¹³⁶Gassner, Producing the Play, p. 61.

¹³⁷Cooper, p. 140.

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139 Ibid.

140 Babbitt,

141 Ibid., p

142 Carpenter

143 Cassner,

Theme. -- The major themes of the dramatic style of Romanticism involve the subjects of escape, freedom, rebellion, emotion, and moral justice. Other themes associated with Romanticism deal with nature and fate. Many of these themes are often interrelated in a play.

The general characteristic of escape in Romanticism especially in "secondhand" Romanticism, is marked by an avoidance of themes dealing with an orderly contemporary social environment.¹³⁸ This is a general tendency which may have some exceptions in "secondhand" Romanticism. "Historical" Romanticism characteristically turns to "situations of social disorder and to the romantic past" for its subjects.¹³⁹ The Romantic concern for the past is but one aspect of the escapist theme of nostalgia, a longing to get away from the here and now and back to the "radiant hues of one's dreams."¹⁴⁰ In Romanticism, nostalgia is not exclusively a longing for the past, but includes the more inclusive desire to avoid the present.¹⁴¹

Topics of freedom and rebellion are frequently associated with Romanticism. "The untrammelled soul or the soul which seeks to break its bonds" is a characteristic theme of a great many Romantic plays.¹⁴² As Gassner writes, Romantic playwrights are absorbed in "the struggles of a unique individual, heroically, at odds with conventions and his environment."¹⁴³ In "historical" Romanticism the theme of political

¹³⁸Gassner, A Treasury of the Theatre, I, p. 500.

¹³⁹Ibid.

¹⁴⁰Babbitt, pp. 79-92.

¹⁴¹Ibid., p. 92.

¹⁴²Carpenter, p. 130.

¹⁴³Gassner, Treasury of the Theatre, I, p. 500.

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¹⁴⁹Carpente

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¹⁵¹Brockett

freedom and the rebellion against injustice, tyranny, and inequality is more pronounced than in "secondhand" Romanticism. Both types of Romanticism often include the theme of personal freedom from the limitations of social and moral codes.¹⁴⁴

There is a wide range of emotional subjects in Romanticism. Most of them are expressive of "inward life, moods, and emotions."¹⁴⁵ Many aspects of love are covered in the themes of Romanticism including "overwhelming love at first sight,"¹⁴⁶ "the courtesan regenerated by love,"¹⁴⁷ adulterous love,¹⁴⁸ and jealousy.¹⁴⁹ Melancholy, anguish, despair, and sentiment are also manifestations of emotion in the themes of Romanticism.¹⁵⁰

Melodrama's concept of poetic justice can be considered a theme of "secondhand" Romanticism, and may even be found in "historical" Romanticism. This theme is that "no matter how horrible the trials of the virtuous characters or how powerful the villainous, the good are always rewarded and the evil are always punished."¹⁵¹

Other themes of Romanticism are concerned with nature and fate. First, since the influence of nature on Romanticism has been discussed in other sections of this chapter, it is sufficient to say that the

¹⁴⁴Brockett, p. 225.

¹⁴⁵Millett and Bentley, p. 143.

¹⁴⁶Tymms, p. 300.

¹⁴⁷Albert Joseph George, The Development of French Romanticism (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1955), p. 29.

¹⁴⁸Draper, p. 295.

¹⁴⁹Carpenter, p. 130.

¹⁵⁰George, pp. 29-32.

¹⁵¹Brockett, p. 236.

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general ideas of the essential goodness of unspoiled nature and uncivilized man are carried over into the themes of some Romantic plays. Secondly, the concept of the operation of fate in man's life is not an exclusively Romantic theme, but has been noted in some Romantic plays. This theme is evident when a hero "is subjected to an arbitrary external destiny from which he cannot free himself."¹⁵² Often this theme takes the form of characters suffering because of the sins of their fathers.¹⁵³

¹⁵²Tymms, p. 12.

¹⁵³Draper, p. 228.

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Dramatic Style of Romanticism

Principle

Romanticism as a dramatic style arose out of the general philosophical theories formulated in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. These theories advance the view that the universe and all things in it, including man, are manifestations of an absolute spirit which is in the process of becoming perfect through constant creative evolution and which can only be apprehended by the subjective mind. Thus the Romantic universe is an organic one in which everything in it is a part of everything else since everything in it has a common origin. Knowledge of any part may lead to knowledge of the whole, but such knowledge is intuitive rather than rational.

Drama and the other arts, guided by the theories of Romantic philosophy, are created according to aesthetic principles which view the artist as a person gifted with original genius, intuitive grasp of the universal, which is expressed freely without regard to any established rules, conventions, or standards. The artist's subjective imagination is his only guide. This imagination is stimulated by observation of nature unspoiled by civilization. Details, the particular, are studied because they are truer to the infinity of creation than the norms or abstractions arrived at by rational thought. The strange and grotesque, because they exist in nature, are introduced into art and are used as a contrast to beauty. The Romantic revolts against society both artistically and politically because its rules interfere with the expression of his intuition.

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Characteristics of Romanticism

General Characteristics. -- The first general characteristic of Romanticism is a tendency away from actuality. Enough Detail and suggestion of observed reality is included to lead the reader or spectator to believe that the actions presented could or might happen. However, the feeling of actuality is modified by the remoteness of a Romantic play in time, place, or culture, Romantic drama impress one as being an escape from everyday reality because they customarily contain elements of excitement, sensation, and imagination that are not common to ordinary human experience. There is a great sense of the improbable in the drama of Romanticism.

The second general Characteristic of Romanticism is emotionality and subjectivity. Logic and common sense seem to be excluded or minimized. There is an idealization of the instinctive and non-rational powers of humans. To some degree, emotional appeal is common in all drama, but in Romanticism emotions seem to be aroused and expressed for their own sake.

The third general characteristic of Romanticism is a search for freedom and an opposition to any limitations which affect the actions and desires of the individual. The rebellious quality in Romanticism may take the form of opposition to any established political, social, or moral order. "Historical" Romanticism is more likely to deal with political freedom than is "secondhand" Romanticism.

The fourth general characteristic of Romanticism is an inclusion of the strange, the mysterious, and the grotesque. A part of this characteristic is the depiction of the picturesque and local color, but this is truer of earlier Romanticism in which realistic detail

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was a novelty. "Secondhand" Romanticism, which superficially resembles Realism, is an extension of this aspect of early French and German Romanticism. Nevertheless, both types of Romanticism often deal with unusual, even bizarre, situations, setting, and characters. Even the supernatural and fantastic are not excluded. Physical and psychological evil and deformity can also be encompassed under this characteristic.

The fifth and last general characteristic of Romanticism is its concern with nature and man unspoiled by civilization. Nature is idyllic and free from the evil that, in the Romantic view, civilization spawns. There is a tendency for nature to reflect the moods and actions of the characters. There is also the idea that the closer a man is to nature, the less he is influenced by civilization, the better he is.

Form Elements

Plot.--Plot structure in Romanticism is loose in its treatment of the traditional unities of action, time and place. The unity of action is usually retained, but action is often complicated in the main plot and sometimes subplots are employed that add to the complexity. There is a free use of elapsed time and shifts in place are not uncommon. The unity of tone is broken by a mingling of the serious and the comic.

A common trait of plot in Romanticism is a chronological structure featuring many scenes and an early point of attack with exposition carried out through action rather than narrative exposition. The unfolding of the story often appears as a series of thrills presented in a rapid melodramatic manner. The use of overheard conversations, prologues, and epilogues to advance the action of the plot is sometimes

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Plot content in Romanticism usually provides for excitement, suspense, imagination, and glamor. Exotic settings, sensational situations -- in general, the strange and the mysterious -- are frequently a part of Romantic content. Subject matter from the past is characteristic of "historical" Romanticism. The world of nature is often used as a setting, but is less likely to appear in "second-hand" Romanticism.

Character. -- Characters in Romanticism, while not wholly unrealistic, are usually improbable persons. Their actions and reactions are guided more by emotion than reason. They are often victims of emotional states connected with love, ambition, jealousy, melancholy, despair, self-pity, mental anguish, avarice, and lust.

Characters are rather complex personalities in "historical" Romanticism, but tend to be "types" in "secondhand" Romanticism. Royalty or noble persons are portrayed frequently in "historical" Romanticism. Even in "secondhand" Romanticism, the commonplace human being is seldom a leading figure.

Traditional characters of Romanticism are the Byronic hero, the outcast of society, and the romantic criminal. Virtuous heroines in Romanticism are usually colorless in personality, but less reputable female characters are more complex and show traits of lust, ambition, and heartlessness. Byronic self-pity and melancholy is also found in heroines. The weak woman enslaved in adulterous passion is a favorite figure in both types of Romanticism.

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Language. -- Language in Romanticism has two forms. In "second-hand" Romanticism, dialogue is in prose which is primarily functional in advancing the plot. It is seldom poetically ornate. As such, it is quite similar to the language of Realism. In "historical" Romanticism, dialogue tends to be poetic and ornate. It is often an informal lyricism, rather than a strict poetic form. Expression is idealized; characters speak with a poet's gift for language. Language often takes the form of reflective soliloquies, asides, and even set speeches. These techniques of language are not wholly excluded from "secondhand" Romanticism, but if they appear they are realistically motivated; that is, there is some attempt to treat them as a natural occurrence rather than as a convention.

Theme. -- Themes in Romanticism usually avoid ideas and problems of contemporary society and environment. "Historical" Romanticism turns to the past for its themes. "Secondhand" Romanticism, although often set in a contemporary environment, usually evades extensive involvement in the ideas of that environment. Both types of Romanticism often have themes of nostalgia, a desire to ignore the present and a longing to live according to one's dreams and memories.

Themes of Romanticism often involve a search for freedom of the individual from political inequalities or the limitations of social and moral codes. Characters are frequently seen as rebelling against the conditions which curtail the free expression of their individuality or desires. The theme of political liberty is more common to "historical" Romanticism than to "secondhand" Romanticism.

Themes concerning the emotions of individuals are often found in Romanticism. Typical of these themes are love at first sight, the

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enobling power of love, the anguish of jealousy, the despair of melancholy, and the degradation of adultery. Sentiment is also common as a theme in Romanticism.

"Secondhand" Romanticism often projects the theme of strict moral justice in which the good are rewarded and the evil are punished.

Other themes of Romanticism concern nature and fate. Things in a state of nature are seen as being good because they are unspoiled by civilization. This is particularly true of men who live apart from the "corruptions" of society. Fate as a determinant of man's destiny is not exclusively a Romantic theme, but is incorporated into some Romantic dramas. According to this theme, man cannot escape an arbitrary external fate. Often fate takes the form of the sins of the father being visited on his offspring.

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CHAPTER VII

SYMBOLISM

Historical Background

Just as the Romantic movement of the late eighteenth century was a reaction against the formal Classicism of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, and the realistic movement of the second half of the nineteenth century was a reaction against Romanticism, so too in the last decade of the nineteenth century it was the symbolists who came to react against the theatre of Realism.¹ As a variant form of Romanticism, Symbolism first arose as a somewhat vaguely defined poetic movement, strongly influenced by the philosophical idealism of Bergson, the poetry of Baudelaire, Rimbaud, and Verlaine, and the painting style of the post-impressionists. It arose first in literature in France, when the so-called "neo-Romantic" poets reacted against the "cold, formal poetry of Parnassians like Leconte de Lisle, and declared themselves 'Symbolists'."

Officially it was in the year 1886 that the French poet Jean Moreas, in an article in Figaro, proposed that the term "Symbolism" be applied to a particular literary tendency which, up to that time, had been generally labeled "decadance."

Jacques de Lacretelle quotes Remy de Gourmont, chief theorist of

¹Arthur Symons, The Symbolist Movement in Literature (New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., 1919). An excellent and detailed study of the rise of Symbolism in literature.

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the symbolists, "above all, it is a theory of liberty, it implies absolute freedom of thought and form; it is the free and individual development of the aesthetic personality."²

In the 1880's when Realism in drama had finally pushed out the last remaining vestiges of Romanticism and had established itself as the dominant mode of playwrighting, its domain was challenged by the new group of symbolist writers. Lead in spirit by Maurice Maeterlinck, writing under the influence of the poets Mallarme and Verlaine, Symbolism in drama became the "fashionable" mode of expression in the 1890's.³ It was during this decade that Maeterlinck wrote his most impressive symbolist dramas: The Intruder (1890), The Blind (1891), his most successful full length play Pelleas and Melisande (1893), The Interior (1895), and The Blue Bird, (1908).

Writing in the symbolist style concurrently with Maeterlinck during the 1890's, and also slightly preceeding him, was the leader of Realism, Henrik Ibsen. As early as 1884 Ibsen had begun to bridge his "social Realism period" and his "symbolic period" with The Wild Duck. This was followed by more symbolic plays such as Rosmersholm in 1886, The Lady from the Sea two years later, Little Eyolf in 1894, and When We Dead Awaken, in verse, in 1897-1899. Even Hauptmann, a staunch realist-naturalist, became involved in Symbolism with Hannelle in 1893.

The immediate effect of this sweeping theatrical movement in the last two decades of the nineteenth century upon the drama was to ease the control of Realism on playwrighting, and "bring the poet back

²Jacques de Lacretelle, "The Legacy of Symbolism," translated by Clive Bell, Living Age, CCCLIV (July, 1938), p. 453.

³Gassner, Directions in Modern Theatre and Drama, p. 98.

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⁴Ibid.

⁵John Gassner
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⁶Edward Gordon
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into the field of playwriting after his exile by realism."⁴ Maeterlinck, Rostand, Hofmannsthal, Claudel, Andreyev, Yeats and even O'Neill all turned at some time away from the reality of Realism, toward the imagination of Symbolism.

Principles of Symbolism

The essential principle behind the works of these men was a banishment of photographic Realism and Zola's logic and science, both of which had permeated all aspects of theatre. In its place they wished to hold that truth is not always evidence through the five senses, but is to be grasped through mental suggestion. This principle behind the aesthetic in drama was in this sense similar to that which guided the poets. They sought to convey the "fluidity of emotions and perceptions, found life full of fugitive impressions and sensations that meant nothing to sociology or science, and yet were symbolic of existence and were immediate to the spirit."⁵

One of the original spokesman for this new form of theatre, Edward Gordon Craig, spoke about his dislike for the naturalistic permeation of the theatre in his famous writing Towards a New Theatre.

Photographic and Phonographic Realism injure the minds of the people. They thrust upon them a grotesque and inaccurate representation of the outward and visible life -- with the divine essence -- the spirit -- the beauty of life left out.

Unimportant is it what subject the artist turns to -- his pleasure is to illumine all that he touches so that it shall shine brightly.⁶

⁴Ibid.

⁵John Gassner, Masters of the Drama (New York: Dover Publications, 1945), p. 412.

⁶Edward Gordon Craig, Towards a New Theatre (London: J. D. Dent and Sons, Ltd., 1913), p. 89.

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Craig and other symbolists firmly denied Zola's method of dramatic composition (and the corollary theories and practices which sprang up in production around Antoine), based upon the exactitude of science as applied to literature and art. Applied to the drama by Mallarme and his followers, the principle of the new aesthetic "imposed the reduction or elimination of anecdote, the displacement of statement by suggestion, the evocation of mood or atmosphere rather than the presentment of concrete events."⁷ Words were used "not to reproduce life, but to evoke emotions, and objectivity . . . [⁷ was abandoned in favour of the subjective."⁸

This suggestion of the intangible appears as the essential principle of the symbolist movement in drama. A purely subjective approach to theatre and drama, it is in direct opposition to the scientific objectivity of Zola, where facts are the only known and knowable truths. In Maeterlinck's own words, this suggestive approach is clear:

Only in the rarest instances are . . . beauty and grandeur limited to the known facts. Nine times out of ten it [⁷poetry] owes its beauty to an illusion to the mystery of human destiny, to some new link between the visible and the invisible, the temporal and the eternal.⁹

The theories and practices of symbolist scene designers and Regisseurs appear much more important to Twentieth Century theatre practice than the theories and practices of the dramatists. It was their efforts which were finally to accomplish the turning back of the strong tide of Realism and Naturalism which had flooded the world theatre.

⁷Block and Shedd, p. 157.

⁸Nicoll, p. 620.

⁹Maurice Maeterlinck, "Preface - Theatre I," trans. Barrett H. Clark, European Theories of the Drama, p. 415.

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If "suggestion of the intangible" is the essential principle of Symbolism as practiced and theorized by Maeterlinck, then it is also the essence of Symbolism in production, along with such terms as "suggestive illusion," "the organic theory of production," "stylization," and "the New Stagecraft," all founded and promoted by Adolphe Appia, Edward Gordon Craig, and Robert Edmund Jones. Not only are these men of the theatre regarded as "founders," but also as precursors of an entire movement that was entitled "the New Stagecraft," which eventually embodied all of the new styles and the variations upon these styles to arise within the twentieth century.

One of the most important contributions of the New Stagecraft was the principle that scenery should aid and enhance the production as a whole, not exist in and for itself. Douglas Rose sums up Gordon Craig's view of this function of scenery:

So far as scenery is concerned the guiding principle of Mr. Craig is that scenery is not to be seen. Rather it is to be felt. It assists to an atmosphere instead of obtruding as a picture.¹⁰

It was Appia's intention to "use every effort, by means of the decoration as well as by means of the actor, to bring out the secret of the drama he was producing."¹¹ To do this he wished to remove from the stage all nonessentials, thereby allowing perfect focus upon the actor.¹² He was the first to "see the inconsistency of placing the action against the scenery with painted perspective."¹³

¹⁰Harold Helvenston, Scenery (Stanford: University Press, 1931), p. 9.

¹¹Carl Van Vechten, "Adolphe Appia and Gordon Craig," The Forum, LIV (October, 1915), p. 484.

¹²Helvenston, p. 80.

¹³Van Vechten, p. 484.

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Just as significant, was the fact that he conceived of the use of light as a unifying factor between the three-dimensional painted scenery and the three-dimensional actor. He conceived of light as a plastic medium. Thus, he insisted on the production as a whole, and evolved a theory of lighting which Moderwell pointed out, "was imagined before a lighting system had been devised to make its practical application possible."¹⁴ And Sheldon Cheney, writing in 1914 about Gordon Craig's concept of scene design, stated that "it [scenery] will be symbolic and decorative rather than historically accurate"¹⁵

Robert Edmund Jones, though not as influential a theorist at first on "the organic theory of production," was later considered to be tremendously influential in the practice of scene design, and his writings had much weight in later years.

An imaginative symbolism pervaded his work. He relates various scenes of a play by his creations of light, color, and atmosphere that are in keeping with the psychological state of the characters.¹⁶

In summary, in both drama and production, the essential principle of Symbolism is clearly the banishment of the principles of Realism and Naturalism, and in its place the establishment of the principle that truth, not always evidenced through the senses, can be grasped by suggestion. Hence, the principle of "suggestion and evocation of the intangible."

Characteristics of Symbolism

General Characteristics

In the previous section it was suggested that the principle of

¹⁵Cheney, The New Movement . . . , p. 282.

¹⁶"Impressionist of the Theatre," The Independent, CXVI (May 8, 1926), p. 545.

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17 Sheldon
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19 Ibid.

"suggestion of the intangible" cannot be communicated directly through the senses in Symbolism, but rather must be communicated indirectly, subjectively, through a technique of symbols. This is the primary characteristic exhibited by Symbolism which flows directly from the basic aesthetic principle.

Sheldon Cheney defines the word "symbol" in a manner which will serve for both drama and production:

A symbol in its most direct definition, is something that stands for something else, a thing that stands for more than itself. It is clear, then, that as soon as an artist begins to exercise a selective sense, to make the setting suggestive rather than literal, he is traveling toward the use of symbolism.¹⁷

There appears to be three uses of symbols possible in drama: (1) an image used to reflect the central dramatic theme; (2) is itself an action; and (3) an object that can be used in an action.¹⁸

As an example of the possibility, Bamber Gascoigne cites A Doll's House, where the image of the "doll house" reflects the central meaning of the play¹⁹ and the kind of world in which Nora lives. This is a common technique among many dramatists, and does not indicate any necessary characteristic connection with the style of Symbolism. It is merely an artistic and dramatic technique which can be used to heighten the meaning of a drama. It has been used as a dramatic technique for centuries.

The second use, in which the symbol is itself an action, "consists in regarding the whole natural world as a symbol of an inner

¹⁷Sheldon Cheney, Stage Decoration (New York: The John Day Company, 1928), p. 51.

¹⁸Bamber Gascoigne, Twentieth Century Drama (London: Hutchinson and Co., 1962), p. 75.

¹⁹Ibid.

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spiritual reality."²⁰ However, because of the serious practical limitations placed upon that kind of production by the theatre, its use is "by nature of less inherent value to drama."²¹ As a technique in symbolist poetry this use of the image could be much more successful.

As an example of the third use of the symbol Gascoigne cites the "wild duck" in the Ibsen play in which the image is used in the action of the play. In itself the wild duck does not by its nature stand for anything other than what it is. It is only when it is used in the action of the play that some special meaning is communicated. In itself the symbol has no complete second meaning; it is the action in which the symbol is used which has meaning and which informs the symbol with a further significance or meaning. The symbol in this case is a "reproduction of reality in which forms, shapes, and the whole world of sensuous phenomena have their ordinary meaning for those who are satisfied with the superficial."²² But, for those who are not satisfied, for those who look deeper, it reveals a second, deeper level of comprehension, an inward abyss of infinity.²³ This is the essential characteristic use of symbols in Symbolism.

The same example of this type of symbolism can be given from the Maeterlinck play, Pelleas and Melisande. The water, which plays an important part in almost the entire play, the fountain, the light or darkness, the forest, the ring, the smell inside of the castle, etc., are all symbols in this same meaning. In and of themselves they are

²⁰Storm Jameson, Modern Drama in Europe (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Howe, 1920), p. 199.

²¹Ibid.

²²S. C. de Soissions, "Maeterlinck as a Reformer," Living Age, CCXLIV (January 21, 1905), p. 141.

²³Ibid.

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natural elements from reality. But taken in context with the drama and the action, they take on a completely different and more significant meaning. And when added together they comprise the secondary, or symbolic level of the drama. The symbols are concrete, and visible. But in the symbolic level they are just the opposite.

The external, visible part of the symbol must be a concrete picture, taken so straight from the real world that its clear ordinary meaning is comprehensible even to those who would not search in it for any depth; but beyond that concrete picture there must be open boundless horizons of the hidden, indefinite, external, immutable and incomprehensible essence of things.²⁴

Storm Jameson sees this same use of the dramatic symbol as typical of the symbolic structure when he says that the dramatist creates beings whose natures, actions, thoughts, and passions are of lasting significance for all men. "They are eternal types at the same time that they are alive and real in any moment of time."²⁵ This is essentially the Maeterlinck technique in Pelleas and Melisande.

On the surface Pelleas and Melisande is the melodramatic story of a young wife who falls in love with her husband's younger brother. The husband kills his brother and the young wife dies of grief. This simple story of awakening love and its consequences holds the play together, but it is the ideas and feelings behind this facade which are of most importance to Maeterlinck.²⁶

It is this use of the symbol (as an object that can be used in an action) that the majority of critics seem to imply in their discussions on Symbolism. And it is this use of it that the author of this study accepts.

From Sheldon Cheney's definition of the word "symbol" it can be seen that the symbol is also the primary general characteristic in

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Jameson, p. 200.

²⁶Brockett, p. 288.

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theatre production. This is a natural result of the principle behind Symbolism which asks for a suggestion of the intangible, not the reproduction of the tangible. The symbolic process is neither vague nor ill-defined. Like the naturalistic setting, the symbolic setting is not a setting tacked on to a play, rather it is the play. Gorelik illustrates this:

In Arthur Hopkins' production of Richard III (1919) the entire list of scenes as designed by Jones was represented by a section of the Tower of London In Reinhardt's production of Much Ado About Nothing (1912) the Italian Baroque was re-created by means of crystal chandeliers and Venetian mirrors. The project of Norman Bel Geddes for King Lear concretized ancient Britain in the form of a dolmen.²⁷

And Hewitt, in further characterizing the style in production, adds to this suggestive aspect:

The Symbolist producer seeks some way of expressing in every aspect of the production the essential meaning or mood of the play, and thus each play acquires its individual style of production Sometimes Symbolist scenery was selective using a part to symbolize the whole environment.²⁸

In summary, the total over-all aesthetic characteristic of Symbolism appears as an emphasis upon suggestion and imagination rather than the accurate reflection of life. In production Appia, Craig, and Jones moved beyond Realism to the selection of scenic elements, or a scenic element in order to suggest a value or theme. This is also the essence of the characteristic in drama and literature as initially defined and practiced by Baudelaire, Rimbaud, and Verlaine in poetic literature. The selective element, simply stated, becomes a symbol. The technique of Symbolism, then, has to do with

²⁷Gorelik, pp. 197-98.

²⁸Hewitt, p. 13.

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a method of "using concrete things to suggest spiritual or otherwise intangible values."²⁹ Tucker agrees when she says that the style suggests spiritual values by means of concrete signs.³⁰ This is the significant difference between the most selective forms of Realism and Symbolism. Where the selective realist always selects elements from reality to suggest or "stand for" larger aspects of reality, the symbolist usually selects elements of and from reality to stand for certain spiritual, intangible values or essences.

And so in this sense Symbolism is basically a suggestive art, the effect being one of atmosphere.³¹ It attempts the denial of the material and concrete in behalf of what Dickinson calls "a deeper verity."³² According to Mallarme, when the realists name an object, they suppress a part of the enjoyment of guessing its meaning; but to suggest it is the "dreamlike function" of Symbolism.³³

Form Elements

Plot.--A survey of dramatic criticism indicates that in technique and structure there are two levels of comprehension: the narrative and the symbolic, the narrative being the vehicle for the symbolic. Or put another way, the wholly symbolic play is the play written with the two planes of meaning kept steadily in mind and with

²⁹Hartley and Ladu, p. 10.

³⁰Marion S. Tucker (ed.), Modern Continental Plays (New York: Dover and Brothers, 1929), p. vii.

³¹Gassner, Producing the Play, pp. 63-64.

³²Dickinson, An Outline of Contemporary Drama, p. 169.

³³Mallarme, Enquete sur l'evolution litteraire, as quoted in Aubert, "Mysticism in French Literature," Contemporary Review, January, 1937), p. 98.

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³⁷Ibid,

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According to Gassner the realistic structure often remains intact on the narrative level. Fantasies such as Maeterlinck's Blue Bird, H. G. Wells' Outward Bound, and Sir James Barrie's Dear Brutus and Mary Rose present themselves to us as "real" stories.³⁵ Or the plot on the narrative level may be Romantic, as it appears to be in Hamlet and Melisande or The Sunken Bell; or, in fact, it may be in any style. The only connection between the two levels of action, according to Juliette Knapp in a widely held view, is often quite tenuous and non-dependent, the two being held together only by the intuitive significance given to the symbols on the narrative level. He says that "the story of the play (the narrative level of comprehension) has a tendency toward aloofness from its fable (the symbolic level). Not only is the story complete, it is satisfying as well."³⁶ And so, on the narrative level the dramatic action and plot are complete and whole, although at times quite simple. The second level of comprehension, the important level for Symbolism, "enhances and lights up" the narrative, as in The Sunken Bell, and "is usually more independent of the plot than, for example, the fable in old allegory was."³⁷ Here he is making reference to Medieval allegory in which the allegorical level was completely tied to the narrative through such devices as personification, as in Everyman. In this comparative sense Symbolism, with its use of representative symbols, has "almost wholly crowded out

³⁴Millett and Bentley, p. 164.

³⁵Gassner, Directions in Modern Theatre and Drama, p. 102.

³⁶Knapp, p. 232.

³⁷Ibid., pp. 232-33.

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abstract personifications which were so often dominant in old allegory."³⁸

In subject matter Symbolism tends to make use of "fairytales and legends of days long ago, and distant civilizations into which are poured modern conflicts of the soul and the senses."³⁹ It frequently deals with problems of philosophy, art, and mysticism.⁴⁰ Dickinson agrees, and looking at Maeterlinck's marionette plays he sees "soul, death, love, fear, and disembodied states" as proper material for Symbolism.⁴¹

Unlike the realists and naturalists from whom the symbolists were trying to divorce the drama, the Symbolists chose their subject matter from the past, and avoided any attempt to deal with social problems or to recreate the physical environment of its characters.⁴²

A review of the literature of criticism reveals two secondary characteristics of plot, structure, and technique. These are (1) the marked freedom of interpretation allowed the representative symbol; and (2) as a result of the tendency toward independence of plot and "fable," and the subsequent subtle presentation of the fable, "the appeal of modern symbolism is often vague and general."⁴³

Goeffrey Brereton answers this problem by pointing out that if the symbol were clear (capable of one definite interpretation by every observer) it would cease to be symbolic.⁴⁴ "The whole purpose

³⁸Ibid., p. 232.

³⁹Rapp, p. 81-82.

⁴⁰Juliette Knapp, "Symbolic Drama of Today," Poet Lore, XXXII (June, 1921,) p. 232.

⁴¹Dickinson, An Outline of Contemporary Drama, p. 172.

⁴²Brockett, p. 288.

⁴³Knapp, p. 232-33.

⁴⁴Goeffrey Brereton, "The French Symbolists," Contemporary Review, (April, 1937), p. 464.

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⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶Cassner

⁴⁷Brockett

⁴⁸Ibid.

of the symbol," he notes, "is to represent more truly than the most carefully worded analysis of feeling an inner mood."⁴⁵

Character. -- A survey of dramatic criticism reveals that on the narrative level characters in symbolist plays are simple, unreal, abstract, and clearly motivated; and on the symbolic level they are meant to symbolize a higher entity or concept.

In its essential form symbolism simply turns one or more characters into symbols of some force or factor which is operative on the symbolic level.⁴⁶ As a result of this, on the narrative level a character's behavior is dictated by the narrative plot, while on the symbolic level they are motivated by what they are meant to symbolize. The characters act and are drawn, then, according to the simplest of terms since it is not the narrative level which is important in Symbolism, but the second or higher order, as for example the intruder in the Maeterlinck play of the same name.

Maeterlinck is not interested in portraying lifelike characters, but rather is attempting to suggest states of feelings which come upon characters mysteriously and which lead to mysterious consequences.⁴⁷

As a result of this the characters in Pelleas and Melisande, for instance, have a narrative motivation, and few positive psychological traits nor do they perform any knowing acts. And because of the second level they are driven by forces stronger than themselves, forces applicable to the symbolic level, not the narrative.⁴⁸

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶Gassner, Producing the Play, p. 64.

⁴⁷Brockett, p. 292.

⁴⁸Ibid.

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Further evidence is given by May Daniels, who describes symbolist characters of the spiritual plane as "unreal abstractions" whose function in the drama is to demonstrate a relationship with a system of ideas.⁴⁹ Due, then, to the nature of the techniques of Symbolism with the narrative and the symbolic levels, it can be said that on the symbolic level "the characters are at best vague abstractions,"⁵⁰ and on the narrative level of comprehension they are uncomplicated and clearly, if not simply, motivated.

Language. -- There is very little critical comment concerning language in Symbolism. The essential nature of what comment there indicates that a primary characteristic is that it ought to be simple and poetic. Apparently this does not seem to indicate that verse is a requirement, although many symbolic plays written during the later part of the nineteenth century were in verse.

De Soissons, in describing Maeterlinck's characters, for example, indicates that they never utter complicated philosophic dialogues or monologues. Their sentences are "short, abrupt, expressing that which they feel and not that which they would think if they were to ponder over their impressions."⁵¹

Daniels adds that the dialogue, in its simplicity, is both rhythmic and melodious."⁵² Thus, all that is in the character, its attractiveness and unreality, appears not to be contained in the

⁴⁹May Daniels, The French Drama of the Unspoken (Edinburgh: University Press, 1953), p. 42.

⁵⁰Block and Shedd, p. 157.

⁵¹de Soissons, p. 143.

⁵²Daniels, p. 41.

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⁵³Dickinson

⁵⁴Cassner

⁵⁵Ibid.

⁵⁶Ibid.,

⁵⁷Millett

⁵⁸Cassner

⁵⁹Ibid.,

meaning of the words. Symbolist drama, then, attempts to convey complex relationships, abstractions, and metaphysical themes of an intellectual nature through dialogue on the narrative level which is clear, and often realistic.

Theme. -- Symbolist themes concern the spiritual, the aesthetic, and the irrational. Dickinson sums them up as being generally impersonalized, set in the larger stage of the cosmos" and dispensing with the ordinary clashes of the will of society,⁵³ best illustrated The Sunken Bell or The Blue Bird. And John Gassner describes the late nineteenth century art theatre brand of Symbolism as being concerned with "indefinite, irrational feelings and visions, allegedly more real than observed phenomena."⁵⁴ Accordingly it dealt with unalterable verities,"⁵⁵ and its catchword was beauty."⁵⁶

Millett and Bentley see symbolist themes as reflecting those things "which, in the course of experience, human beings have tended to attach the greatest values."⁵⁷

Substantially, Symbolism can be called the "cult of the mysterious and mystical."⁵⁸ It reflected the belief that "we live in a mysterious, aesthetic' universe rather than in a concrete world of facts."⁵⁹

⁵³Dickinson, An Outline of Contemporary Drama, p. 172

⁵⁴Gassner, Directions in Modern Theatre and Drama, p. 97.

⁵⁵Ibid.

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 99.

⁵⁷Millett and Bentley, pp. 164-165.

⁵⁸Gassner, Directions in Modern Theatre and Drama, p. 101.

⁵⁹Ibid., p. 105.

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Summary: Criteria for Identification of the
Theatrical Style of Symbolism

Principle of Symbolism

The essential principle behind the style of Symbolism is an emphasis upon suggestion of the intangible. It emphasizes the imagination and suggestion, rather than an accurate reflection of sensual values.

Characteristics of Symbolism

General Characteristics. -- The quality which stems from the principle of suggestion is the use of the symbol. Symbolism makes use of external, objective phenomena as symbols of a higher order, a different system of concepts, in order to suggest the intangible.

Elements

Plot. -- The structure of symbolist plays can be found on two levels -- a narrative level and a symbolic (higher) level. The narrative level of comprehension is the vehicle for the symbolic; it has a tendency to remain aloof from it. In subject matter Symbolism tends to make use of fairy-tales, legends, and avoids contemporary social concerns.

Character. -- Characters in symbolist plays on the narrative level are simple, uncomplex, often unemotional, and void of any human psychological problems. They are symbols of a foreign feeling, or sensation.

Language. -- The only requirement for symbolic language is that it be simple, clear and poetic. It may be in verse or prose.

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Theme. -- The thematic concern of Symbolism is with the spiritual, aesthetic, and irrational. Symbolist dramatists are usually interested in abstract notions, rather than with concrete, real human problems. The themes are usually depersonalized along these lines and set "in the large stage of the cosmos." The result of these concerns often appears vague and ambiguous.

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CHAPTER VIII
EXPRESSIONISM

Historical Background

The term "Expressionism" was first applied to works of art, primarily to painting, early in the twentieth century. Its first actual use was by the French painter Julien-Auguste Herve, at an exhibition of his works at the Salon des Independants in Paris in 1901.¹ It was not until ten years later, in Germany, in the August, 1911, issue of Sturm that critics first applied the term to the Fine Arts, and not until 1914 to literature.²

As a conscious literary movement, Expressionism is generally considered to have begun in Germany around 1910, and to have lasted until 1924 or 1925.³ The beginning in 1910 is marked not so much by a single work of art, or critical manifesto, "as by a sudden collective activity displayed by writers and artists hitherto hardly known to the public."⁴ That activity was marked, as are all new artistic movements, by a certain new and different process of artistic

¹Richard Samuel and R. Hinton Thomas, Expressionism in German Literature and the Theatre (Cambridge: W. Heffer and Sons, Ltd., 1939), p. 10.

²Ibid.

³Carl C. W. L. Dahlstrom, Strindberg's Dramatic Expressionism (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1930), p. 6.

⁴Samuel and Thomas, p. 2.

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tion. It arose, as do most new aesthetic movements, as a revolt
revolt, in this case, against the forms of Romanticism and
ism in literature, and Impressionism in painting.

In their search for a definition of this movement, Samuel and
as quote one of the earliest formal theorists, Kasimir Edschmid.
series of lectures delivered in Berlin in 1917, Edschmid voiced
of the movement's arguments against Realism. The expressionist,
Edschmid, does not work as a photographer but as a visionist.
es not try to catch the "momentary effect of a situation" but
r "its eternal significance."⁵ He is not concerned with "descrip-
," but rather with "experience;" he doesn't "reproduce," but
r he "creates;" and he is not "receptive," but rather "searching."⁶

In the light of history, this conscious movement of Expressionism
rs approximately fifteen years, from 1910 - 24" in Germany.⁷
er true this is, it is only a part of the story of Expressionism,
the principle and stylistic characteristics of the movement
cease in 1924-25. They continued on, not as a large "movement,"
transcending national and time boundaries as an integral part of
a literature.⁸

Expressionist principle inform O'Neill's The Great God
Brown; Thornton Wilder's Our Town, and The Skin of Our
Teeth; . . . Elmer Rice's The Adding Machine; and a

⁵Ibid., pp. 10-11.

⁶Ibid., p. 11

⁷Ibid., p. 1.

⁸Walter H. Sokel, The Writer in Extremis; Expressionism in
Twentieth-Century German Literature (Stanford, California: Stanford
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number of works by Sean O'Casey, Tennessee Williams, Samuel Beckett, Friedrich Durrenmatt, and others.⁹

The historical background of Expressionism, then, relates to unconscious artistic movement in Germany from 1910 to 1924, and usually to a tradition in isolated dramatists throughout the world, dating from 1925 to the present day.

Although the above chronology is an accurate picture of Expressionism as a conscious artistic movement, it is by no means the entire picture.

Attention must be made of August Strindberg, whose experiments and theories in the area of expressionist drama preceded the conscious

movement by at least twelve years. In To Damascus, written in 1898,

The Dream Play, written in 1902, Strindberg utilized characteristics

of expressionistic technique and principle. And his "preface" to

The Dream Play, quoted in detail below in the discussion of the form

and content of plot, first "struck the keynote of the expressionist theory

of the theatre."¹⁰ Another dramatist whose works in the area of

expressionism are somewhat isolated from the major movement of

expressionism is Frank Wedekind. In The Awakening of Spring (1891) and

A Spirit (1895), both naturalistic in theme, Wedekind's dramatic

technique of jerky, weird, and sometimes macabre scenes makes him also

a precursor of Expressionism.

In summary of the historical background the following three con-

clusions are pertinent: (1) Expressionism as a large, conscious

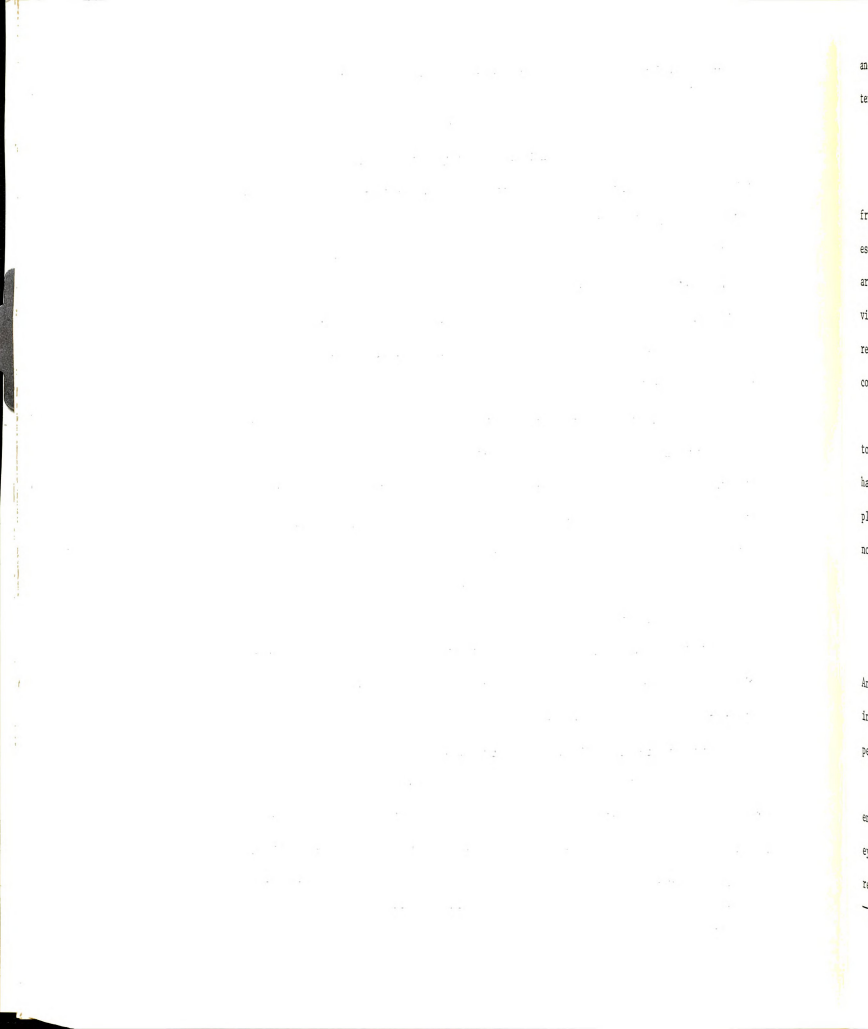
movement in drama existed between 1910 and 1924, mostly in Germany;

(2) the tradition and practice of Expressionism continues in drama to

this day, although not as a large movement; and, (3) August Strindberg

Ibid.

¹⁰Gassner, Direction in . . ., p. 118.



Frank Wedekind from 1898 to 1905 exhibit the earliest expressionistic tendencies in drama.

Principles of Expressionism

Although the general characteristics of German Expressionism from 1910 to 1924 differ from post 1924 world Expressionism, the essential informing aesthetic principles remains constant. They are (1) that expressionists attempted to express a personal, egocentric vision of reality; (2) that they sometimes embodied a Messianic or social utopian principle; and (3) they often were dissatisfied with the conditions of their world.

The philosophy behind the artistic revolt in Germany from 1910 to 1924 was to supersede the old rules and conventions of art which had become immersed in the reproduction or imitation of nature. In the course of that process the expressionist wished to express a personal, subjective vision of reality.

... it is not the casual circumstances of a man or woman that interest the Expressionists, but the humanity of the person as they see it. Everything else is a "facade," showing a "bourgeois" attitude that is to be destroyed with its superficial judgments of right or wrong.¹¹

So the expressionist did not demonstrate interest in reproducing external, objective appearances, but rather an interest in a personal, subjective interpretation of objects.

Expressionistic dramatists turned their backs on the type of physical reality which comes through the physical sense of the world and thereby ceased to imitate either observed or imagined reality in their works of art.¹² In drama the expressionist was

¹Samuel and Thomas, p. 11.

²Dahlstrom, p. 12.

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longer interested in the details of domestic stories for their sake, nor in milieu-dramas and plays dealing with the customs of everyday life."¹³ Instead the expressionist turned to a subjective view of that reality where truth is to be sought in the personal subjective vision of life. "Unlike the Realist who seeks truth in observation of external facts, the Expressionist seeks truth in the human mind."¹⁴ Empirical reality, then, being rejected, the ego takes its place and becomes to the expressionist the essential and indeed the heart, of reality. An ego without the universe is nothing; the universe exists only as the subjective projection of the dramatist's ego. As a result: "It is my ego and my world which come together in the super-subjective individual."¹⁵

According to Edschmid this subjective creation of a world and apart from observed reality is attempted by expressionists whose use only in our own soul is the image of the world kept pure and unfalsified."¹⁶ In this context it is suggested that the expressionist finds the objective world about him incompatible with his subjective, somewhat less corrupt view of the universe. As a result he begins to project a new, personal "community" from his own ego, a world more compatible with his intuitions. Samuel and Thomas credit this situation to a "dissatisfaction that the expressionists felt with existing thought."¹⁷ As a result they felt that "only through the

¹³Samuel and Thomas, p. 11.

¹⁴Brockett, p. 298.

¹⁵Dahlstrom, p. 12.

¹⁶Samuel and Thomas, p. 12.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 121.



struction and rebirth of the world could a new and pure humanity
se."¹⁸ Walter Sokel claims that this effort "manifested itself
Messianic Expressionism," and is one of the guiding principles of
early German and current Expressionism.¹⁹ This same "vision of
al renewal" is also seen by Samuel and Thomas as a guiding principle
xpressionism.

The natural world is considered by the Expressionists
to be the foundation of the spiritual. Thus the
Expressionist theatre depicts two levels of existence.
The one is that of apparent reality which is inadequate
and unsatisfying; the other is the ideal world in which
the true reality of the future will be fulfilled.²⁰

In summary, Expressionism desires to reshape material, objective
ity in order to express a more spiritual, inner, subjective radia-
of a central idea, emotion, or state of feeling. Its departure
ama is a refusal to accept the time-honored conceptions of reality
f the scientific basis of literature as bequeathed by Naturalism
ealism. Truth for the expressionist "is to be sought in the
nal vision of life."²¹ They are concerned with a personal
pretation of natural objects, actions, and experiences, the
ting purpose being a depiction of the disintegration of twentieth
ry man and a challenge to find a new, ideal way of life.

o summarize its essence in a very concise formula one
ight follow Lothar Schreyer, a member of the "Sturm"
ircle, when he defined Expressionism as "the spiritual
ovement of a time that places inner experience above
xternal life."²²

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Sokel, p. 162.

²⁰ Samuel and Thomas, p. 40.

²¹ Brockett, p. 298.

²² Samuel and Thomas, p. 18.

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Characteristics of Expressionism

General Characteristics

If the aesthetic principles of Expressionism transcend national boundaries and are equally true for the early German movement and later Expressionism, such is not entirely the case with the more particular technical characteristics of the style. There is a double aspect to Expressionism in drama which must be taken into account when one attempts to come to grips with these stylistic characteristics. Critics trace two independent tendencies in Germany during the years 1910-1925: Mystic Expressionism and Activism, the latter carrying more significance into the post 1910-1925 brand of Expressionism. In assessing characteristics and form elements of Expressionism, it is important to make the distinction between these two brands of Expressionism.

The general characteristic of the "mystic" form of early German Expressionism was a contentment with merely expressing its views of life and its states of feelings.²³ It is these men who are "partially concerned with the problems of Man and God."²⁴ They are the "religious poets" in whose works "irrationalism predominates."²⁵ They are more interested in the liberation of the soul than in the reform of society."²⁶

The so-called "Activists," on the other hand, are interested in social and political reform, their outlook clearly inclining towards

²³ Brockett, p. 298.

²⁴ Samuel and Thomas, p. 14.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.



ionalism, sometimes so far as to clash with certain ideals of the
ement. In describing this essential difference Sokel points out
t both the activist and the mystic expressionist radically affirm
t which has set them apart from normality.²⁷ In other words, they
n fail to accept the "given" nature of the world and society in
ch, as Sokel states, the expressionists feel they have found themselves
rangers and outcasts." But there is an important characteristic
ference:

. . . whereas the abstractionist does not dream of
changing anything, the activist rebels against the
dominant type of society and, at the same time, hopes
to regenerate himself.²⁸

These two aspects of early German Expressionism, the "mystic"
the "activist", appear to continue after 1925 in world, or
ernational, Expressionism; however it was the Activist element
h has been of primary importance in the theatre in post 1910-1925
expressionism.²⁹ This "mobilization of the mind in the service of
ne goals" appears as the first essential general characteristic
expressionism.³⁰ This essential characteristic will become more
ent later in the discussion of the form element of "theme"
A second general characteristic appears as a tendency toward
aration of the art object from empirical reality. This charac-
tic of divorcing objects from reality is usually referred to as
characteristic of distortion, which accounts for much of the
ique which occurs in Expressionism. It results from the attempt

²⁷Sokel, p. 166.

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Brockett, p. 298.

³⁰Dahlstrom, p. 16.



to describe in words whole psychic experiences: all of the associations that the ego may acquire in its relation to an object. The object becomes only a means to an end, and as such it becomes "so lacking in importance that an accurate reproduction of it becomes positively an impediment to the expression of the subject."³¹ This characteristic of Expressionism will be evident in the discussions of some of the form elements.

In summary there appears to be two general characteristics of expressionism in drama. The first is that expressionists, failing to accept the given nature of empirical reality, concern themselves with social and political reform. They "attempt to show how current ideals have distorted man's spirit . . . through false values," while looking forward to the transformation of society and to a time when harmony between empirical reality and man's spirit can be achieved.³² This is the Activist characteristic. The mystic characteristic is a contentment with merely expressing dissatisfaction with current reality, and not being interested in reform. A second characteristic is the technique of divorcing the art object from empirical reality.

Form Elements

Plot. -- Since the expressionist must somehow embody an inner, subjective, personal truth, he must seek for a means adequate for expressing this personal vision. Since by aesthetic philosophy and belief, the expressionist is not bound to an attempt to create the

³¹Dahlstrom, p. 16.

³²Brockett, pp. 298-99.



clusion of empirical reality, he may use any device or technique he
a devise in order to produce his subjective vision. The essential
structural technique he seems to employ is to alter and distort the
empirical world radically so that events no longer appear to be structured
they are in real life, but rather as they might be in a nightmare
in a dream. In Sokel's words: "To make expression more emphatic,
Expressionist, exactly like the dreaming mind, distorts features
reality be exaggeration."³³ Dahlstrom describes this type of struct-
l distortion as the "dream-like" technique of Expressionism.

In the first place, continuity of action and of time is
lost or ignored. Action is nearly always that of dream
action, in a plastic state of becoming, in duration un-
qualified by time. And, as in dreams, any action may
without warning drop into oblivion and another one take
its place, with the same absence of time and space ele-
ments.³⁴

This type of "free composition" was discussed by August
ndberg in his preface to The Dream Play, when he described his
onal attempt to "imitate the disconnected but seemingly logical
of the dream" where anything may happen.³⁵

. . . everything is possible and probable. Time and
space do not exist; on a slight groundwork of reality,
imagination spins and weaves new patterns made up of
memories, experiences, unfettered fancies, absurdities
and improvisations.³⁶

whole purpose in using this technique is to express the sub-
ive vision of the world. The expressionist, "like the dreamer,
entrates entirely on the purpose of expressing an inner world

³³Sokel, p. 39.

³⁴Dahlstrom, p. 70.

³⁵August Strindberg, "Preface to a Dream Play," Six Plays of
ndberg, p. 193.

³⁶Ibid.



refuses to let conformity to external reality divert him from purpose."³⁷

The effect of this type of distortion on the dramatic form states that the division of acts and scenes be somewhat arbitrary: there may be acts with a large number of scenes; there may be variations."³⁸ Through all of this distorting of reality and dramatic structure Expressionism frequently retains the divisions into acts and scenes, though such divisions do not usually correspond to the actual distribution of subject matter.³⁹

Isaac Goldberg describes this dream-like structure as a seeking to create a "fourth-dimensional technique," in which the forms of time and space "dissolve into the velocity of thought."⁴⁰ Sokel claims that the distortion of time, place, and action functions as a means of expression.

The Expressionist drama not only destroys the unity of place, time, actions, and character; it changes time, like space, into a function of expression. It sometimes accelerates the flow of time fantastically or it reverses its direction.⁴¹

The essence, then, of expressionistic technique is close to the structure of dreams as it seeks to "interiorize and vivify the traditional

³⁷Sokel, p. 38. (It is obvious that this "dream-like technique" is similar to that used in Surrealism. In the sense that both distort reality as dreams do, the techniques are basically similar. However, the intent and deliberate use of this type of structure is different in each style. See "Surrealism," Chapter III, supra.)

³⁸Dahlstrom, p. 70.

³⁹Ibid., pp. 69-70.

⁴⁰Isaac Goldberg, The Drama of Transition (Cincinnati: Stewart Co., 1922), p. 276.

⁴¹Sokel, p. 39.

rative method of presenting inner states" in drama.⁴² Even though dream-like structural approach is important in describing the dramatic technique of Expressionism, Gassner (and others) warns us that "it is generally subjective orientation rather than dream formation per se that is most characteristic of expressionism."⁴³ It is true, however, that Expressionism in drama does employ a thin, rather than "story-line," as compared, for example, to Realism. The unifying factor in this structure is rather a central idea, emotion, or sense of feeling.⁴⁴

Character. -- Consistent with the general characteristic of Expressionism (the rejection and distortion of empirical reality), characters in Expressionism are drawn as genuine products of inner experience, rather than of objective experience.⁴⁵ Further, they are often seen as partial abstractions and type characters, who operate under a non-realistic, type of cause and effect motivation.

Sokel describes expressionistic characters as not always life-abstractions. On the contrary, he writes, "they often act in striking and unique ways."⁴⁶ But the more nominal approach is to attempt to destroy our illusion that these characters are a part of reality.

. . . some strange detail, some distortion or implausible exaggeration, a grotesque twist, an intentional incongruity, appearances at empirically impossible times and places,

²Ibid., p. 41.

³Gassner, Directions in Modern Theatre and Drama, p. 119.

⁴Sokel, p. 41.

⁵Dahlstrom, p. 71.

⁶Sokel, p. 36.

again and again destroy our illusion that we might face three-dimensional persons of flesh and blood in these dramas. These characters resemble neither empirical personalities nor allegorical abstractions, but figures appearing in vivid dreams.⁴⁷

John Gassner calls them "depersonalized characters" who are "transformed into stark symbols or allegorical types;"⁴⁸ Kenneth Rowe sees them as abstractions, "characters without personal names representing types, classes, or ideas;"⁴⁹ and Marriott writes that expressionists "refuse to create individuals: they prefer to use types devoid of personality."⁵⁰

Typical of the sign of this abstraction and typification is the names given to characters. Many of them are anonymous, and those who are not are "known by symbols, numbers or letters,"⁵¹ as in Elmer Rice's The Adding Machine. Sometimes they represent types, classes, or ideas, and are given labels such as The Son, The Billionaire, The Man in Blue, and The Lady in Black as in The Coral, the first play in Kaiser's expressionistic trilogy.

A secondary characteristic in the discussion of character as found in dramatic criticism is the apparent lack of motivation given characters by expressionist dramatists. "Characters," says Thompson, "are often inadequate or unexplained and their actions are consequence startling, unexpected, and violent."⁵²

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 37.

⁴⁸Gassner, Directions in Modern Theatre and Drama, p. 120.

⁴⁹Rowe, p. 205.

⁵⁰J. W. Marriott, Modern Drama (London: Thomas Nelson & Sons, ., n.d.), p. 228.

⁵¹Thomas H. Dickinson, The Theatre in a Changing Europe (New York: Holt and Company, 1937), p. 21.

⁵²Thompson, p. 343.

And Sokel suggests that the expressionist suspends the normative laws of causality and motivation so that only one single, subjective purpose rules.⁵³ For example, the dramatist may by-pass efforts to explain motivation for certain actions, and instead he may immediately transmute the feelings of his characters into actions. "As in dreams, wish becomes act, emotion becomes event."⁵⁴

The point these critics are making doesn't seem to be that there is no motivation, or no causes operative in Expressionism, but rather that it is a different concept of the causal relationship. Where the realist might place emphasis on motives and human character causality as being empirical necessities of life, the Expressionist feels that the emphasis should be on the act and the event. It is feeling and emotion, treated from a subjective point of view, that are important to the expressionist. Sokel illustrates this in describing the acts of the hero in Strindberg's To Damascus.

In Strindberg's drama the hero's emotional situation determines the beggar's whereabouts, and his appearances at the most unexpected times and places are never explained in terms of empirical causality or plausibility.⁵⁵

In summary, expressionistic characters are drawn as products of inner, subjective experience, rather than as empirical observation might reveal them. They border on the abstract, and are usually measureless by ordinary standards.

Language. -- The word "telegraphic" is most often used to explain the linguistic tendencies of expressionistic drama.

⁵³Ibid., p. 39.

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 39.

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 35.

According to Thompson the dialogue tends toward either the telegraphic style of exclamations and cries, "or toward long-winded rhetorical harangues."⁵⁶ Kenneth Thorpe Rowe defines and explains more detail the precise meaning and techniques of "telegraphic dialogue." He bases his observation upon the expressionist's attempt to capture a "stream-of-consciousness" type of narrative flow:

Interior or stream-of-consciousness monologue, . . . became one of the most frequently used methods of externalization, often dominating a play. In the expressionist monologue the playwright undertook to suggest the nature of stream-of-consciousness as a flow of images rather than rationally formulated thought and flashing words and phrases instead of full sentence structure.⁵⁷

Thompson goes on to state that the actual dialogue, or exchange of thought between characters, is reduced to "short crisp exchanges of phrases broken and unfinished sentences . . . a nervous staccato style."⁵⁸ In Toller's Man and the Masses contains much of this type of dialogue, as does Strindberg's The Dream Play, and Rice's The Adding Machine.

In addition to staccato, or telegraphic dialogue, "both the monologue and the aside are quite legitimate and genuine elements of expressionist drama,"⁵⁹ as in Beggar on Horseback.

These techniques all serve the express purpose of attempting to express some inner innovating force, thought, or idea.⁶⁰ It is a functional use of speech, rather than a descriptive use. In real

⁵⁶Thompson, p. 343.

⁵⁷Rowe, p. 205.

⁵⁸Dahlstrom, p. 67.

⁵⁹Dickinson, The Theatre in a Changing Europe, p. 142.

⁶⁰Dahlstrom, p. 67.

fe we can recognize many characters by their speech patterns. But Expressionism, where the dramatist doesn't want characters to be highly individualized, speech must be purely functional.

The realist aims at the variety of accents and idioms which the social and geographical diversity of actual life suggests. The Expressionist reverses this principle, since speech for him is not a means of characterization, but a function of expression.⁶¹

Theme. -- As discussed earlier there are two aspects of Expressionism formulated and developed in Germany during the early period of the expressionist movement from 1910-25; these were the Mystics and the Activists. The essential principle of "subjectivism" informs both branches of the style; however, there are different specific characteristics. These express themselves most visually in the expressionist's thematic concerns, resulting in essentially two thematic aspects.

Mystical Expressionism as practiced by the early German dramatists "first and foremost engaged in searching for the essential reality of our universe."⁶² This search, Dahlstrom claims, becomes preoccupied with God, religion, and the inherent worth and dignity of man as central thematic concerns. While the apparent subject matter is a dramatization of the individual consciousness and the inner conflicts of states of being, its essential themes are much more universally significant. In its effort to represent concretely on the stage the inner feelings of a character's mind, these early expressionists in reality presented a religious and metaphysical view of the universe and creation, as for example in The Dream Play. The purpose of this

⁶¹Sokel, p. 40.

⁶²Dahlstrom, p. 80-81.

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spiritual universe, was to escape from the horror of the real world which was at odds with the ideal view of reality which the expressionist felt. The search for God gave a savoring of the religious character to the expressionist drama of the mystics, or a character of the metaphysical, or a touch of mythology.⁶³

While both forms of Expressionism refuse to accept empirical reality, and look for an essentially subjective, egocentric world, the Activists incline toward a more social transformation of that empirical world than do the "mystics." They attempt to make the audience aware of the short-comings of our present situation, and sometimes suggest programs for accomplishing a more perfect future.⁶⁴

It proclaims an idea, that of the New Man and of a New Humanity, which is to be no longer subjected to the limitation of State and nation, of society and traditional laws, and which is to be transformed into a community of love, goodness and peace.⁶⁵

Sokel, too, describes the characteristic difference between the two expressionistic concepts in theme.

In abstractionism the human mind sets itself up as the creator of a kingdom of pure forms whose likeness cannot be found in nature; in activism the mind proposes a perfect social order based on absolute ideals of happiness and justice unconnected with historical reality.⁶⁶

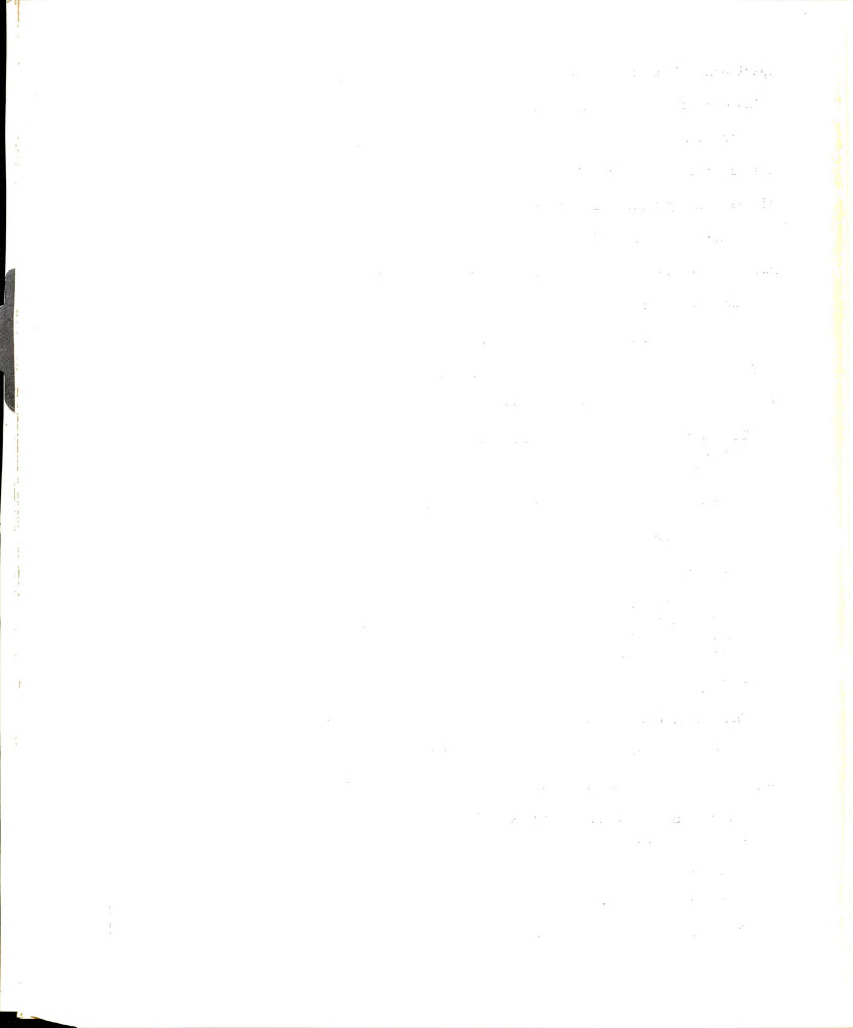
While this call for a perfect or ideal society is implied in most of the dramas, very few expressionists actually depict it in their plays. Instead the emphasis is usually on a violent revelation of the destructive nature of the modern world by abstracting key aspects and

⁶³Ibid., p. 78.

⁶⁴Brockett, p. 299.

⁶⁵Samuel and Thomas, p. 60.

⁶⁶Sokel, p. 206.



expressing them directly and in isolation. Its specific thematic point of departure is a refusal to accept the machine-like nature of contemporary humanity. They suggest a spiritual transformation of mankind, so that man's greatness can be fully realized through his soul, not his material being. Dahlstrom calls this "esoteric socialism", a socialism of the soul, which attempts to solve social problems through spiritual and mental investigation. Specific themes involve the conflicts between father and son,⁶⁷ historical motifs, the conflict between the old and the new generation, man's relation to the proletariat and to the community as a whole, and especially protests against materialism, mechanization, and militarism.⁶⁸

In summary there is the religious, mystic Expressionism whose thematic concerns are essentially with man and his relationship to God; and there is the activist who is concerned with more social themes which depict current ideals and the dignity of man in a modern mechanized society.

Summary: Criteria for Identification of the

Dramatic Style of Expressionism

Principles of Expressionism

Expressionists, in their rejection of empirical reality, express their own personal, subjective vision of reality. It is the "soul image" of the world which is kept pure and unfalsified. Essentially it is a spiritual movement which places inner experience above external life, being generally subjective in orientation.

⁶⁷Franz Rapp, "Germany," A History of Modern Drama, p. 88.

⁶⁸Samuel and Thomas, pp. 63, 64, and 110.

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Characteristics of Expressionism

General Characteristics.--There are two aspects of Expressionism; the mystic aspect and the activist aspect. The mystical form of Expressionism is characterized by the liberation of the soul, and a concern for the spiritual projection of reality. The Activist expressionists are characterized by rebelling against empirical reality and at the same time they hope to regenerate and reform man. Their point of contention in opposition to the mystics is social reform. The second general characteristic of Expressionism is a tendency to divorce the object from empirical reality.

Form Elements

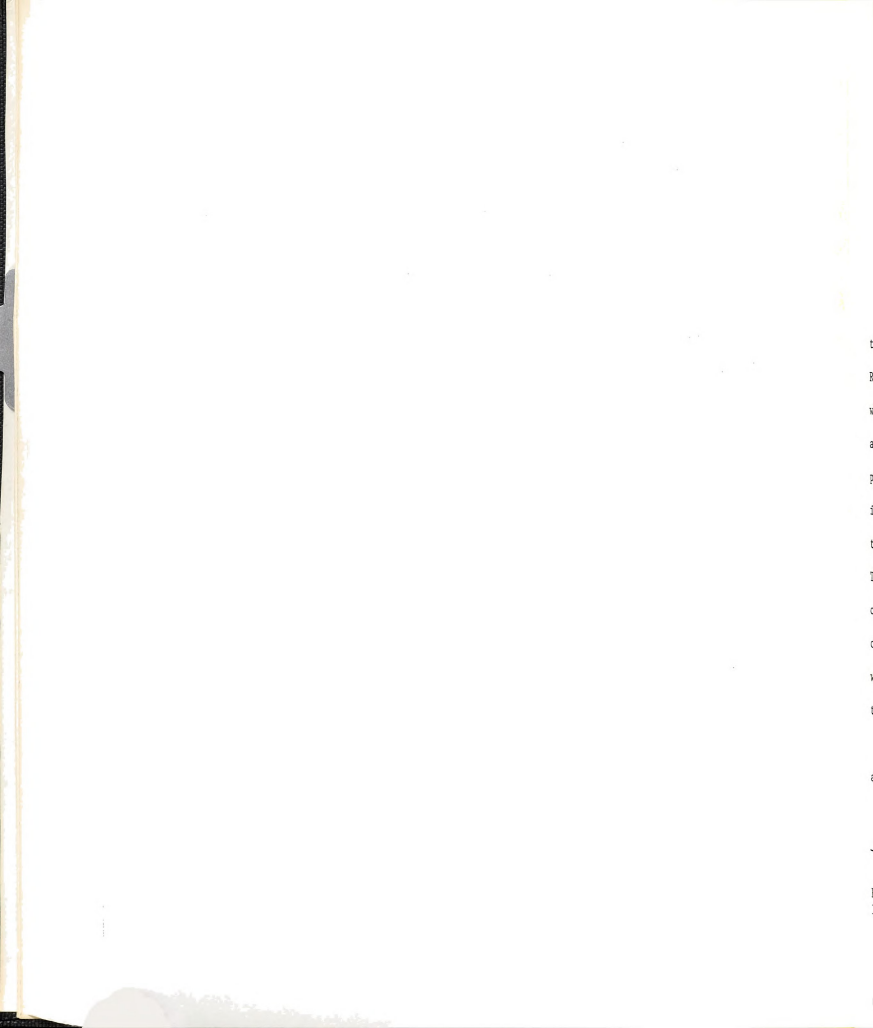
Plot.--The essence of expressionist technique is to distort reality so that events take the formal sequential aspect of dreams. This dream-like structure leads to a rejection of the formal continuity of action and time. The division of acts is somewhat arbitrary, and the story-line is somewhat thin. The unifying factor is a central idea, emotion, or state of feeling rather than the casual structure of Realism.

Character.--Expressionist characters are drawn as genuine products of inner experience. They are partial abstractions, type characters, and non-realistic. Most characters are anonymous and named by symbols, numbers, or letters, and finally the expressionist tends to emphasize human motivation.

Language.--The word "telegraphic" most accurately describes the technique of Expressionism, as the use of phrases and non-complete sentences demonstrate. Also the rhetorical monologue is characteristic of the dialogue.



Theme. -- Abstractionists or mystic expressionists are concerned with religious, spiritual themes. They attempt to relate the drama to God and religion. The essential reality which they project is a spiritual, religious, mythological one. The Activists incline toward themes of social renewal. They violently express themes which attempt to point out a messianic complex, where the world is to be transformed into a better place for man. They often concentrate upon the negative aspect of reality in order to show that current ideals have distorted man's spirit and made him a machine through false, materialistic values.



CHAPTER IX

EPIC THEATRE

Historical Background

The initial development of the dramatic style known as Epic theatre took place in the second decade of the twentieth century as Russia, during the early 1920's began to use techniques now associated with Epic theatre in the "living newspapers" of the "blue blouse" amateur dramatic movement. The amateurs gave way to government professionals who used the "living newspaper" form as a powerful instrument of Bolshevik propaganda.¹ By 1927, the popular and entertaining informational device of earlier years all but disappeared.² This brief dramatic movement in Russia exhibited the intent and some of the techniques of later Epic theatre dramas, but its influence on subsequent development of the style is questionable.³ Concurrent with the "blue blouse" productions, a much more significant movement toward Epic theatre arose in Germany.

Shortly after World War I, three directors, Reinhardt, Jessner, and Piscator, dominated German drama and production.

Reinhardt . . . had created a colorful style of his own, a cross between realism and romanticism but was looking for

¹Nikolai A. Gorchakov, The Theatre in Soviet Russia trans. Edgar Lehrman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1957), pp. 145-46.

²Ibid.

³Gorelik, pp. 444-45.



new worlds to conquer: vast spectacles in circuses and giant halls or open-air productions involving whole towns like his Everyman at the Salzburg Festival. Leopold Jessner at the Staats-Theater (Prussian State Theatre) was the exponent of Expressionism as applied to the classics: highly stylized productions built around huge staircases. And finally there was the radically left-wing Agitprop theatre of Irwin Piscator, who regarded the stage above all as an instrument for mobilizing the masses.⁴

Reinhardt's revivals of Georg Buchner's Woyzeck and Danton's with their "effective sequences of short instructive scenes" "powerful new-minted language" influenced the development of theatre.⁵ Jessner's experiments in Expressionism and the 1920 productions of Kaiser's expressionistic trilogy also affected the growth of the new style. Yet the theatrical work of Irwin Piscator marked the true beginning of Epic theatre in Germany.⁶

Piscator's contributions to Epic theatre were in turn supplemented and amplified by the work of Bertolt Brecht.⁷ The Epic theatre was put into practice by Piscator, in theory by Brecht."⁸

Brecht, the major theorist and playwright of the Epic theatre movement, arrived in Berlin in 1924 and became absorbed in its theatrical world. He inherited the immediate theatrical traditions of Reinhardt, Jessner, and Piscator. Along with them, he studied Russian experiments in film and theatre, Pirandello's new "Theatre of the mind," the plays of Buchner, Japanese plays, and the acting style of the Chinese performer, Mei-Lan-fang.⁹ From such

⁴Ibid., pp. 22-23.

⁵Allan Lewis, The Contemporary Theatre (New York: Crown Publications, Inc., 1962), p. 221.

⁶Ibid., p. 222.

⁷Gorelik, p. 394.

⁸Ibid., p. 381.

⁹John Willett, The Theatre of Bertolt Brecht (London: Methuen & Co., Ltd., 1959), pp. 108-110, 112-113, 123, and 180.



diverse influences, Brecht developed and refined Epic Theatre in Germany until the political environment forced him to leave the country in the early 1930's.

American experiments in Epic theatre began about the same time that the German movement ceased. Earlier in 1926 and 1927, the formation of the short-lived Workers' Drama League and the New Playwrights' Theatre laid the groundwork for experimentation.¹⁰ In 1930, techniques of Epic theatre appeared in the productions of the "German-speaking Prolet-Bühne whose home was in the center of New York City's German working-class population."¹¹ This group gave "exciting performances of a new chanted type of play which the group called 'agitprop' plays."¹²

Almost simultaneously, there arose in New York an English-speaking "agitprop" organization called "Workers' Laboratory Theatre."¹³ A general employment of an Epic theatre approach appeared from time to time in other American groups and productions, such as the Theatre Union (1933), the Theatre of Action (1934), the Group Theatre (1935), and the International Ladies' Garment Workers Union's Labor Stage (1937).¹⁴ In addition, the Federal Theatre Project's "Living Newspapers" made use of Epic theatre techniques in the years between 1936 and 1939.

Lastly, the influence of Epic theatre was apparent in a number of American plays in the years just before World War II. This Epic

¹⁰Gorelik, p. 400.

¹¹Ibid., p. 401.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 400-405.

theatre influence was seen in such plays as Thornton Wilder's Our
and The Skin of Our Teeth, Marc Blitzstein's The Cradle Will
g, and Lerner and Weill's musical comedy, Love Life.¹⁵

Following World War II, there was a revival of interest in the
theatre. Brecht returned to Germany and organized the Berliner
Ensemble, "a superbly coordinated troupe devoted almost exclusively
the production of Brecht's work."¹⁶ Although Brecht died in 1956,
Berliner Ensemble is still active in East Germany.

At present, the Epic theatre style is the subject of widespread
critical commentary, most of which is centered on Brecht. But the
movement did not end with Brecht. Fairly recent plays such as Marat/
e, The Royal Hunt of the Sun and Max Frisch's The Chinese Wall
strongly influenced by the Epic theatre style.¹⁷

Principles of Epic Theatre

It is difficult to outline the principles of Epic theatre with-
out focusing on the writing of its major adherent, Bertolt Brecht.
Theatre artists (notably Piscator) contributed to the growth
of the style, and other plays have been written employing its techniques,
but Brecht is by far the most articulate and prolific commentator on
the movement and its point of view. For these reasons, the following
discussion deals mainly with the ideas and principle of Epic theatre
as formulated and expressed by Brecht.

¹⁵Gassner, Treasury of the Theatre, II, p. 458.

¹⁶Lewis, p. 225.

¹⁷Max Frisch, The Chinese Wall, trans. James L. Roseberg, (New
Hill and Wang, 1961), p. 5. For further Epic influences, see
Chapter III.



The first principle underlying Epic theatre is simply that the world, human life, and society are capable of changing. Brecht's particular belief in this principle was derived from the doctrine of dialectical materialism, which is "essentially a method of showing that history, science, and all human life can never be treated as static but are continually developing; that all causes, all effects, all relations are dynamic; that the time element must not be left out."¹⁸ Brecht affirmed this point of view when he stated that nothing must be taken for granted, in order that nothing may seem unalterable."¹⁹

The second principle which determines the particular point of view of Epic theatre is the application of scientific methods of human and social problems as a means of solving the miseries that beset mankind. Brecht felt that since human institutions and conditions undergo change, the methods of science "must be applied to our social surroundings if "we [~ are_7 ever to learn to control them."²⁰ Brecht, the essence of all science is skepticism, "a refusal to take anything for granted: an active burrowing doubt."²¹

The Epic theatre involvement with science and scientific method is not a unique event in the history of dramatic styles. Earlier, Naturalism and its adherents had championed a scientific and analytic view of life.²² Epic theatre's concern with science, however, goes beyond the reported scientific observation of Naturalism. The

¹⁸Willett, p. 195.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 76.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Ibid.

²²See Chapter V. Naturalism.

scientific principle in Epic theatre is employed to discover the sociological, even technological, relationships which are the causes of human behaviour.²³ An even greater difference between the style of Naturalism and Epic theatre in terms of science lies in the fact that Naturalism is founded on a mechanistic and deterministic view of life and character, while Epic theatre is based on the alterability of human nature. In essence, Naturalism allegedly used science and observation to discover what are supposed to be fixed natural laws and Epic theatre views science as a means to unearth knowledge about the changing conditions of nature and society -- a social science.

The third principle underlying Epic theatre style is that drama must have a didactic purpose. Supporters of the Epic theatre style insist that the best of any drama is didactic. They maintain that the didactic purpose in drama makes all the difference between a cultural medium and a mere device for idling away time.²⁴ As Brecht stated, "we need a type of theatre which not only releases the feelings, thoughts, and impulses within a particular historical field of human relations in which the actions takes place, but also employs and encourages those thoughts and feelings which help transform the field itself."²⁵ Brecht felt that the objective of theatre and drama was to develop the means of entertainment into an object of instruction to change certain institutions from places of amusement into organs of public instructions."²⁶

²³Gorelik, p. 412.

²⁴Ibid., p. 430.

²⁵Bertolt Brecht, "A Short Organum for the Theatre," Playwrights on Playwriting, ed. Toby Cole (New York: Hill and Wang, Inc., 1963), pp. 84-85.

²⁶Willett, p. 174.



Advocates of Epic theatre style admit that didactic drama is a unique principle of their particular movement. The element of didacticism has existed to some extent throughout theatre and dramatic history. But, as Gorelik claims, the didactic nature of Epic theatre is distinguishable from that of preceding drama, since it insists only that in every age the worth of drama has depended upon a penetrating observation of life; In the past the power of observation has often been a highly intuitive poetical gift, For the life of today one must bring to the theatre a different kind of beauty in observation: the deliberately scientific laboratory.²⁷

In brief, didacticism in Epic theatre style is consistent with a new deal of the drama of the past in that it agrees that drama should or must be used for instruction. Epic theatre differs in that the basis of its didacticism purports to be science and not intuition. In keeping with the didactic purpose, Epic theatre is opposed to what Brecht termed the "Aristotelian" theatre in which, according to Brecht, the spectator becomes emotionally involved in the stage action.²⁸

He thought that the old theatre ["Aristotelian"] had outlived its usefulness since it reduced the spectator to a role of passivity. In it . . . events are presented as fixed and unchangeable, since even historical subjects are created in present day terms; this approach encourages the audience to believe that things have always been the same. Realistic staging gives the actions the air of stability which contributes to the idea that society is solidly entrenched and cannot be altered. The spectator, therefore can only watch in a hypnotized and uncritical way, his senses lulled, and he cannot participate "productively" in the theatrical event.²⁹

But, in his Epic theatre principles, wished to modify emotional

²⁷Gorelik, p. 430.

²⁸Bentley, p. 215.

²⁹Brockett, p. 311.



appeal in drama and overcome passivity and uncritical acceptance.

Yet, he did not completely deny emotion a place in drama. John

Willettt quotes him as saying,

The essential point of the Epic theatre is perhaps that it appeals less to the feelings than to the spectator's reason. Instead of sharing an experience the spectator must come to grips with things. At the same time it would be quite wrong to try and deny emotion to this kind of theatre.³⁰

Brecht's attitude toward emotion in drama has been often misunderstood. He felt that the emotional content of "Aristotelian" drama acted as a soporific on the minds of the spectators.³¹ The emotional content produced an empathy that Brecht wished to modify, but not eliminate entirely. As Bentley points out, empathy, suspense, and pathos are not eliminated but limited by being placed alongside their opposites. He claims that this practice leads to an enrichment of the drama, "even an enrichment of the emotional context."³² Finally, Brecht himself said that the task of the theatre was to entertain "the children of the scientific age, and to do so with consciousness and humor."³³

The remainder of Epic theatre principles are the results of Brecht's attempt to develop in theory and practice a didactic theatre of drama which would modify the emotional involvement of the spectator in the stage action. These principles are the use of epic form, and alienation."

³⁰Willettt, p. 170.

³¹Gassner, Directions in . . ., p. 210.

³²Eric Bentley, In Search of Theatre (New York: Vintage Books, 1953), p. 144.

³³Brecht, "A Little Organum," p. 104.

Brecht termed the style he helped develop "Epic theatre" because he believed it to be more like an epic poem than like "Aristotelian"

na.³⁴ The epic, one of the oldest literary forms, "distinguishes a type of drama which supersedes tragedy in that its canvas is the world of events rather than the narrower one of personal fate."³⁵

The epic poem is composed of alternating sections of dialogue and narration, and the entire story is presented from the viewpoint of a single storyteller. The epic poem also has almost complete freedom in changing place and time; it tells about some scenes and shows others; it bridges great passages of time with a single sentence or a brief narrative passage; it may easily cover the entire sweep of an historical period.³⁶

He did not follow all the elements included in epic poetry. He adopted the basic meaning of epic as being "a sequence of incidents and events, narrated without artificial restrictions as to time, place or relevance to a formal 'plot'."³⁷

Along with his dependence on the epic form, Brecht is noted for his principle of "alienation." This principle, termed Verfremdung by Brecht, and variously translated as "estrangement," "detachment," "illusion," "V-effect," and "A-effect,"³⁸ is simply an attempt to make the familiar seem strange, to bring to attention a normal feature of everyday life. As Brecht says,

"The estrangement [alienation] effect . . . occurs when the thing to be understood, the thing to which attention is to be drawn, is changed from an ordinary, well-known, immediately present thing into a particular,

Brockett, p. 313.

Corelik, p. 412.

Brockett, p. 313.

Ellett, p. 171.

id., p. 179.

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striking, unexpected thing. In a certain sense the self-evident is made incomprehensible, although this only happens in order to make it all the more comprehensible.³⁹

tes as an example the experience of driving a Model T Ford driving a modern car. The modern car gives no sense of genesis, and is taken for granted, but the old Ford makes the driver aware of the automobile and the process of driving. Its engine makes the driver think of all the mechanical processes involved in the providing of power for locomotion. In short, a familiar process is rendered strange and thought is aroused.⁴⁰

"Alienation" is an integral part of the didactic goal of Epic theatre and is "designed to free socially conditioned phenomena from that stamp of familiarity which protects them from our grasp."⁴¹

This technique allows the theatre to make use in its representations of the new scientific method known as dialectical materialism. In order to unearth society's laws of motion this method treats social situations as processes, and traces out all their inconsistencies. It regards nothing as existing except in so far as it changes; in other words, is in disharmony with itself. This also goes for those human feelings, opinions, and attitudes through which any time the form of human social life finds its expression.⁴²

Characteristics of Epic Theatre Style

1. Characteristics

The first general characteristic of Epic theatre style is its

³⁹Ronald Gray, Bertolt Brecht (New York: Grove Press, Inc., p. 68.

⁴⁰Ibid.

⁴¹Brecht, "A Short Organum . . . ," p. 88

⁴²Ibid., p. 89.

dactic quality. Epic theatre utilizes "any and all of the instrumentalities of theatre and of modern technology for communication the idea."⁴³ The "idea" is usually "a demonstration of some aspect social reality."⁴⁴ "Plays become less like a story, and more and more like a court of investigation."⁴⁵

The second general characteristic of Epic theatre style is its anti-illusory or unrealistic quality. That is, the total effect is realistic, although individual scenes may be starkly realistic. The anti-illusory quality is achieved by unrealistic juxtaposition of such scenes, thus modifying the empathic response of the audience.

Epic theatre theorists view reality as being "as faithful as possible to objective facts."⁴⁶ But by destroying illusion, Epic theatre achieves

a greater sense of the actual world. They [Epic theatre plays] say to the audience: "The actual world exists and it is our subject. But this play and this stage are not identical with it."⁴⁷

The use of realistic scenes within an Epic theatre play may accompany other scenes employing discussion, narration, songs, or dramatization.⁴⁸ However, the over-all effect is unrealistic in the sense of not building the illusion that the stage action is actually a part of life itself; rather, it encourages the audience to look

⁴³Rowe, p. 214.

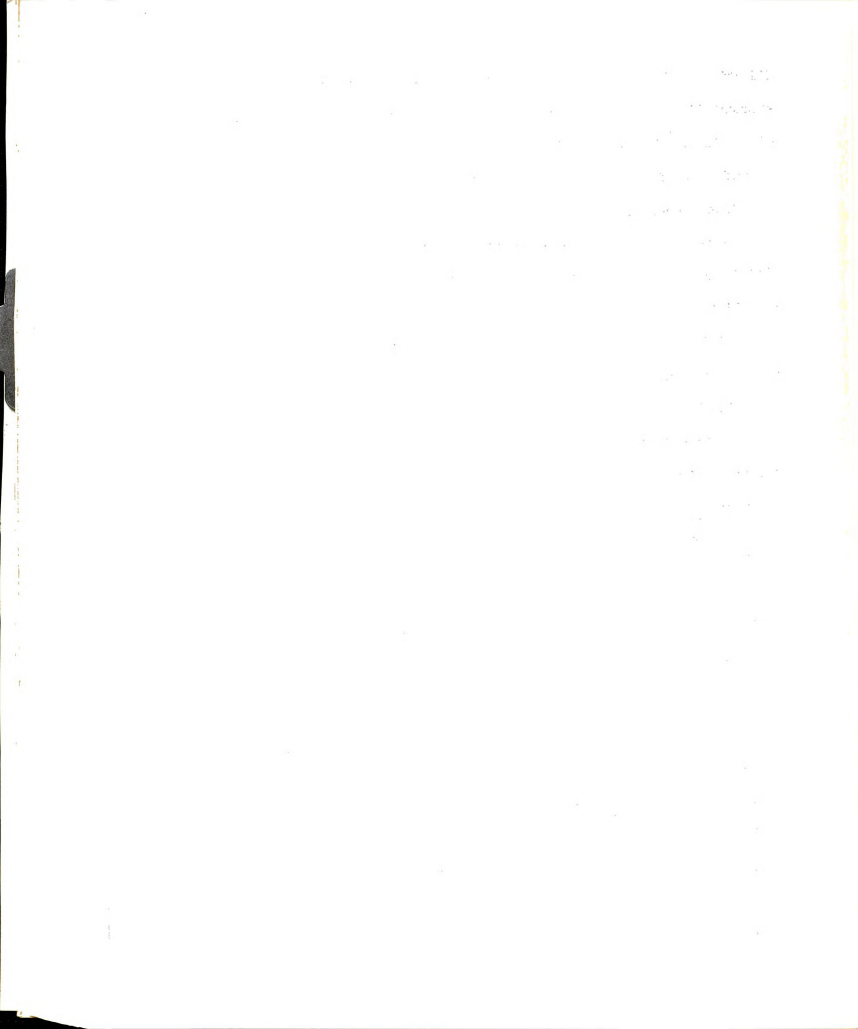
⁴⁴Gassner, Directions in . . ., pp. 113-114.

⁴⁵Willett, p. 72.

⁴⁶Bentley, Playwright as Thinker, p. 217.

⁴⁷Ibid.

⁴⁸Gassner, The Theatre in Our Time, p. 90.



ectively, detachedly, at what the playwright is saying.⁴⁹

This objectivity is a third general characteristic of Epic theatre. Epic theatre does not rely on suggestion or subjectivity; it is objective, analytical, and documentary.⁵⁰

In keeping with Brecht's emphasis on the importance of scientific method, Epic theatre plays thus replace illusion with a "precise, exact method" in which there is a "selection of functional elements necessary to make clear a given dramatic situation."⁵¹

The last general characteristic of Epic theatre style is the purposefully obvious relation of its form elements to the theme of the play. Because the didactic purpose is paramount, the parts which make up any given Epic play are selected and shaped in a clear and cooperative manner to demonstrate the theme or major idea. This relationship of elements seems to be logical in view of Epic theatre's purpose of stimulating thought, analysis, and judgment.⁵²

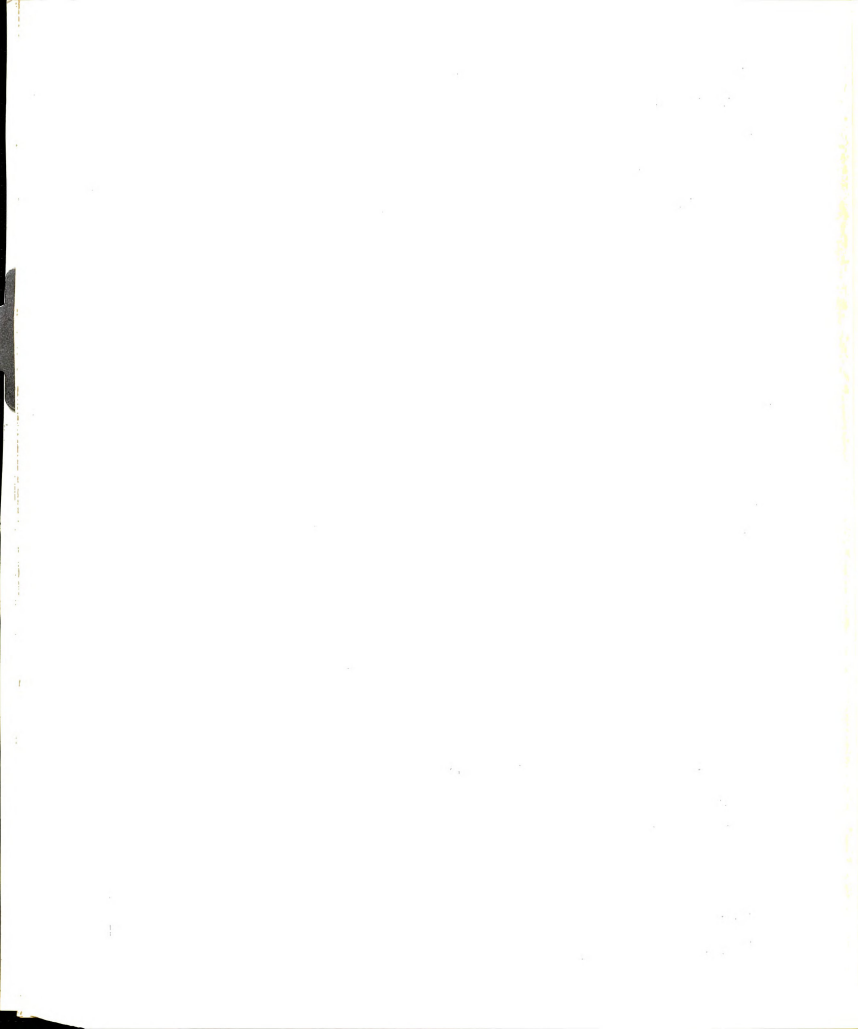
The characteristic emphasis on theme and idea is not solely the domain of Epic theatre. Social protest Realism is often theme-oriented. Epic theatre differs in that it is explicit, obvious, and direct in its demonstrations of themes. While plays written in other styles usually reveal themes through implication and suggestion, attaining their meaning at the conclusion of the play, Epic theatre plays usually state their themes early in the play and use the material of the drama to demonstrate the validity of the theme.

⁴⁹Rowe, p. 214.

⁵⁰Gassner, Producing the Play, pp. 65-66.

⁵¹Gorelik, p. 440.

⁵²Gassner, Producing the Play, p. 66.



Form Elements

Plot. -- In general the plot in Epic theatre style is "episodic, combines different styles, and is directly expressive (presentational) rather than representational."⁵³ The plot should make possible the projection of "various facets of man's life in society without accepting an obligation to abide by any strict unity of time, place, action, and style."⁵⁴

Although Epic theatre plots are seemingly loose and episodic in construction, they are bound together "by the demonstration of a social issue."⁵⁵ The "cumulative effect of all the scenes" is more important than the "straining toward a climax."⁵⁶ The playwright deliberately avoids continuity of action. The audience is deprived of a sustaining plot and is "thrown back on the bare words and the ideas, and these lead . . . to an (ostensibly) firm judgement and an (apparently) clear-cut conclusion."⁵⁷

There are a number of techniques used in Epic theatre to achieve these ends. Dramatic scenes may be short, even stenographic, and numerous.⁵⁸ Each scene is treated for itself instead of the usual historic practice of relating one scene to another.⁵⁹

⁵³Ibid., p. 65.

⁵⁴Gassner, The Theatre in Our Times, p. 72.

⁵⁵Rowe, p. 214.

⁵⁶Mordecai Gorelik, "Brecht: 'I Am the Einstein of the New Dramatic Form . . . ;'" Theatre Arts, XLI (March, 1957), p. 72.

⁵⁷Willett, p. 72.

⁵⁸Gassner, Producing the Play, p. 65.

⁵⁹John Howard Lawson, The Theory and Techniques of Playwriting (New York: Hill and Wang, 1960), p. XXV.

"A frequent structural device is the repetition or duplication of characters or events."⁶⁰ Short scenes are often presented without continuity of cast, and longer scenes are interrupted by narration, or "direct address of actors to audience, or by illustration of a thesis by means of a motion picture sequence showing a parallel action."⁶¹ The total effect of the play is built up through "the juxtaposition and 'montage' of contrasting episodes."⁶²

In brief, the plot element in Epic theatre may be characterized as loose in structure, episodic, and not bound by the unities of time, place, and action. The didactic element in the style requires a structure that modifies illusion and discourages involvement in the story for its own sake. The plot achieves its purpose by a cumulative means. It is the "sequence of events which constitutes the social experiment of the play; it provides the dialectical field for the interplay of social forces; from which the lesson of the play will be seen to emerge."⁶³

Character. -- Because Epic theatre tries to embrace various facets of the economic and social aspects of the modern world, it depicts its characters "as units of a socially conditioned world in which the individual is a part of the mass."⁶⁴ The study of human nature is replaced by the study of human relations.⁶⁵ Epic theatre

⁶⁰Gray, p. 66.

⁶¹Albright, Halstead, and Mitchell, p. 209.

⁶²Esslin, p. 113.

⁶³Ibid., p. 118.

⁶⁴Gassner, Producing the Play, p. 66.

⁶⁵Esslin, p. 118.

style displays an attitude toward character in which in inner life the characters is irrelevant except in so far as it is expressed outward actions and attitudes.

In practice, Epic theatre developed some particular character types and traits. Especially in Brecht's plays the characters, set against the often violent and exaggerated lawlessness depicted on the stage, voice an

embittered and anarchic reaction against the shortcomings of orthodox morality. The outcast, the disillusioned tough becomes the hero; he may be criminal, he may be semi-human, but . . . he can be romanticized into an inverted idealist, blindly striking out at the society in which he lives.⁶⁶

Brecht's plays the character's environment is often "a tattered, shabby jungle background . . ., haunted by beggars, tramps, blind singers, whores; figures drawn from a tradition of squalor."⁶⁷ For characters are also shabby and down-to-earth, "even those who come from a slightly higher social grade . . . have a healthy pragmatism which leads them again and again to adopt the unheroic attitude."⁶⁸

The creation of Epic theatre characters cannot be divorced from the acting practice of the style, for "alienation" influences the conceptions of the characters. The actor is not impersonating the character; he is "narrating the actions of another person at a definite time in the past."⁶⁹ This leads to a fragmentation of the character in which he is seen in several different contexts, some-

⁶⁶Willett, p. 66.

⁶⁷Ibid.

⁶⁸Ibid.

⁶⁹Esslin, p. 115.



times as the actor, sometimes as the character, sometimes as a commentator, and sometimes as all of these at once. All of this is aimed at producing the desired effect of breaking stage illusion. It also follows that the "characters do not sustain the illusion that they are unaware of the audience's presence."⁷⁰

In Epic theatre style didacticism influences the form element of character. The characters become part of the projection of an overriding theme or social investigation, and as a result highly individualized characterization is avoided. The presentational nature of the style is increased by an emphasis on the duality of the actor and the character. The emphasis is on the demonstration of human action, not on imitation.

Language. -- Due to the didactic nature of Epic theatre, language as a form element is of particular importance.

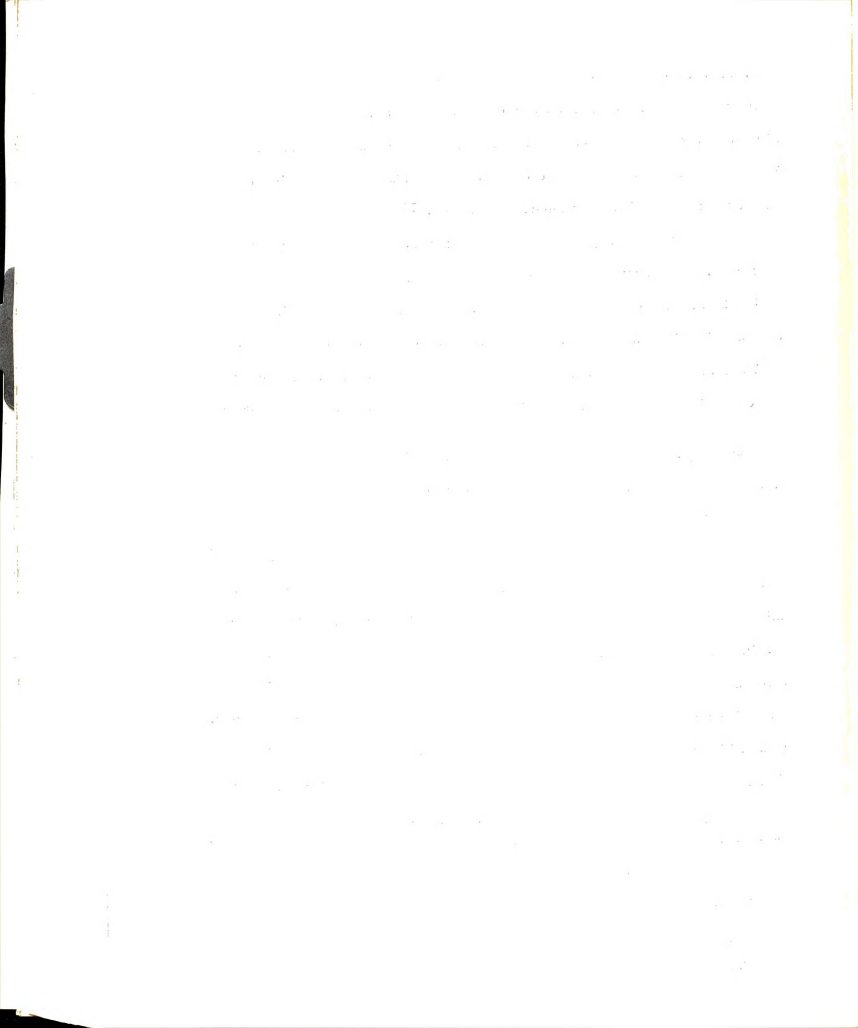
"The language of Epic theatre must follow exactly the attitude of the person speaking," and, at the same time, sound right to the ear.⁷¹ In pointed and clear language the lines must "convey the direction in which the speaker is aiming: to imply the basic purpose of the speech, not just to give elegant expression to the ideas and images through which this might be attained."⁷² In other words, language has the task of carrying the message of the play in a clear and concrete manner. It should have the "practical and purposeful value of saying just what one really means and no more."⁷³ There is no place for ambiguity; rather, unmistakable communication or discussion of ideas is the goal.

⁷⁰Willett, p. 97.

⁷¹Ibid.

⁷²Ibid., pp. 97-98.

⁷³Ibid., p. 97.



Among the specific techniques found in the language of Epic theatre are such familiar devices as constructive soliloquies, direct address to the audience, commentators, and choral chants.⁷⁴ Or as Gassner states, "A narrator may harangue the audience and explain the social meaning of the dramatic scenes, choruses may chant songs expressive of the ideas of the play."⁷⁵ Music is also considered as a part of the language of Epic theatre. Its prime function is one of punctuation or emphasis of the words.⁷⁶

Through means of slide-projectors, language becomes visual as well as oral. Lines of dialogue, slogans from social thinkers, charts, graphs, and titles of scenes might be projected on a screen to aid alienation."⁷⁷

In summary, language is an important element in the description of the Epic theatre style. It helps communicate clearly, aids in breaking illusions, and, in its diversity, provides interest. It avoids being merely ornamental, yet gains aesthetic appeal by its clean, colloquial, and spare utterance. Far from being sterile or dull, it is meant to provoke, arouse, and challenge.

Theme. -- Any consideration of the prevalent themes of Epic theatre must involve the social-didactic purposes behind the style. The scientific skepticism, the concern with social relationships and the philosophical dialectical view of history are both the basis for the expression of the entire style and, at the same time, the

⁷⁴Rowe, p. 214.

⁷⁵Gassner, Producing the Play, pp. 65-66.

⁷⁶Willett, p. 132.

⁷⁷Ibid.

origin of its themes. Regardless of the particular theme of any Epic theatre play or even of the individual scenes in the play (for each scene supposedly can exist for itself), all are traceable back to the paramount theme that human nature is alterable rather than unalterable.⁷⁸

This major theme can be broken down into two areas in which the specific themes of Epic theatre can be grouped: social and moral themes. Social themes are concerned with sociological and sometimes technological relationships which are the fundamental causes of economic and tragic events.⁷⁹ Here the themes of Brecht's theatre, the themes of Marxist doctrine, the evils of capitalism, the misery of the lower classes, class struggle, and the need to reform society.⁸⁰ Yet the social themes of Epic theatre need not be limited to Marxist doctrine. The "Living Newspapers" of the American Federal Theatre Project contained the themes of the misery of the lower classes and the need to reform society in the play One-third of a Nation. The social and technological themes dealing with agriculture and federal electrical projects were treated in Triple-A Plowed Under and Power.

The moral themes of Epic theatre may also include many of the social themes, but are generally more concerned with human conduct. These themes are expressed by John Willett:

The ethical confusion of a confused society means that evil actions may be undertaken from good intentions, or that good intentions may have evil consequences, or that evil intentions may be thrust on men who carry them out laboriously and with reluctance: that the

⁷⁸Lawson, p. xxv.

⁷⁹Gorelik, New Theatres for Old, p. 412.

⁸⁰Willett, p. 194.



Individual himself is often a peculiar mixture of extreme good and extreme bad.⁸¹

Theme, then, in Epic theatre style is a continuation of the basic principle behind the style. It includes this principle in the areas of social and moral inquiry, always reflecting a fundamental belief in the fluidity of human nature and institutions.

Summary: Criteria for Identification of the

Dramatic Style of Epic Theatre

Principles

Epic theatre is an attempt to create a modern didactic drama which will aid in the instruction and reformation of society. Its basic assumption is that society and human nature are alterable. Through "scientific" inquiry into social and moral problems, drama is supposed to make its audience aware of the possibility of alteration and lead the spectators to form judgments and to take desirable actions.

In order to accomplish the purposes of a didactic drama, innovations have been made in Epic theatre that separate it from traditional "realistic" drama. These innovations are the use of the epic form and "alienation."

The epic form is concerned with a broader view of human relations rather than with personal fate. It is accepted in Epic theatre as being "a sequence of events, narrated without artificial restrictions as to time, place or relevance to a formal plot."⁸² It is used to dramatize the social, economic, political, and technological processes that determine the tragic and comic events in life.

⁸¹Ibid., p. 82.

⁸²Willett, p. 171.



Characteristics

General Characteristics. -- The basic characteristic of Epic theatre style is its didactic quality. Its second characteristic is its anti-illusory manner of treating plot, character, and language. Its third characteristic is its attempt at objectivity in the treatment of ideas and problems presented in a given play. The formal relationships of Epic theatre are such that all elements of a play are selected and shaped according to the major theme of the play.

Form Elements

Plot. -- Plots in Epic theatre plays are directly presentational, linear, and episodic. The plot is tied together by the demonstration of a social or moral issue. Short and numerous individual scenes exist for their own sake. Audience involvement in the story is determined by plot structure. Different styles may be used in different plays along with such techniques as constructive soliloquies, direct address to the audience, motion picture film, slides, narration, discussion, and songs.

Character. -- Characters in Epic theatre are treated as units of mass in a socially conditioned world. The psychological aspects of characters are not dealt with unless they can be shown clearly in social interaction. A character may be "fragmented" into actor, commentator, and character. Characters do not ignore the presence of the audience. Characterization of types from lower-class backgrounds is common. Characters are used in an obvious manner to project the theme of the play.

Language. -- Language in Epic theatre must carry the message

the play in a clear and concrete manner; therefore, language functional and rarely ornamental. It says what must be said and more. Prose is the most common form of language in Epic theatre, but verse and song are also sometimes included. Language may take the form of constructive soliloquy, direct address, or choral chant, and becomes visual through the use of projected slides of captions, pictures, and lines of dialogue.

Theme. -- The major theme of Epic theatre is that society is dehumanizing. Specific themes are social and moral in nature and have been previously stated. Social themes deal with the misery of the lower classes, the need to reform society, and the effect of technology on culture. Moral themes are concerned with human conduct in which moral confusion leads to a confusion of the roles of good and evil in the intentions and actions of people. Themes are contemporary and applicable to present society regardless of the historical context in which they appear.

PART TWO

DRAMATIC STYLE DURING THE 1930'S

CHAPTER X

THE 1931-32 SEASON

The purpose of Part Two of this study is to describe dramatic style in successful, serious American drama written for the professional New York stage during the 1930's. In order to accomplish this, a number of plays from four seasons were read and analyzed for style. For a detailed account of the play selection procedure, see Chapter I.)

In order to describe dramatic style during a particular year, each play selected is analyzed for its stylistic manifestations in principle, general characteristics, and the form elements of plot, character, language, and theme. The analysis in each of these areas for every play consists of essentially two parts: first, an assertion which briefly states the style of the particular element; second, support for that assertion through (1) a reference, sometimes by direct quotation, to the criteria in Chapters IV-X, and (2) selected examples of that criteria as they are manifested in the play itself. Quotations from the criteria from Part I are not footnoted.

In assessing the style of a play equal value is given to each of the form elements and to the overall principle and general characteristics. This is done in order to describe a totally accurate picture of each play, since the form elements of a play are not necessarily reflective of the principle of that play.



A total of two hundred and seven plays opened on Broadway during this season. Of these, ninety-five were comedies, forty-two were musicals, and seventy were serious plays. Out of the seventy serious works, forty-six were first-run productions; only six ran over fifty performances. The average length of run of those which were under fifty performances was eleven performances.

According to the established criteria (see Chapter I), the following six plays will be studied for the season 1931-32. They will be considered in this chapter, as they opened, in the following order:

1. After Tomorrow, by Hugh Stange and John Golden.
2. The House of Connelly, by Paul Green.
3. Two Seconds, by Elliot Lester.
4. Mourning Becomes Electra, by Eugene O'Neill.
5. The Black Tower, by Ralph Murphy and Lora Baxter.
6. Trick for Trick, by Vivian Crosby, Shirley Warde, and

Harry W. Gribble.

After Tomorrow

Synopsis.--The scene is the Taylor basement-apartment in New York City. It is a cheap, flat-house filled with a "heterogeneous mass of worn and battered furniture . . . pressed so tightly together that one feels stifled almost to the point of suffocation."¹ In this apartment live Willie Taylor, his wife Elsie, and daughter, Sidney. Willie is a complete social and economic failure. He is supposedly

¹Hugh Stange and John Golden, After Tomorrow (New York: Samuel French, Inc., 1931), p. 3.



an insurance salesman, although he doesn't seem to sell enough insurance to support his family. His wife, Elsie, outwardly demonstrates her hate for both him and Sidney. Her hate of Willie is based upon his economic failure, and she dislikes her own daughter because she never wanted her to be born in the first place, and second, because Sidney is planning to get married soon. This latter plan would cut off a substantial part of the family income. Sidney works in a factory during the day, and at night she works at home cleaning the house, washing dishes, and cooking for her father. On top of all of this, she helps contribute to the financial affairs of the family. Despite this hard, unfair life she and her fiancée, Peter Piper, have managed to save \$400 for their upcoming marriage. During the first act the love and affection between Sidney and Pete is tenderly presented, and an extra-marital affair between Elsie and one of the other tenants in the building, Malcom Jarvis, is sordidly presented. During the second act, despite many hardships and much opposition, the wedding plans continue. The day before the ceremony Elsie, disgusted with poverty, runs away with Jarvis, who has just embezzled \$25,000 from his employer. When Willie discovers this he collapses with a stroke. Sidney and Pete then have to call off the wedding, and the marriage funds starts to diminish to pay off Willie's medical expenses. Soon the young couple become resigned to the fact that their marriage is now years off, if it will ever take place at all. This is all good news to Pete's mother, who wants Pete to remain at home with her. In the end Elsie sends Willie a thousand dollars bond, part of the stolen money. As Willie hands it to Sidney to use to pay off the medical expenses, he collapses again. This time he will never recover. The room is filled with Sidney's heartbroken sobs as "the Fourth Wall

looms before us as the curtain falls."²

Principle and General Characteristics.--The essential idea which guides After Tomorrow is that heredity and environment are extremely hard to overcome in the struggle for a happy life. Most of the play is pessimistic and dwells upon the wretchedness of a life of poverty in which the hope of escape and rescue is ever present, but always beyond reach. Illustrative of this are the destructive elements which thwart Sidney and Pete's impending marriage. Elsie's action in running off with Jarvis, Willie's stroke, Mrs. Piper's nervous condition which forces her to want Pete to stay home with her, and Willie's final death are all instances of this pessimistic attitude. Just when the couple thinks that everything is about to go right in their lives, something happens to ruin their plans. Never is the event of their own doing, rather it is something which is a part of their environmental surroundings, and it always directs their lives.

Because of this emphasis upon poverty and its effects upon the innocent, determinism, pessimism, and environment the overall principle of After Tomorrow is naturalistic. Further, the seemingly objective, fourth-wall, scientific observation of humanity that Stange and Golden use is also naturalistic. Specific illusionistic techniques in this area are mentioned below in the discussion of the form element of plot.

The specific general characteristics of Naturalism which After Tomorrow exhibits are the application to life of Zola's principle of scientific determinism, and the slice-of-life characteristic of writing and production. The authors examine a contemporary family, the members of which are destined to a life of misery because of poverty.

²Ibid., p. 121.



The manner in which this idea is presented is extremely illusionistic, as though the audience were looking through a peep-hole.

Plot.--The material which Stange and Golden use is the plight of the poor. The plot deals with a family in which the father can't make enough money; the daughter must work long hours to save money for the family and her coming marriage; and the mother, who is having an affair with a neighbor, runs away on her daughter's wedding eve. This material appears naturalistic because it is "brutal, morbid, pessimistic, and dwells upon . . . the squalor of the poor and misery."

The structure and dramatic technique is, on the whole, a combination of realistic and naturalistic techniques and characteristics. The plot development is realistically constructed, at times being quite obvious in its use of irony, plants, and suspense. Examples of this are the irony in the song "After Tomorrow," the obvious hint given in the first act that Elsie will run off with Jarvis, and the blunt hints that the \$400 which Sidney and Peter have saved is destined to be lost to some other cause. It is a realistic, melodramatic presentation of the troubles of the Taylor household. The plot has a late point of attack, and the exposition is woven well into the rising action. The story line involves Sidney and Pete's attempt to get married and live a happy life despite the trials and hardships placed upon them by Willie, Elsie, Mrs. Piper, and the general condition of poverty which surrounds them.

At the same time the authors attempt to emphasize the totally illusionistic nature of their investigation, and that attempt goes beyond simple Realism. Realism's technique is a simple, selective illusionistic technique through the "fourth-wall convention."

The attempt to emphasize that fourth-wall, and thereby to project a totally "slice-of-life" technique is naturalistic. Note, for example, one of the stage directions in After Tomorrow which attempts to stress this technique:

The doctor returns to his work, and the misty vapor of the Fourth Wall looms before us, blotting out the room, and its bitter tragedy. There is a moment of silence and the curtain falls.³

Directions such as this, plus the use of environmental sounds, references, and ideas stresses the naturalistic atmosphere which the authors feel so important to the play.

In summary, the plot structure is essentially realistic with the additional techniques of Naturalism which attempt to depict the depressing environmental surroundings of the action.

Character.--The characters in After Tomorrow are naturalistically drawn. The Taylor family, the Pipers, and Jarvis are all socially and economically lower class citizens in New York City. None of them has any complex psychological drives, but rather they are all motivated and driven by a single drive and personality trait. Elsie, for instance, wants to get out of her poverty; Willie wants Sidney to get married to Pete; Pete wants to marry Sidney; Mrs. Piper wants Pete to stay with her; and Jarvis wants Elsie. This lack of psychological complexity and inner conflict is obvious when a crisis hits the family. Willie, for instance, is never disturbed by the fact that he lives in poverty and can't afford to keep his family. He has no psychological problems because of his wife's constant nagging at him to make more money, nor does he particularly try to analyze his family's economic position.

³Ibid., p. 91.

le is not bothered by his daughter's hardships, nor by the lack of affection shown between Sidney and Elsie. He just seems to plod along in a kind of a lovable but incompetent manner. The very same can be said of Sidney. Except for a brief moment in act three, she never seems bothered by her position and the troubles which are forced upon her.

In summary, the characters move forward by rote mechanics, determined by outside events beyond their control. They are simple, uncomplicated, and driven by single character traits. Granted the drives of these people, the forces of circumstances which work to prevent their fulfillment never create inner problems of conflicts.

Language.--The dialogue in After Tomorrow is in prose, and realistic and colloquial.

Theme.--The title of the play is taken from a song of the same name, the sheet music of which Pete gives to Sidney.

After Tomorrow
We'll see our troubles break like bubbles,
Hard times, we're saying good-bye.
After Tomorrow
Bad luck evading, cares all fading,
Trading a smile for a sigh.
Good luck, come on along and hurry up,
And come where you're sent;
We'll give every little worry up
And be quite content.
After Tomorrow
We'll see each little sorrow
Disappearing like clouds in the sky.⁴

according to Stange and Golden, that tomorrow never arrives. And when you think that it has, it brings more grief and misery. This is naturalistic because of its concern with misery, poverty, and

⁴Ibid., pp. 37-38.



the poor soul defeated by the stronger for forces of environment.

Summary.--After Tomorrow is naturalistic in principle, general characteristics, subject matter, character, and theme. It is realistic in language, and naturalistic and realistic in structure.

The House of Connelly

Synopsis.--"The cracked walls of the colonial mansion and the neglected fields of the plantation reflect the decaying of a family that once ranked among the South's proudest and most powerful. Will Connelly, the young head of the house, lacks the energy to stem the tide until he falls in love with the unspoiled, aggressive Patsy Drake, daughter of a poor-white tenant farmer who provokes him to shed his pride, tear himself away from a choking tradition, and make his family face the truth. His uncle, a lecherous, garrulous old colonel, commits suicide; his invalid mother dies of a broken heart; his sisters, two married-up old maids, leave home forever; but the barren land will come strong and fertile again."⁵

Principle and General Characteristics.--This report of the stylistic analysis of Paul Green's The House of Connelly is made on the basis of the ending of the play used in its first public production, The Group Theatre in 1931. When the play was first sold to The Group Theatre by The Theatre Guild early in 1931, the ending has Patsy strangled to death by two negroes, Big Sue and Big Sis. This "pessimistic" ending was changed by The Group Theatre directors Strasberg,

⁵Theodore J. Shank, ed., A Digest of 500 Plays (New York: The Powell-Collier Press, 1963), p. 315.



Crawford, and Clurman in consultation with Green several weeks into rehearsal. The optimistic ending used in its place gives Connelly a chance to redeem his possessions with Patsy, his love. This change radically changes the style in theme and principle from Naturalism, in which evil and society can not change but are determined to remain constant, to a social Realism, in which the "Old South" no longer 'strangles' the hopes of the "New South." The reason for using the second ending here is that this study is attempting to look at successful plays on the New York stage, and it was the second, optimistic, social ending which the patrons viewed, even though the Guild members violently protested the use of the happy ending. Mr. Green's personal pessimism gave way to The Group Theatre's social optimism,⁶ and as a result the public never heard Big Sue sing,

In the cold earth the sinful clay
Wropped in a sheet is laid away.
Rock to the hills to the trees do mourn,
Pity poor man ever was born.⁷

And so, in principle, the overall concept of The House of Connelly is realistic since it attempts to take a sympathetic look at a contemporary social problem. Specifically, the problem in the destruction of the old aristocratic South, and the rise of a new social and economic order. Green presents this problem not by placing emphasis upon a photographic reproduction of life, but by examining human motives, human problems, and human conflicts with society. It is a very vivid human study.

⁶For a detailed account of this change see Harold Clurman, The Fervent Years (New York: Hill and Wang, 1957), pp. 44-45.

⁷Paul Green, "The House of Connelly," in John Gassner, ed., Best American Plays, supplementary volume (New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1961), p. 211.



The subsequent general characteristics of the play are a concern for the advancement of life and society, and a humanitarian concern for contemporary social problems and maladjustments.

Plot.--The subject matter of the plot of The House of Connelly is realistic. Paul Green chose as his material for this play contemporary life and problems on a large Southern plantation. One of the focal point is the concern for the Negro-white relationship, and the status and future of the white plantation "boss" in his working development with his Negro help. A second, and more important concern, is the problem of the destruction and disintegration of the old aristocratic South and the rise of a new social, economic, and more democratic order.

The general technique of this play is essentially realistic, although there is one characteristic of Romanticism. This major deviation from Realism is the uneconomical shifts of scenes. There are six scenes in the two acts. Other than that there is one central plot, the exposition is well woven into the play, and a forward pattern of events rising toward the conclusion all evident of the tight dramatic structure of Realism.

Character.--Paul Green created some thirty diverse types of Southerners in The House of Connelly, both whites and Negroes. They are diverse because they range from Negro slaves to an old aristocratic Colonel. The essential traits of these characters are realistic.

The realistic characteristics appear in characters, first, as composite impulses, drives, and desires of a varying and contradictory nature. In Will Connelly, for instance, there exists the drive to ease his family by continuing to operate the plantation on the same basis as it has been for generations. He is of aristocratic birth,



a member of a "well-established" household, and by tradition is expected to continue the old, conservative, traditional, proud policies of the house of Connelly. In addition to the operation of the plantation he is, in his personal life, expected to marry into aristocracy. With these strong social drives present in him, he meets and falls in love with Patsy Tate from the "poor-white" tenantry on the Connelly estate. She is young, has new, liberal, democratic ideas, and thereby sets up an internal psychological conflict in Will. Patsy and her father, Jess, also are confronted with a similar conflict, although not as strong as Will's.

The second manner in which realistic traits of characterization appear in The House of Connelly is in the use of heredity and environment as forces in the determination of human conduct and action. Certainly the hereditary background of Robert Connelly, Will, Jessie, Mrs. Connelly, and Patsy has much to do with their attitudes and actions. It is not, however, an all-determining force, since in the end Will and Patsy conquer it. In the case of Robert, Mrs. Connelly, and the two sisters the force is much stronger, and acts in a more deterministic manner on their lives.

Other realistic traits in character can be seen in the use of representative characters. Big Sis and Big Sue represent the old Negroes who are caught in the middle of the conflict and somehow, as a chorus might, reflect upon the opposition of forces, positions, and alternatives; Geraldine and Evelyn, the two old sisters, represent the strong, determined, stubborn old Southerner who, when faced with the new ideas of the twentieth century, refuses to accept them and leave; and there is Robert Connelly, representing the degrading depths to which the aristocracy has sunk -- "Skip to my Lou, skip to my Lou, if you

can't get a white gal a nigger'll do."⁸

In summary, the characters in The House of Connelly are realistic due to their contemporary, psychological complexities, their mutable relation to heredity and environment, and the fact that they are representative and normal to their contemporary background.

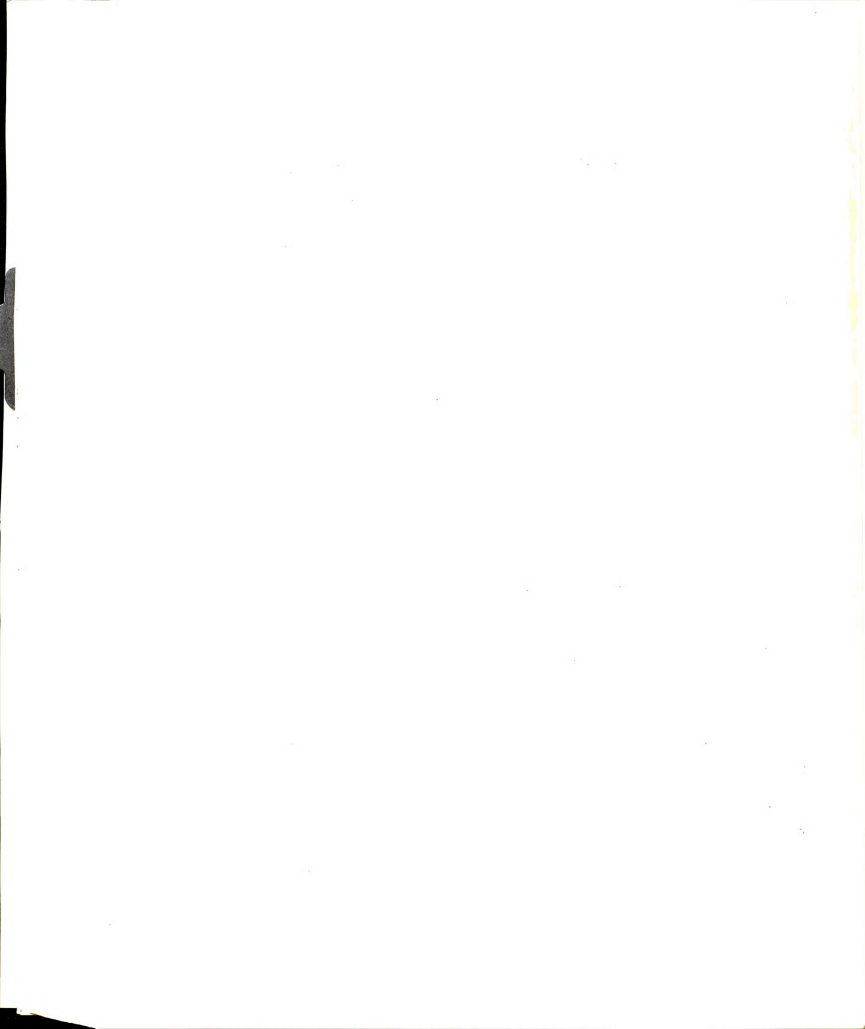
Language.--Green's dialogue is in prose, realistic, and simple. He attempts a regional and racial dialect, and all dialogue appears proper to the characters. The only exception to this latter statement is the Negroes, who appear too "poetic" and sophisticated at times.

Theme.--Will and Patsy are a part of two opposing classes of society in a Southern system which is coming to an end in this the twentieth century. Green portrays the end of that Old South in The House of Connelly. The Negroes, as seen in Big Sis and Big Sue, are the catalyst in this merger between the old plantation owner (Will) and the hope for the new, young tenant-farmer (Patsy). Life in the South will go on, but like The Cherry Orchard, it will be a new type of life -- democratic, and based upon the dignity of man. As Patsy says in the end, "The dead and the proud have to give way to us -- the living."⁹

Summary.--The House of Connelly is a realistic social drama. It is concerned with the new type of emerging class system in the South. It is realistic in principle, general characteristics, plot, characters, language, and theme. The preceding analysis and summary is based upon the "second" ending to the play as suggested to Green

⁸Ibid., p. 203.

⁹Ibid., p. 215.



by The Group Theatre directors.

Two Seconds

Synopsis.--Written in a prologue, an epilogue, and twenty scenes,

Two Seconds tells the story, through the mental recollections of the hero, of John Allen and the events in his life which bring him to the electric chair. During the two seconds elapsing between the time they strap him in the electric chair and his execution he recalls his meeting with Shirley Day, a dance hall girl; his getting drunk and being married to her late that night; his quarrel with his friend, Bud Clark, over Shirley; his discovery that she is cheating on him with the owner of the dance hall; and finally his shooting of Shirley to redeem his own tortured soul and to rid the world of one not fit to live. After these two seconds of recollections, the current is turned on, and Allen receives his punishment.

Principle and General Characteristics.--The overall idea behind

Elliott Lester's play is the idea of the projection of inner experiences and thoughts colored by present psychic attitudes. This is clearly characteristic of the guiding idea of Expressionism. The whole point of the play is to project the thoughts and ideas of a dying man into subjective scenes of sharp, unreal, past experiences. During the two seconds which it takes to die after the switch has been pulled, John Allen's mind and thoughts are presented to the audience as a series of episodes which come and go as he relives the experiences which brought him to the electric chair. In the prologue, Lester sets up this possibility as reporters and witnesses speculate upon the last few seconds of the condemned man.

Doctor

(explaining)

Practically so . . . But you see, there's a great deal of resistance in the human body. It fights off death. I've watched dozens of men in this chair and I've seen the carotid artery . . . throb once or twice after the current is on. That means that the heart was still beating a couple of times -- the brain was still functioning.

2nd Reporter

I thought it was all over --

(snaps his fingers)

-- like that.

Doctor

A weak man - a stripling - will go like that; but a big fellow like John Allen -- it'll take a couple of seconds to knock him out.

The Boy

(thoughtfully)

Those'll be the longest two seconds he ever lived.

Doctor

(agreeing)

Long enough for him to re-live his whole life.¹⁰

The remaining part of the play brings to life that possibility of a man reliving his life in two seconds.

Further characteristics of Two Seconds are the distortion of empirical reality, and the totally subjective view of scenes and episodes.

The most vivid example of the distortion of the scenes occurs in an early stage direction at the end of the Prologue.

The sets employed are only suggestive of the places they portray - only the essential features of a room or a street are presented.

Everything - sets, furniture, props, and people are presented in shades of gray. Those people and things which John Allen remembers most vividly, are whitest; those which he least remembers are darker gray. The whole effect, therefore, is of a highlighted

¹⁰Elliott Lester, Two Seconds (Unpublished manuscript, typewritten, 1930).

painting in black and white.¹¹

Later in the play these phantom-like projections arise and fall prompted by noises, words, events, and colors.

Illustrative of the subjective view of the individual scenes and episodes is the manner in which they originate and conclude. There are twenty-three of these episodes in all. At the start of each one Lester uses the movie technique of carrying over from one scene to another a visual or aural element which suggests in the mind of Allen another small segment of his life.

In summary, Two Seconds is expressionistic in principle and general characteristics.

Plot.--The subject matter of Two Seconds is expressionistic. It is a subjective projection of the tortured, half-dead mind of Allen as he painfully reconstructs past events from his life.

The technique, as has been mentioned in some detail above, is expressionistic. The episodic nature of the play, and the loose construction of the dream-like scenes is characteristic of Expressionism. In a personal letter to this writer, Mrs. Elliott Lester, the dramatist's widow, explains the conception her husband had of the structure of the play.

Mr. Lester conceived the idea of making the stage play look like a black and white movie film. All scenes were in shades of white, grays and black with the exception of the final scene when the current was supposed to be turned on in the electric chair and then everything was lit by a red glow. Of course there was no color film being used at that time.¹²

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Letter from Mrs. Elliott Lester, Wyncote, Pa., August 13, 1964. Entire letter is reproduced in Appendix IV.

The episodes have a personal, subjective quality about them. All of the events are depicted in the manner of a dream or a strong recollection, rather than as scenes of actuality and reality. There are missing events, hazy conversations, lack of detail in character relationships, and the general impression that the viewer is looking at the scenes through a thick fog -- only highlights stand out.

Characters.--There are over twenty characters in Two Seconds, only four of which are realistic. The remaining are, as Mr. Lester phrased it, "almost like phantoms." The realistic characters have motives, drives, real and actual concerns. The rest appear, disappear, are drawn in no detail, and are labeled in the traditional expressionistic manner. There are Another Doctor, Warden, A Fat Girl, A Bookie, Two Street Girls, A Tough Guy, etc. The whole emphasis of character in the play is expressionistic. None of them are real. The image we see of them is highly colored by the subjective projection of them in the mind of Allen.

Language.--The dialogue in Two Seconds is a mixture of Realism and Expressionism. There are moments when the language appears realistic. It is in prose, colloquial, and proper to ordinary conversational techniques. And yet, at other times, there are short, crisp exchanges of dialogue and long set speeches. These, plus the sound techniques which introduce and close the scenes are expressionistic techniques.

Theme.--The only theme evident in Two Seconds is the emphasis upon personal, subjective, colored impressions of past reality. The story of Allen's life makes no point other than that in moments of

stress (the two seconds prior to his death) the imagination "plays funny tricks." The entire play appears to revolve around the technique of expressionistic dramaturgy. For this reason, the emphasis upon the personal, egocentric vision of reality and human events, the theme appears as expressionistic.

Summary.--Elliott Lester's Two Seconds is an attempt, the first of the decade in successful plays, to utilize techniques of Expressionism. In all form elements it is expressionistic.

Mourning Becomes Electra

Synopsis.--Eugene O'Neill tells the psychological story of the fall of the house of Mannon, a proud New England family at the end of the Civil War, in three plays, thirteen acts. In the first play, Homecoming, General Ezra Mannon returns from the war and is poisoned by his wife, Christine, and her lover, Adam Brant. Lavinia Mannon, the daughter, knows what has happened, and because of her strong "attachment" for her father she vows her revenge. In The Haunted, the second play, Orin, the son, returns home from an army hospital. He loves his father intensely, and the two women, Christine and Lavinia, then struggle for his affection. Lavinia wins him over to her side, and persuades him to kill Brent and drive his mother to suicide. The third play, The Haunted, depicts the final destruction of the Mannon family. Haunted by feelings of guilt, Orin and Lavinia leave the house and travel to exotic lands. Orin now begins to resemble his father, and Lavinia takes on the character of her mother. She becomes engaged to Peter Niles, and Orin seeks to marry Peter's sister, Hazel. But still possessed by guilt and his "intense" love for his

mother, Orin takes his life so that in death he can rejoin her. Lavinia is left alone with the dead, and returns to the house to mourn for the sins of the family.

Principle and General Characteristics.---This, the most remarkable and most ambitious of O'Neill's published works, is a mixture of various styles -- from Realism and Romanticism to Naturalism. The general characteristics involve all of these three styles, while in principle the dominant trait appears to be one of Naturalism.

The overall principle of the trilogy appears as naturalistic for the essential reason that O'Neill is attempting to depict a view of the world in which human beings are fated and determined by complexes and compulsions beyond their rational control. In the case of the Mannon family he is depicting hereditary and inner psychological forces and complexes. While it is true that O'Neill's play retains the plot structure of the Aeschylus trilogy, and the external, physical events within the plot are similar to the events in The Orestia, the two plays are in no sense related in principle. O'Neill's work is twentieth century, and is based upon many psychological, religious, and traditional beliefs of the modern world. The play takes into account the influence of puritanical religion and possessiveness as found in this New England mercantile setting. It also brings to the drama a significant use of complexes revealed as modern techniques of psychoanalysis might reveal them. It is an objective study of passion, fate, Freudian complexes, un-natural love, hate, jealousy, and revenge from the point of view of the helpless human caught as an animal in a surge of deterministic fate.

While the dominating idea is naturalistic, there are realistic and romantic general characteristics evident in the trilogy. The

realistic elements appear as an illusionistic presentation of internal, psychological problems. The analysis of the complexes of Lavinia and Orin is realistic, based upon the use of current knowledge of Freudian psychoanalysis and psychology.

The removal of the story from contemporary life, and putting it in the distant past is a romantic technique. Further evidence of the romantic influence in the trilogy will be found in the discussion of the form element of character, and the passionate obsessions of the central characters.

In summary of the principle and general characteristics of Mourning Becomes Electra the following conclusions are applicable:

(1) the dominant principle and view expressed by the play is naturalistic due to a view of the world in which internal character development gives way to the deterministic powers of subconscious mechanisms, complexes, passions, and compulsions which give human fate the cruel significance of animals trapped by forces outside of themselves and over which they have no control; (2) the general characteristic of realism is evidenced by the detailed psychological examination of character and contemporary conflicts, such as puritanism versus healthy love; and (3) a romantic characteristic appears as a "tendency away from actuality" in locale, and a "predilection for depicting the particular, the strange, and the grotesque."

Plot.--The story material is essentially romantic in nature, and the material for the conflict is realistic. The story is set in New England just after the Civil War. The Mannon family is an upper class, mercantile family with a long and proud heritage. Because of the nature of the remoteness of this material, it is essentially characteristic of Romanticism.

The material for the conflict is realistic. Essentially it is based upon unnatural psychological complexes which concern love. More will be said of this later in the discussion of the form element of character.

Structurally Mourning Becomes Electra exhibits both realistic and romantic characteristics. The entire drama is written as a trilogy in three parts and thirteen acts. This is romantic in nature. On the other hand, O'Neill shows a remarkable unity of time and place, the whole play taking place in only about a year's time, and with very few shifts of place. This compactness is realistic. In addition, there is a single plot and an attempt at an illusionistic and objective presentation of the many psychological crises.

In summary, there are both realistic and romantic characteristics evident in the plot of the trilogy.

Character.--There are naturalistic, romantic, and realistic characteristics in the characters of Mourning Becomes Electra. Romantically the characters are not contemporary but remote in time and conception. They are not depicted as normal to the contemporary background, and are somewhat exceptional and "removed from ordinary human experience." In addition, emotion and uncontrolled passion plays an important role in their behavior manifesting itself in characters who are "slaves of passion."

In terms of Naturalism, the dominant trait is the determination of action based upon inherited or environmental factors rather than free, volitional choices. Lavinia and Orin are both at the mercy of Freudian complexes and compulsions which dominate their characters and actions. It is the view of O'Neill that these inner, mental



complexities are hereditary and created by the characters' environmental family background.

The emphasis upon the inner, psychological complexities of Lavinia, Orin, and Christine is characteristic of a realistic approach to character portrayal. Instances of the Freudian complexes which O'Neill stresses can be seen in Lavinia and Orin. Lavinia has and demonstrates in the first play a terrible hatred for Christine. On the surface it appears that the cause for this hatred is that she can not stand to see her father betrayed by Christine and Adam during the General's absence. However, the dominating force behind the hate is in reality a strong, almost unnatural love for her father. This forces her to desire her mother's place as the wife of Ezra, the mistress of Adam, and the mother of Orin. Christine herself brings this possibility up in the first play, and if one follows this line of reasoning then all of Lavinia's actions during the remaining plays can be easily explained and understood. In the case of Orin, the love is the opposite. His intense, again unnatural, love for his mother is the compulsion which O'Neill stresses in examining his actions and character. It is this feeling of Orin's which ultimately drives him to suicide in the final play. These psychological complexes, repressions, and fixations are treated in contemporary psychological terms, and mark the technique as realistic.

In summary, there are three stylistic traits of character in the trilogy: Realism, Naturalism, and Romanticism.

Language.--O'Neill's dialogue is in prose, and is realistic.

Theme.--The theme of Mourning Becomes Electra is essentially naturalistic. O'Neill shows his audience that violence and cruel,

passionate actions are natural conditions in man who is brought up in the social, and religious atmosphere of the New England Mannons. The play shows that man is really a terrible creature when operating under the grip of uncontrollable compulsions, and the violence of which he is capable under those circumstances is truly animalistic. The naturalistic element here is the emphasis upon the "uncontrollable" aspect of their behavior.

Summary.--In Mourning Becomes Electra Eugene O'Neill attempted to write a modern psychological approximation of the Greek sense of Fate. The result is a modern play of heroic proportions in which one sexual neurosis leads to another in characters whose actions are determined by hereditary evil, hate, jealousy, and incest. The play is naturalistic in principle; realistic, romantic, and naturalistic in general characteristics; realistic and romantic in technique; naturalistic, romantic, and realistic in character; realistic in language; and naturalistic in theme.

The Black Tower

Synopsis.--The Prologue, which takes place in a lonely spot in Central Park, New York, sets the stage for this melodrama about a mad scientist, Dr. Ludlow. In order to achieve perfection in sculpture he has invented a special type of embalming fluid which will "freeze" humans so that he may disguise them as statues. In order to get these humans he must "kidnap" them. Of course he only tries to get the handsomest men and the most beautiful girls. Sylvia Knight applies in innocence for a job working for the doctor. As he is about to make his diabolical experiment on her, the police, headed by Inspector

Quirk, break up his laboratory in the Black Tower on the Hudson.

Principle and General Characteristics.--In principle this play is a romantic melodrama of the "secondhand" romantic type. Its overall purpose is a "quest for thrills," and its guiding idea is "excitement, thrills, suspense, and pure dramatic entertainment." As a "mad scientist" or "monster" type of entertainment it depicts "the particular and the strange," the outlandish, and artificial as it seeks to thrill and excite.

The particular general characteristics exhibited in The Black Tower are: (1) "a tendency away from actuality which includes qualities of remoteness and escape;" (2) "a predilection for depicting the particular, the strange, and the grotesque."

The tendency away from actuality in this case does not mean remote in time or place, but rather that the events depicted are removed from the ordinary experiences of contemporary people. The idea of mad scientists, secret formulas, kidnapping, detective work, and secret laboratories are not common experiences of normal audience members. This type of "escapist" drama is romantic, of the "second-hand" type.

These same story elements can be seen as the romantic depiction for the strange, "the mysterious, even the bizarre and the grotesque." Also involved in this characteristic is an "appeal to the irrational or supernatural; madness, hallucination, magic, witchcraft, and ghosts." Many of these qualities can be found in the story of Dr. Ludlow and his mad attempts to make statues out of human beings.

Plot.--The subject matter for The Black Tower is also romantic. Several characteristics of romantic subject matter are the glamorous,

the exciting, the curious, the strange, and the mysterious. These can certainly be seen as the subject matter this mad scientist drama.

Again, it is escapist in nature.

The technique of the play exhibits both romantic and realistic qualities. The essential romantic element is the illogical, unreal, and unmotivated sequence of events. Many of the scenes are conceived in the manner of melodrama, where the action leaps forward by means of surprises, unforeseen and unforeseeable events. Illustrative of this type of loose construction is the "rescue" by Inspector Quirk of Sylvia at the last possible moment, or "in the nick of time," the coincidence of Sylvia's appearance at Ludlow's, and the completely unexplained manner in which he concocts his embalming fluid. In a romantic, escapist melodrama such as The Black Tower, it is not necessary to explain all of these events. It is enough that they are exciting and in a world of total make-believe.

The realistic elements of plot occur in the tight construction of the events. While the scenes are lightly motivated, and tenuously connected, the authors do make an attempt to be economical in their use of elapsed time and shifts of place. Outside of the prologue, the entire action takes place in Ludlow's black tower laboratory. Within each scene there is an attempt to be illusionistic so that the audience believes what is happening at least for the moment.

In summary, the subject matter is romantic, and in structure the essential characteristics are romantic, with some realistic.

Character.--Basically the character portrayal in Murphy and Baxter's The Black Tower is romantic. Several of the romantic characteristics which are evident in this play are: (1) most of the

characters exist "in an environment and atmosphere removed from everyday life;" (2) they are "removed from ordinary human experience;" and (3) two of the characters are "outcasts of society." The mad scientist, Ludlow, and his assistant are both social outcasts and quite far removed from ordinary human experience. And the atmosphere in which the Inspector and the characters in the black tower exist is certainly unreal for the average person. In summary, the characters have little realistic detail, are drawn as types, strange and unreal.

Language.--The dialogue used in the play is in prose, is colloquial, and is, then, realistic.

Theme.--The general characteristic of escape in "secondhand" Romanticism is marked by "an avoidance of themes dealing with contemporary social environment." Usually themes in mystery plays concern "poetic justice." No matter how evil or how powerful the villain, and no matter how horrible the trials of the virtuous, the good are always rewarded and the evil are punished. So it is in The Black Tower. Dr. Ludlow is stopped in time and will be punished for his anti-social behavior.

Summary.--The Black Tower appears as a typical mystery, monster, science fiction type of melodrama. It is romantic in principle, general characteristics, subject matter, character, and theme. It is romantic and realistic in technique, and realistic in language.

Trick for Trick

Synopsis.--This play by Harry Wagstaff Gribble was never published, and was read for this analysis in manuscript form. The plot involves the

"great mystic," Zarah, and his attempt to solve the suicide of Evelyn Maxwell. During a seance his rival, La Tour, the "great mystic," is murdered. Now there are two crimes to solve. There are detectives, lovers, servants, professors, and doctors involved, and eventually it is discovered that one of the doctors present at the seance was the father of Evelyn, and hidden in his stethoscope was a knife. When he attempts to murder Azrah during a seance in the last act, he is discovered. He murdered La Tour by mistake, intending to kill Azrah instead. His motive -- jealousy of the affection the two mystics had for his daughter.

Principle and General Characteristics.--Despite the missing pages in the original manuscript, it is evident that this play is romantic, of the "secondhand" type. It is a mystery play, in which detectives and magicians attempt to solve two crimes. In between some of the "serious" crime-solving, there are pages and pages of tricks. Appearing cigars, rabbits from scarves, growing pencils, magic curtains, disappearing bodies and people, spirits flying through the air, and voices appearing from "nowhere." There are ten full pages of directions to producers concerning the exact set up for all of the magic tricks. Sometimes the plot is interrupted for ten minutes as La Tour, prior to his death, and Azrah compete with slight-of-hand effects.

When the plot does attempt to get back to the case of murder and suicide, the emphasis is upon sudden discoveries about the personalities involved, and suspense. For these reasons the main aim of the play is thrills, suspense, and excitement, all characteristic of melodrama, and "secondhand" Romanticism.

Plot.--The technique and subject matter of Trick for Trick are romantic.

The subject matter is thrills, removed from the ordinary experiences of man, and remote in time and place. The magic, the mystery, the appearance of objects and dead people are all beyond the normal experiences of man. Further, the emphasis is not upon contemporary motives and characters, but rather upon action and surprise.

The technique is also romantic. There is a love sub-plot, loose construction, and a lack of careful motivation. The scenes of magic are almost similar to a "Review," since the plot at times seems secondary. The highlight of the third act, or rather one of the many highlights, is the seance when Azrah brings back the dead Evelyn Maxwell. Even though the pages of the manuscript are missing during this scene, it is obvious that this "mystic" scene contains more magic and tricks.

In summary, the plot structure and subject matter are highly romantic, attempting to depict excitement and thrills at the expense of character, motivation, and honesty.

Character.--The characters in this mystery-magic play are complete stereotypes. None of the characters are given the slightest motivation, nor are they examined in any psychological detail. The language which they use is never in character, primarily because there are no characterizations. The two mystics, the lovers, the district attorney, the inspector, the policemen, the doctors, and all of the guests are surface characters. The only important piece of character description seems to be that given to Evelyn's father in the last six lines of the play.

Language.--The dialogue is in prose, and is realistic.

Theme.--The typical thematic content of "secondhand" Romanticism is poetic justice. That is the theme of Trick for Trick. The murderer is apprehended, and the suspects are all free. The lovers get together, and the audience has seen an exciting, "magical" performance.

Summary.--Despite the difficulty in obtaining a semi-complete copy of this play, it is possible to come to a conclusion concerning the style of Trick for Trick. It is romantic in all form elements, except language. It is a melodrama, of the "secondhand" romantic type.

Summary of Seasonal Stylistic Characteristics

Principle and General Characteristics.--There is an equal division between Romanticism and Naturalism as the dominant style in principle during the 1931-1932 theatrical season. Of the six plays which ran over fifty performances, two exhibit characteristics of Romanticism, and two exhibit characteristics of Naturalism in principle.

The plays which are romantic in their overall point of view are The Black Tower and Trick for Trick. Both are classified as "second-hand" Romanticism. They are melodramas which have as their guiding purpose escape and the quest for thrills. The Black Tower is a type of "mad scientist" play, and Trick for Trick is essentially a murder mystery.

The two plays which appear as naturalistic in principle are After Tomorrow and Mourning Becomes Electra. After Tomorrow depicts the misery of a contemporary family caught up in a deterministic environment of poverty. It does not look for social reform, but rather it presents an objective picture of the problems of a young couple and their attempts to strike out on their own and create a

meaningful life. The O'Neill play is similar in that it also pictures humans fated and determined by elements beyond their immediate control. In this instance the elements are psychological complexes and compulsions which act as the determining agents.

In general characteristics Romanticism has a slight edge over Naturalism due to Mourning Becomes Electra which has romantic characteristics as well as naturalistic ones.

Both The Black Tower and Trick for Trick are romantic in general characteristics, and the O'Neill play is at least one-third romantic and one-third naturalistic in this area. After Tomorrow is naturalistic in general characteristics.

The remaining two plays are equally divided between Realism and Expressionism. The House of Connelly is realistic in principle and general characteristics, and Two Seconds is expressionistic in both categories.

In summary, four out of the six plays are equally divided between Naturalism and Romanticism in principle, while in general characteristics Romanticism can be seen in three plays. Realism and Expressionism are evident in the two remaining plays in principle and general characteristics.

Plot.--In subject matter Romanticism exists as the primary characteristic in two plays, and as a partial characteristic in one play. Realism appears as the second most discovered stylistic element in subject matter. Characteristics of this style appear fully in one play, and partially in another.

The Black Tower and Trick for Trick both use as their essential subjects romantic type material typified as glamorous, exciting, and mysterious subjects. Mourning Becomes Electra's subject matter is

partially romantic. This occurs in the use of story material which has the essential characteristic of remoteness. The remaining characteristics of the material for the conflict in the O'Neill trilogy are realistic. Of the remaining plays The House of Connelly uses realistic material, After Tomorrow uses naturalistic material, and the subject of Two Seconds is expressionistic.

Fifty per cent of the stylistic characteristics of structure are realistic. The House of Connelly is fully realistic in this form element, while After Tomorrow, Mourning Becomes Electra, The Black Tower, and Trick for Trick share realistic characteristics with either Romanticism or Naturalism. The last play, Two Seconds, is expressionistic in the form element of structure.

In summary, Romanticism appears as the dominant style in subject matter in two plays, and as a partial characteristic in one play. Realism dominates in one play, and appears partially in one other. One play uses expressionistic material and one play uses naturalistic material. In the area of structure Realism dominates all other stylistic characteristics as it appears dominant in one play, and partially in four others.

Character.--Romanticism appears as the dominant characteristic in The Black Tower and Trick for Trick, and as a partial characteristic in Mourning Becomes Electra. No other style occurs that often in character. The characteristic which is evident in these plays is "remoteness," both in time and place, and as being removed from the normal everyday experiences of the average audience member.

Realistic and naturalistic stylistic traits in character are evident as most of the remaining traits in the other three plays. Realism dominates character portrayal in The House of Connelly, and

Naturalism dominates in After Tomorrow, and both styles appear together in Mourning Becomes Electra. Expressionism is evident as a stylistic trait in the characters in Two Seconds.

In summary, Romanticism slightly dominates Naturalism and Realism as the dominant stylistic trait in the form element of character.

Language.--Realism is characteristic of the dialogue in all six plays studied for the 1931-1932 season.

Theme.--Again Realism and Naturalism dominate as two plays are realistic in theme and two are romantic. The Black Tower and Trick for Trick are romantic. Their themes have to do with the usual themes of "secondhand" Romanticism, which is poetic justice. In both plays the evil, social outcasts are punished in the end, and justice wins out.

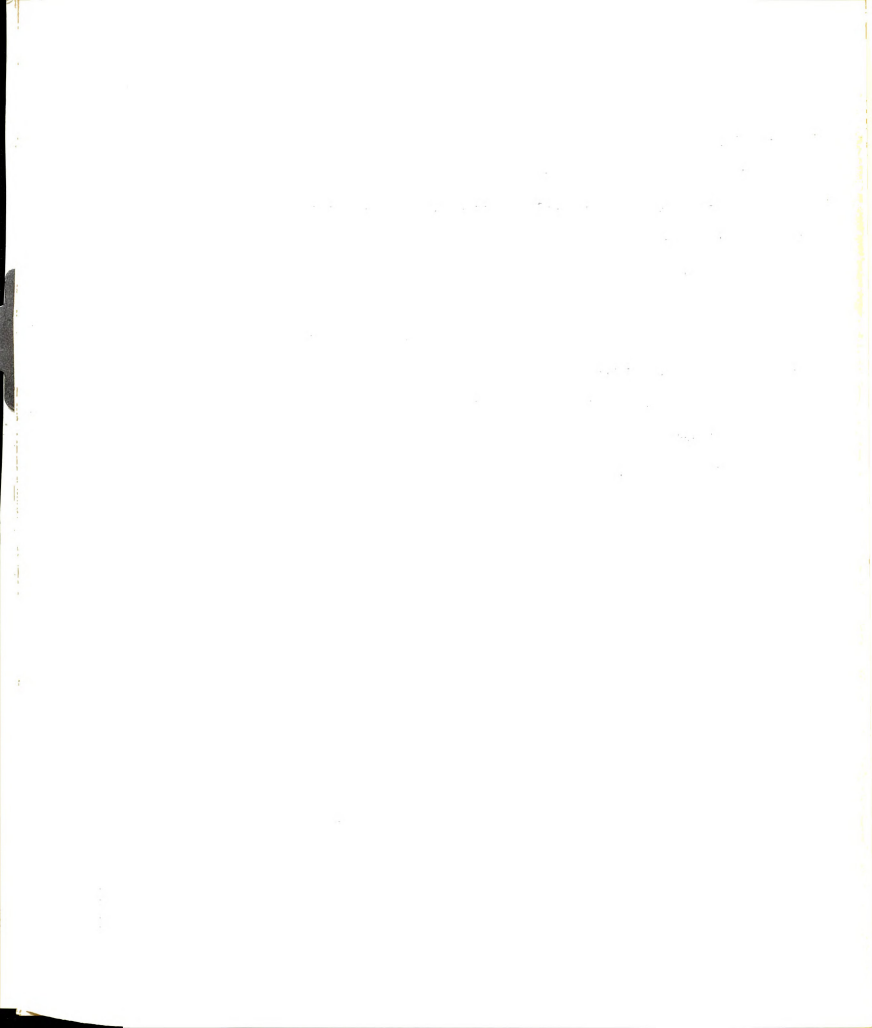
The two plays which are naturalistic in theme are After Tomorrow and Mourning Becomes Electra. Both plays thematically involve the effects of heredity and environment as forces which determine human conduct.

The House of Connelly is realistic in theme due to its concern with a contemporary social problem, and Two Seconds is expressionistic due to its emphasis upon projections of the inner mind.

Conclusions.--The 1931-1932 theatre season appears as an eclectic season as far as style in individual plays is concerned. Only one play can be said to have been written in one consistent style in all form elements, and that play is The House of Connelly. All of the other plays which were examined have at least two stylistic characteristics in at least one form element.

Two other conclusions seem evident for this season. The first is the overall dominance of Romanticism and Realism in principle, general characteristics, and form elements. Sixty-six per cent of all stylistic characteristics are either realistic or romantic. The second conclusion is that Realism dominates considerably in the form element of language.

In summary of the 1931-1932 season, the following three conclusions are reached: (1) the vast majority of plays are written in more than one style, and the plays, as a result, appear as a constellation of styles; (2) Realism and Romanticism dominate the stylistic characteristics by a two to three ratio; (3) except for the form element of language, which is realistic, Romanticism dominates all other styles in the frequency of appearance.



CHAPTER XI

THE 1934-35 SEASON

The purpose of this chapter is to describe dramatic style in successful, serious drama written for the professional New York stage during the 1934-35 theatrical season, June 16, 1934 to June 16, 1935. The procedure for the analysis of each play is the same as it was for the preceding year (see Chapter X).

There were sixty-six less openings in the 1934-35 season than there were in the 1931-32 season. Of the one hundred and forty-one openings, fifty-four were comedies, seventeen were musicals, and seventy were serious plays. Out of the seventy serious plays, fifty-six of them were first-run productions; only seventeen ran over fifty performances. The average length of run of those which were under fifty performances was eleven performances.

According to the established criteria (see Chapter I), the following seventeen plays will be studied for the year 1934-35. They will be considered in this chapter, as they opened, in the following order:

1. Dodsworth, by Sidney Howard.
2. Judgment Day, by Elmer Rice.
3. Small Miracle, by Norman Krasna.
4. Merrily We Roll Along, by George S. Kaufman and Moss Hart.
5. The First Legion, by Emmet Lavery.

6. Dark Victory, by George Brewer and Bertram Bloch.
7. The Children's Hour, by Lillian Hellman.
8. Gold Eagle Guy, by Melvin Levy.
9. Valley Forge, by Maxwell Anderson.
10. The Petrified Forest, by Robert E. Sherwood.
11. The Old Maid, by Zoe Atkins.
12. Awake and Sing, by Clifford Odets.
13. The Black Pit, by Albert Maltz.
14. Till the Day I Die, by Clifford Odets.
15. Waiting for Lefty, by Clifford Odets.
16. Ceiling Zero, by Frank Wead.
17. Kind Lady, by Edward Chodorov

Dodsworth

Synopsis.--As the play opens we are introduced to Samuel Dodsworth and his wife, Fran. They are both leaving together by boat for a long deserved vacation in Europe. The exposition tells us that Dodsworth is a successful manufacturer in the city of Zenith, and both his career and marriage appear at the "zenith" of their development. At the end of the first act the Dodsworths are in London, and Fran has an "innocent" flirtation with a Clyde Lockert. Dodsworth is amused at the affair, and Fran, who feels her husband is getting too old for her, sends him back to Zenith so that she can continue her "youthful urges." Her affairs go on and on until finally, in the third act, she asks Dodsworth for a divorce, and he leaves her and goes off to Italy. There he falls "madly in love" with Edith Cortwright. Meanwhile, Fran is in Berlin attempting to marry her latest lover, Kurt von Obersdorft, but is thwarted by Kurt's wise mother. All that is left

for her now is to call Dodsworth and ask him to have her back. Painfully he agrees, and meets her. When they are just about to sail for home, back to Zenith, Dodsworth makes the long delayed decision--he leaves Fran and returns to Edith. The boat sails for Zenith, minus Dodsworth.

Principle and General Characteristics.--There is some critical comment about Dodsworth which claims that the play contains social comment and criticism, and is, hence, realistic. However, in the light of objective, internal criticism as to style, the drama appears to be in principle, romantic.

The guiding, overall idea implicit in the play is to create an exciting, suspenseful, theatrical drama from the Sinclair Lewis novel. This "quest for thrills" is romantic. Further, "the reliance on emotion," and the excitement and suspense" emphasis is romantic.

Instances of the "quest for thrills" can be seen in the "adventures" of Fran in London and Berlin, and the late subplot between Dodsworth and Edith. Instances of the "reliance on emotion" can be seen all the way through in the actions of both Dodsworth and his wife. They never stop to reason out their situations, but rely on passion and feeling alone. "Excitement and suspense" is most prevalent in the third act when the plot leaves Fran and Dodsworth and picks up the extraneous sub-plot of Dodsworth and Edith.

The general characteristics of Dodsworth are also romantic. The first is "a tendency away from actuality." The series of events, highly improbable to the average man, which this "jet-set" couple undertake are appealing as a form of escape for the average audience. This is especially true in light of the sentimental attachment given to the character of Dodsworth, and the "shrewish" character given to Fran.

From the point of view of a romantic hero, each one is appealing.

A second characteristic is "an emphasis upon emotionality and subjectivity." Both central characters act upon emotion, are never reasonable, and never try to reason out their actions. The overall view of their actions is a subjective one, as opposed to a "scientific, analytic, and objective one."

A final general characteristic of Dodsworth is the idea of "freedom and . . . rebellion" against certain strictures of life. Fran is this rebellious soul. She wants her freedom from marriage and the mediocrity of Zenith. All she wants is really to act according to her desires.

Plot.--The subject material of the plot is realistic--contemporary "love and marriage." The dissolution of the marriage of Dodsworth and Fran is the subject of the play, along with several "extra marital" adventures.

The dramatic technique of Dodsworth is romantic. It is, first, "loose in its treatment of . . . time and place" and is "free (in its) use of elapsed time and shifts in place. The play covers a long period of time, and roams from America to a ship on the Atlantic, to Spain, to London, to Germany.

Second, "sometimes sub-plots are employed" in the romantic technique. Dodsworth contains, in the third act, the introduction of a second plot -- Dodsworth and Edith. This love addition to the plot line is completely extraneous to the main story, and serves to illustrate Howards' technique of maintaining suspense and excitement at the expense of a more honest, direct treatment of the story line.

It is for these characteristics of romantic technique that Dodsworth is classified as romantic in the form element of plot technique but

realistic in subject matter.

Character.--The two central characters in this play--Dodsworth and Fran--are romantic. They are romantic, first, because "their actions are guided more by emotion than reason;" second, because they are victims "of emotional states connected with love, . . . jealousy, . . . (and) self-pity;" and third, because Fran, the heroine, is "enslaved in adulterous passion." All of these characteristics are romantic.

Language.--The language employed by Howard in Dodsworth exhibits both realistic and naturalistic characteristics. The play has one essential characteristic of Naturalism. Dialogue in Naturalism "contains repetitions, useless words, and all of the techniques of real, actual human conversation." In Dodsworth there are many passages containing such meaningless dialogue. This goes further than realistic dialogue in attempting to add to the atmosphere of reality. A sample of one of these passages may be found in the Appendix. Otherwise, the dialogue is in prose, and is realistic.

Theme.--Dodsworth is romantic in theme, due to the fact that it "evades extensive involvement in the ideas of . . . environment." It contains the ideas of "love at first sight, the ennobling power of love, and the degradation of adultery." The instance of the ennobling power of love occurs as the major sentiment given to Dodsworth as he leaves Fran for Edith; and the degradation of adultery is certainly the theme of Fran's actions.

Summary.--Dodsworth, the most successful serious play of the 1934-35 season, is romantic in principle, general characteristics, structure,

character, and theme. It is realistic in its use of subject matter; and both realistic and naturalistic in dialogue.

Judgment Day

Synopsis.--The scene is a room in the Palace of Justice in the capital of a country somewhere in Southeastern Europe. Lydia Kuman, George Khitov, and Kurt Schneider are on trial, accused of being conspirators in a plot to overthrow the dictatorship of the National Government. Lydia and George are leaders of the People's Party, a liberal, democratic type of political "resistance" group. Schneider, a drug addict, has been used by the Nationalists and their leader in framing a case against them. The trial lasts for three days (and three acts), and on the last day the People's Party revolution is accomplished as Marek, the great revolutionist who we all believed to be dead, suddenly appears, and the liberal Judge Slatarski upholds the honor of his country by shooting the Dictator.

Principle and General Characteristics.--Elmer Rice's Judgment Day is the first of many plays of the 1930's intent on protesting against some social or political institution. It was composed as an attack on dictatorships, and to promote the democratic causes of the working classes. This type of idea is realistic. The implication of the play is that of making society "aware of a problem in order that it (society) may turn its attention to it." Even though, as we will see, in the general characteristics and some form elements Judgment Day suffers from an excess of emotionality (which is romantic), its guiding principle is still the realistic concern for contemporary political inequities. Specifically, Mr. Rice is dramatizing the

Berlin trial of the two young men accused of having burned the Reichstad. This is his vehicle for speaking out against contemporary dictatorships and totalitarian governments, and is, hence, realistic.

The general characteristics of Judgment Day are a mixture of realistic and romantic traits. The realistic characteristic is a concern for "contemporary life." Rice, as a realist in this play, was prompted by events of his own times to write about certain contemporary political problems.

The first romantic characteristic is "a tendency away from actuality." Rice's courtroom is removed from our world, placed in an imaginary country, and the characters are given queer, distant, foreign names. The second characteristic is an "emphasis upon emotionality and subjectivity," and "an idealization of the instinctive and non-rational powers of humans." This is especially true in the treatment of Marek and the Judge. As far as we know there is no thought-out rationale for their actions. All the audience sees is their emotional reactions to events and situations. They are both highly idealized. While this romantic characteristic is true of these two characters, it is not true for the three defendants. Theirs is a cold, logical, rational, and objective pattern of events.

The final romantic characteristic is the "search for freedom" and an "opposition to established political power." Both Lydia and George, as representative of the People's Party, are looking for this "political freedom" which is characteristic of historical Romanticism.

In summary, then, Judgment Day exhibits both romantic and realistic general characteristics.

Plot.--The subject matter of Judgment Day, the trial and liberation

of three members of the democratic People's Party, is realistic primarily because it is contemporary. That is, it is supposed to be going on now, even though Rice places the action in a far-off land, anyone in 1934 viewing this play would immediately recognize it as Germany.

The dramatic pattern of events is also realistic. The plot is compact; there is a realistic late point of attack; the exposition is well integrated into the rising action, especially in the first act; and there is a minimum use of theatrical devices and conventions. The only exception to all of this is the unmotivated, and not totally logical series of events at the conclusion. This is probably a failing of the realistic technique, rather than a romantic characteristic.

Character.--The characters in Judgment Day are essentially realistic, but do have characteristics of both Realism and Romanticism. The realistic characteristics are their contemporary nature and the naturalness by which they appear as a part of their environment. The romantic characteristic, admittedly minor in this play, is the idealized and emotional nature of Marek and Judge Slatarski. The final act of assassination by Slatarski is, it appears, an emotional one. Rice never prepares the audience for such an act, either by planting a motive, by giving us an insight into his character, or by showing us the mental struggle which would lead to such an action. The only explanation given is that it is the right, ideal thing to do.

The essential characterizations, however, are realistic. The contradiction here is based upon the poor, illogical conclusion, and is a basic stylistic interpretation of character.

Language.--Realistic dialogue, in prose, is characteristic of this Rice play.

Theme.--The theme--"the honest liberal defeats the dictator"--is realistic. Rice's thematic concern is with a contemporary political problem. It is "humanitarian" in the sense that Rice recognizes the deadly nature of the democratic-dictatorial conflict, and has faith in the ultimate ability of the liberal to take action against tyranny. In addition, it sees progression in society as possible, and indeed as advantageous. These types of thematic concerns are realistic.

Summary.--Judgment Day is realistic in principle, subject matter, structure, language, and theme. Its general characteristics are realistic and romantic, due essentially to the results of the unprepared ending of the play. It is a play written with a great deal of emotion and hate on the part of Rice for the dictator and the National Government. In this sense the dictator, Marek, and the judge are somewhat romantic characters, while the others are realistic.

Small Miracle

Synopsis.--We are in the lounge of the 43rd Street Theatre in New York as the audience arrives for the performance. As the curtain opens inside we meet the people left in the lounge: Tony Mako, convicted murderer and handcuffed to Joseph Taft, detective, is on his way to Colorado to be executed; Carl Barrett, Jr. is waiting for his "friend," Sylvia Temple, wife of a prominent business man; Eddie, the coatroom boy, is involved with Mae Danish, and is trying to raise \$200 to "help her through her trouble," or, as Mae wants, marry her; Helen, Eddie's "honest fiancée" is determined to get him out of the clutches of Mae, and she determines to "sacrefice herself" to her employer to raise the \$200. These plots are revealed in the lounge during the

first two acts of the play (both plays). In the end, Mako shoots his "accomplice" in an escape attempt because of a "double-cross." That victim just happened to be Mae's husband. Eddie is free, Helen's sacrifice is for nothing, the Barrett-Temple "friendship" is broken up due to the events, and both audiences leave.

Principle and General Characteristics.---In Small Miracle Norman Krasna has written a taut, emotional, and exciting melodrama in the best tradition of the "cops and robbers" plots. It is, in principle, romantic, of the "secondhand" type, mainly because of its "quest for thrills," "excitement . . . and suspense."

In addition, in the plots of Mae and Eddie, and Barrett and Temple, the Rousseau postulate of the inherent goodness of man is quite strong. Finally, Small Miracle relies upon "emotion . . . as the prime means of apprehending reality." In the two above mentioned plots, the end of the final act affirms Krasna's belief that the goodness in man will win out over the evil tendencies.

The general characteristics of Small Miracle are also romantic, of the "secondhand" type. The first romantic characteristic is "a tendency away from actuality" including certain "qualities of remoteness and escape." Mystery plays of this type, while portraying a contemporary series of events, is nevertheless remote in terms of the audience's personal experience. It is adventurous, make-believe, and highly improbable. The chain of events and circumstances which are depicted in Small Miracle are indeed "miraculous" if dramatic action were to be measured by everyday reality as we usually experience it, for instance, a prisoner in a theatre lobby, the attempted escape, and the coincidental character relationships. This is the sense in which Small Miracle is remote.

The second general characteristic of Small Miracle is the "emphasis upon emotionality and subjectivity" which is so prevalent. The actions of Mae, Eddie, Sylvia, Barrett, and Mako are all motivated by passion and feeling, as opposed to reason and logic. Also, there is no attempt on the part of the author to objectively and scientifically analyze the emotions, passions, or actions of his characters. It is enough that they are all exciting and dramatic.

Plot.--The content of Small Miracle is "glamorous, exciting, and admirable." It is contemporary in nature, but "spectacular and sensational in situation." This type of melodramatic material is romantic.

The treatment of that material is also romantic. First, there are at least three discernable plot lines, all dependent upon and held together by the Mako-Taft story. Second, "there is . . . an illogical (un-real) sequence of events," in which there are successions "of surprises . . . unforeseen and unforeseeable events, conceived in the manner of melodrama." Several instances of this are the coincidence in Mae's husband being Mako's accomplice, and the Sylvia-Barrett "affair" being climaxed and broken up by the shooting and release of Mae.

This romantic treatment overshadows the realistic characteristic of a tight, compact structure, and makes the overall plot technique romantic.

Character.--The depiction of character in Small Miracle is romantic. There are twenty-four characters in the play, all of whom are "recognizable human types, but are removed from ordinary human experience." Mako is a typical tough guy with no redeeming characteristics;

Taft is the stock, tough detective; Mae is the good girl who made a "mistake;" Eddie is the young boy who loves the girl gone wrong; etc. There is little in the play to make them highly individualized. In addition, "emotion plays an important part in the development of character" and the movement of the plot.

Language.--The dialogue in Small Miracle is realistic. It is in prose and natural to the background.

Theme.--The good are rewarded, and the evil are punished; the good in man will eventually win out over the evil. This statement serves as the theme of Small Miracle. This concept of "moral justice" is characteristic of themes of "secondhand" Romanticism.

Summary.--Small Miracle is romantic in all characteristics except the form element of language, which is realistic. The play is a mystery, suspense melodrama largely of the "secondhand" romantic type.

Merrily We Roll Along

Synopsis.--Merrily We Roll Along was one of the most successful plays of the 1934-35 Season. If one looks in it for a plot, in the traditional sense of the word with a beginning, a middle, and an end, he will not find it. The play is written backward, beginning in 1934 and ending up in 1916. The first scene shows Richard Niles, playwright, at the height of his professional, social, and domestic career. Julia Glenn, a long-time-friend of Niles, begins the conflict when she insults his guests and him by telling him that his material success has destroyed him as an artist. This statement of the theme is followed by an

argument between Niles and his wife, Althea, over the leading lady in his new play. The end of the scene is climaxed when Althea throws acid in the other woman's face. It is this relationship (between Niles and Althea) which the play follows back in time. She is the symbol for the luxury and cheap ambition which destroys the artistic impulses of Niles. The final scene in the play is in 1916, when Niles gives the valedictorian speech for his college graduating class. Then he is full of dreams of artistic impressions. His plea is for integrity; the irony of the play is that when we see that scene we know that it was his loss of integrity and artistic truth which destroyed him. The whole point of the play is that Niles was once an aspiring and quite talented writer. However, during the course of his life he compromised his artistic truth and values for material values of fame, sex, admiration, and the "quick buck." It was this series of compromises which ultimately destroyed him in the first scene.

Principle and General Characteristics.--In principle Merrily We Roll Along is romantic due essentially to its distrust of rational thought, and the, if not "return," at least the remaining in a "pure state of nature." It is the rational, the conscious society which permeates this play as the evil into which a spontaneous "genius" is swallowed up. Niles is the free soul who is hindered, indeed destroyed, by culture and the artificialities of society. His Rousseauian search for spontaneity should have remained in nature, not in the compromise of society's false values.

In general characteristics the dominant trait is the romantic characteristic of the "insistence on freedom, and the corresponding rebellion against strictures which limit the individual's acting

according to his desires." In this instance, Niles rebels against the artistic strictures which dictate that money, fame, and public success are not the criteria for artistic accomplishment. His rebellion, in the play, becomes his instrument for destruction.

Plot.--The subject matter of Merrily We Roll Along is contemporary life and man, specifically theatre people and artists, and as such is realistic. The conflict is in the artist, Niles, and is between devotion to art and truth, as opposed to material, un-artistic, financial values of his society, as seen through his wife Althea.

The structure of the play is expressionistic. The story begins by showing Niles in the present time (1934) as an artistic success. The inciting incident is the turn at the end of the first scene when he becomes a failure. From this start Kaufman and Hart show his past life, but not in the expected flashback manner depicting the moments of his life from past to present which lead up to his destruction. Rather the technique is in reverse -- he is carried back in time further and further as the play progresses. There are nine scenes, as follows: Scene 1, 1934; Scene 2, 1927; Scene 3, 1926; Scene 4, 1925; Scene 5, 1924; Scene 6, 1923; Scene 7, 1922; Scene 8, 1918; and Scene 9, 1916. The scenes are not dream sequences or images of Niles' past life, but scenes of actuality. In this sense the structure may be classified as expressionistic. It radically alters and distorts time and the normal causal sequence of human events. It is a purely subjective orientation, free from the restrictions and strictures of normal reality and its normal sequential progress. For Kaufman and Hart this distortion of time and action "functions as a means of expression."

Character.--There is a great proliferation of parts in this play -- ninety-three to be exact. All of them, except for Niles, the protagonist, "are cast into types like melodramatic figures," which is a characteristic of "secondhand" Romanticism. For instance, there are the young girls, the butler, the maid, the director, the producer, the actor, the actress, the guests, and so on. Niles, the protagonist, is not a complex person, but rather is pushed along by the events, not acts of will. We never see him in the usual obligatory scenes attempting to work out his conflict. He is, then "a slave of passion, ambition, and jealousy," a romantic characteristic of a hero.

Language.--The dialogue is natural and realistic. It attempts, and succeeds, in creating a sense of reality in the many scenes.

Theme.--The theme of Merrily We Roll Along reflects romantic concerns. This appears in the soul of Niles as his aesthetic instinct fights "to break its bonds" and conventions of social success, against which his personal freedom eventually succumbs. There is also the thematic concern for the "unique individual, heroically at odds with . . . his environment." In this instance it is "idealism" -- Niles the opportunist versus Niles the idealist. In the start of the play (the end of his life) he is the opportunist who is in harmony with his social environment; at the end of the play (the beginning of his life) he is the idealist, again in harmony with his social environment. And so in Merrily We Roll Along we see a change of environment and a change of character, all brought about by the characters and society in which the authors placed the protagonist.

Summary.--Merrily We Roll Along is romantic in principle, general

characteristics, subject matter, character, and theme. It is realistic in dialogue, and expressionistic in structure.

The First Legion

Synopsis.--The scene is St. Gregory's Novitiate for Jesuites. Father Thomas Rawleigh and Father John Fulton, two priests who have been in the order for some twenty years, begin to have some doubts about their chosen vocation. Father Sierra, who had been paralyzed for some time, is suddenly (almost as if by miracle) restored to health. This event restores the faith of Rawleigh and Fulton, especially when Dr. Peter Morell, the athiestic house physician, declares that the cure cannot be accounted for by science and medicine. The Rector, Father Paul Duquesne, sees in the cure a divine sanction for the canonization of the founder of the House of St. Gregory. Father Mark Ahern, a brilliant former lawyer, is appointed to plead the cause in Rome, but he also has begun to doubt his faith, especially his faith in miracles. He is convinced when Dr. Morell declares in confession that the cure can be explained by medicine, and that he just made up his previous statements out of a passion for sensationalism. So Father Ahern has a conflict. Does he tell what he knows from confession, or does he plead a false cause in Rome? His decision is to leave the order. Meanwhile, hundreds of pilgrims come to the house to see the priest who was cured by a miracle. One of these is Jimmie Magee, a twelve year old boy, who has polio. When the boy takes his first few steps, all believe that this is a true miracle, and a great renewal of faith follows.

Principle and General Characterizations.--The essential guiding

principle behind The First Legion is that of Realism's "emphasis upon the selectivity and the reproduction of human motives and character complexes." Lavery's interest in this play is with the contemporary problem of human conscience, "the deep motives of human character," which is a realistic concern. It is particularly so because of the emphasis upon the environment of the characters as significant in the formulation of their psychological problems. Specifically the play examines the consciences of the Jesuits, especially Rawleigh, Fulton, and Ahern.

The general characteristics of The First Legion are also realistic. They are "a concern for contemporary life, . . . a selective technique in the portrayal of that life, and . . . an emphasis on the form element of character."

Plot.--The basic material from which Lavery draws his plot is a group of Jesuit priests in "contemporary life," and their internal problems with their "contemporary environment." This material and its manifestation in the conflict, is realistic.

The technique and structure of The First Legion is also realistic. The plot is "structurally compact," there is a "late point of attack," and the dramatic conventions are kept to a minimum as illusionism is emphasized. The only departure from this "organic compactness" is the "miracle" at the end, which is a romantic device. This device, or trick as Cheney calls it, is foreign to the realistic organic structure which Lavery had followed up to that point. Even though the departure is not a realistic device, it doesn't appear to change the general overall characteristic of the structure as realistic.

Character.--Lavery's characters are, for the most part, characteristic

of Realism. They are all "normal to their contemporary background," and the central characters are highly "individualized with . . . deep psychological insight." The Jesuits Rawleigh, Ahern, and Fulton are the central characters, and the importance of their inner, mental conflicts is at the heart of the drama. The play's conflict centers around the mental doubts of these men. Instances of this are the long discussion in the first act between Rawleigh and Fulton, and in the second act between Ahern and Fulton.

Language.--The dialogue in The First Legion is prose, and natural to the background. It is, therefore, realistic.

Theme.--The overall theme of The First Legion is realistic, since it deals "with individual man's psychological problems" as faced in the modern world. It is a realistic investigation of the problem of human conscience, and whether, when one is faced with a doubting conscience, blind faith or a satisfied conscience ought to be the guiding rule of human conduct. Lavery's thesis in this regard is that one must always follow his conscience, do what he believes is right, regardless of blind faith.

Summary.--In all characteristics and form elements The First Legion is realistic. The only hint of a non-realistic style to intrude on this play is the device at the end of the play which solves the conflict. This deus tends to emotionalize and sentimentalize the play, which up to that point had been quite honest and objective in its view of human conduct. Rather than making the play romantic, this writer believes that the ending is rather a failing in good dramatic technique.

Dark Victory

Synopsis.--Judith Traherne is a wealthy, skeptical socialite. She loves parties, fun, horses, drink, sex, and the fast life of the upper class. One day she falls from her horse and suffers headaches for a time after. Dr. Frederick Steele, a noted brain surgeon, is called in to examine her. Steele is an idealist, who has found in human service a solution to the problems of life. He loves nature, man, God, and spiritual concepts. He is the exact opposite of Judith. He consents to operate on the twenty-seven year old socialite, thereby delaying his planned retirement in the hills and trees of Vermont. The inevitable happens -- these two opposites attract, and fall in love. After the operation Judith demands from Steele an accurate picture of her present condition. When he tells her she has only a few months to live, she believes that his recent proposal of marriage was made out of pity for her. She breaks off the relationship; Steele leaves for the aesthetic quiet of Vermont, and Judith leaves for the fast life of society to get everything out of life that she can. In the end she discovers that there is no longer any satisfaction in alcohol and casual affairs. She seeks out Steele in Vermont, marries him, and lives happily for two months until the dread summons.

Principle and General Characteristics.--Dark Victory is in principle a romantic melodrama in which escape, "excitement, thrills, suspense, and pure entertainment" are the keystones. There is no attempt in this play to examine reactions, psychological implications, or social issues. All actions and events have a common motivation -- the single drive of the two main characters. The essential reason

for categorizing the play as romantic and not realistic in principle is because a realistic approach would be to study the psychological effects of the "three months to live" announcement on the central characters. Instead Brewer and Block stress the emotional reactions of love and anger, and the suspense of the sentimental question, "Will she or won't she marry Steele?"

The first general characteristic of the play is a "tendency away from actuality" and toward the improbable. Dark Victory, in this sense, provides "the audience with an agreeable period of escape . . . into a world more exciting."

The second general characteristic of Dark Victory is the "emphasis on the emotional and subjective aspects of human behavior." In the actions of both Judith and Steele "emotion takes precedence over the element of reason and the passion for the fidelity for fact." The issues are never examined, argued, or presented. We never see rational decisions or an investigation of possibilities. Action takes precedence over this type of reasoning. For all of these reasons, the general characteristics of the play are romantic.

Plot.--The subject matter for the plot concerns Judith and her idealistic doctor, age forty-five, with whom she falls in love. The situation is contemporary, believable, and treats environment as a prime (not ultimate) factor in the determination of human conduct. Judith acts as she does because of her social, upperclass background. Steele's actions and conduct are as they are because of his romantic idealism and notions on nature and the world.

The dramatic technique is romantic, however, not realistic. This is due to the lack of careful, logical motivation. Instead

there is "an illogical sequence of events," illogical because the authors fail to supply any motivation for them. For instance, we never see the falling in love process of Steele and Judith; we never see Judith's decision to leave society and marry Steele; we never see Judith's motivation in asking Steele to tell her the real condition of her illness; we never see Steele's reactions to Judith's decision to go back to society; and finally we never see the development in Judith between scenes one and two in the third act. This conception of dramatic progress is romantic.

Character.--Both the character of Dr. Steele and Judith are drawn "with traits of extreme sensibilities," which is romantic. Steele is the extreme idealist, and Judith is the exact opposite. As evidence for this there is, in Steele's case, the philosophical "preaching" about nature and the complete, whole humanitarian in his early dialogue with Judith in the first act. Judith is the emotional sensualist who is, to quote her, "going to get all the excitement that's going," and "wants every sensation and every experience there is."¹

The effect of these idealized, emotional, and romantic traits is that both characters react to their situations to emotional extremes.

Language.--The dialogue is in prose, selective, and thereby, realistic.

Theme.--As a form of "secondhand" Romanticism, Dark Victory avoids themes dealing with an orderly, contemporary society. The themes, or ideas, which are discernable in this play include "over-

¹George Brewer, Jr. and Bertram Bloch, Dark Victory (New York: Dramatists Play Service, 1939), p. 21.

whelming love at first sight; the courtesan regenerated by love;" and a general lack of involvement in the ideas of environment. And finally, and most important, the fact that Steele's type of life wins out over Judith's type is certainly a significant indication of the author's point of view that people who live in a state of nature and simplicity are more desirable than those spoiled by the "corruptions of society."

Summary.--Dark Victory exhibits strong characteristics of Romanticism in principle, general characteristics, plot structure, character, and theme. It appears realistic in its selection of plot material and language. The romantic characteristics are of both the historical and "secondhand" types.

The Children's Hour

Synopsis.--The play opens in the living room of the Dobie-Wright School, a boarding school for girls run by two young women, Karen Wright and Martha Dobie. All is well, and Karen and Martha's future looks bright until Mary Tilford, a mischievous, spoiled child in the school runs home to her grandmother. There she tells Mrs. Tilford, a pillar of society, that Martha and Karen have done "unnatural" things between them at the school. This lie about the lesbian affairs of the two women is believed by the grandmother, and with the help of another lie by another student the rumor spreads. The two teachers lose their libel suit, the school is destroyed, and Karen loses her fiancée Dr. Carlin. Mrs. Tilford, the antagonist, attempts a final effort to undo the wrong when she finds out Mary's story was a lie. As she arrives at the Dobie-Wright school she discovers that Martha

has committed suicide, and Karen is left alone.

Principle and General Characteristics.--Lillian Hellman's hit of the 1934-35 season, The Children's Hour conforms in principle to the dramatic style of Realism. Its overall interest is upon selectivity in technique "and a reproduction of human motives and character." The play examines a contemporary situation, and shows a concern for man's problems. Finally, its emphasis is upon the form element of character. Miss Hellman's aim is to study, not the lie, but the effects of that lie upon two humans -- Martha and Karen. This type of objective investigation is realistic.

The general characteristics of the play are also realistic. The play undertakes an honest, concerned look at life, as well as an interest in the responsibility and result of society's actions upon its individual members. In addition the overall treatment is a selective, realistic one.

Plot.--The basic material which serves as the plot for The Children's Hour is contemporary social injustice and the effect of that injustice upon the personal lives of several of its members. This type of contemporary material and environment is realistic.

The plot structure appears as a general "structural compactness," with the period of equilibrium, inciting incident (Mary's running away), complication, and climax. There is no wasted or tangential diversions as the dramatic events and actions all lead directly toward the obligatory scene. This is the scene at the end of the second act, in which Mary faces Karen and Martha. The climax in the third act (the suicide of Martha) seems anti-climactic and useless. Both women had already been destroyed. The reason for the suicide

is a "confession" in which Martha claims she always had a physical attraction for Karen. This late piece of exposition seems somewhat inconsequential. However, despite this flaw, the technique still has the compactness of Realism. It moves forward with vitality and drive with a minimum of theatrical conventions in an acceptably realistic manner.

Character.--The central characters in The Children's Hour are realistic, first, by virtue of their contemporary nature, and second, because of the importance social environment plays in determining personality. Miss Hellman gives us little information concerning the past lives of Martha and Karen, and their present actions result in very little help in solving their present predicament. Yet, they do fight back -- they are mutable -- even though they are destined by the lie to ultimate destruction. This type of social and environmental force upon character is realistic.

Language.--The dialogue is prose, and realistic.

Theme.--The theme of The Children's Hour is the evil brought upon two innocent individuals by lies, the whispering campaign, rumor, and just plain scandalmongering. It was a vicious lie by children and the blind belief in that lie by adults which destroyed Karen and Martha. This type of concern for "individual man's psychological problems and man's responsibility to provide ethical relationships with his fellow men" is realistic.

Summary.--The Children's Hour is realistic in all form elements, principle, and general characteristics.

Gold Eagle Guy

Synopsis.--It is 1862 in a barrom in San Francisco. Guy Button, a rough, forceful, ruthless sailor has just jumped ship. He has a mania for collecting and using gold eagle pieces, as well as a mania, and indeed compulsion, to become great and powerful. Two years later he is well on his way toward the top. In 1864 we see him as head of the Keane Shipping Company and as the head of a "business" which supplies "coolie" labor for the California labor market. When we next see our ruthless "hero" it is 1879 and he is now the head of a large line of steam ship companies. He is married to a well-to-do Californian, and he is able to take over a large bank which is in trouble. He has nowhere to go but higher, and by more and more ruthless means. We next see him nineteen years later, his empire in some trouble now. In order to save his fortune he scuttles the Wells-Fargo strong box on one of his ships and deliberately sinks it with all on board. Eight years later, in his office, his son, Guy, Jr., confronts him with his past crimes. Just as this dramatic obligatory scene reaches its height, and the dilemma for author Levy strongest, Guy Button's walls literally "come tumbling down" upon him, destroying himself and his empire. The cause -- its 1906 in San Francisco.

Principle and General Characteristics.--The guiding principle behind Melvin Levy's play is romance, "excitement, thrills, suspense, and pure dramatic entertainment." It attempts to depict the rise and quick demise of a ruthless, power-hungry hero in the spirit of Marlow's Tamberlaine. In addition, the play is based upon "the reliance on emotion . . . as the prime means of apprehending reality," and is

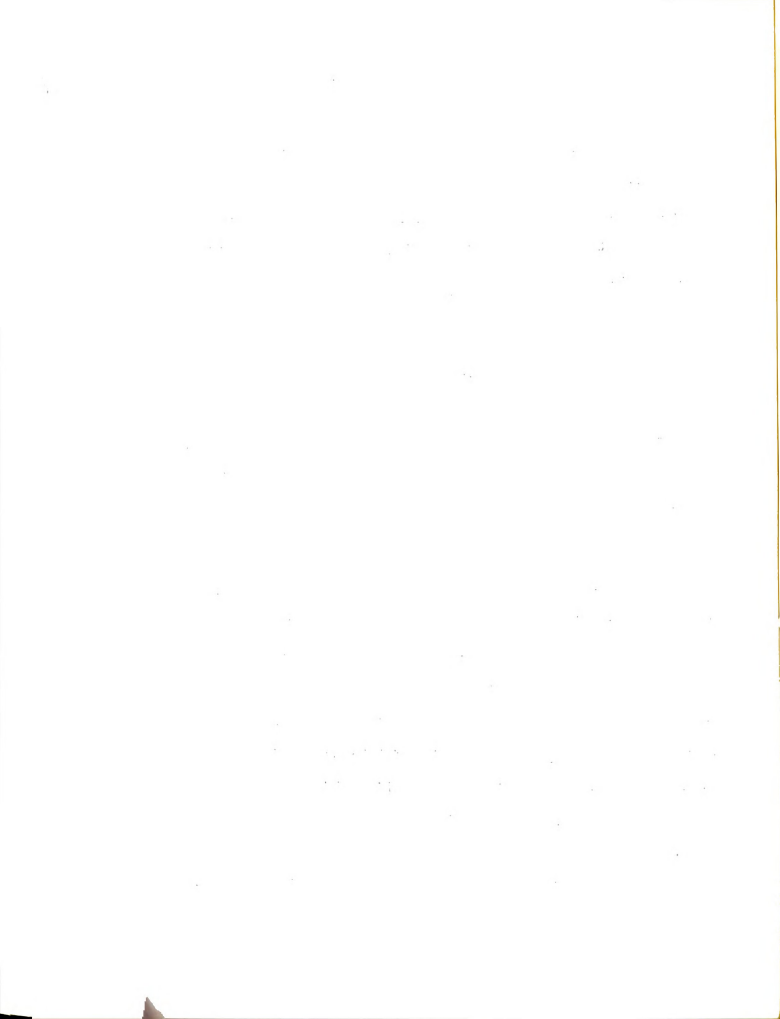
an irrational picture of a purely emotionally driven hero in an exaggerated picture of life.

The general characteristics of Gold Eagle Guy are also romantic. The first is "a tendency away from reality which includes qualities of remoteness and escape." Gold Eagle Guy is set in the later part of the nineteenth century, clearly remote in time. The characters and events presented have no relation to a typical audience's experiences. They are remote, therefore, in terms, "of a general tendency away from actuality" and toward pure fiction.

A second general characteristic is "an emphasis upon emotionality and subjectivity." The rise of Guy Button as depicted in the events of the play are robust and highly colored with a driving, blind passion for greed. There is no attempt to analyze or objectively examine motives or effects.

Plot.--The plot for Gold Eagle Guy is man's greed and resultant downfall. The content of the plot is romantic subject material. It is concerned with the "galmorous, exciting, and admirable" (if the adventures of the hero are capable of identification as admirable). It also includes "exotic settings and the pursuit of the spectacular and sensational in situation." Several instances of these characteristics are the marriage of Guy; the manner in which he "appropriated" bank funds; the spectacular ordering of the sinking of his ship; and the earthquake in the last act. All of these are glamorous and exciting events.

The structure of this material could also be called romantic. First, there is no unity of time or place. There are five scenes running in time from 1862 to 1906. Second, there is a "use of the



chronological structure and many scenes." The episodes follow Guy through forty-five years in chronological order. And finally, there are the "thrills arising from remarkable situations." There are many remarkable scenes and situations and surprises, the most remarkable one being the coincidence of the earthquake deus. These characteristics of the episodic structure, lack of tension, thrilling action, and lack of unities of time and place are all romantic.

Character.--There are fifty-two characters in Gold Eagle Guy--all but Guy "cast into types like melodrama figures." Guy, and his emotional, passionate climb is the center of the drama. He is a "monster of vice . . . of ambition, and heartlessness." In the words of John Howard Lawson, he is "conceived as something which is seen through the events, as stars are seen through a telescope."² In conclusion, the minor characters are romantic types; Guy is a romantic hero, a slave to his evil passions.

Language.--The dialogue is in prose, and is realistic.

Theme.--"Melodrama's concept of moral justice can be considered a theme of 'secondhand' Romanticism." This is the theme of Gold Eagle Guy. Guy's destruction--the walls of his empire tumbling down upon him--is a poetic end to the greed and selfishness of Guy Button. The empire he built destroyed him.

Summary.--Gold Eagle Guy is romantic in all form elements except language which is realistic. It is also romantic in principle and general characteristics.

²Lawson, p. 282.

Valley Forge

Synopsis.--The opening scene depicts the Continental Army's condition at Valley Forge in January, 1778. Put in the words of Alcock, one of the soldiers, "We've got everything from the itch to the purple fever, nothing to eat, nothing to wear, and the coldest son-of-a-bitch of a winter since the lake of Galilee froze over and Jesus walked on the water."³ The first bit of action after the exposition of conditions is George Washington ("honest George") sending General Howe's dog back to him in Philadelphia--the dog was found in George's camp. The second scene is in Howe's headquarters, the ballroom, in Philadelphia. Here we meet Howe and Mary Philipse, who says that she once knew General Washington as a personal friend during their younger days. Her husband is now a prisoner of the Continental Army. Soldier Spad delivers the dog to Howe and leaves with Mary, who has a pass to visit her husband. She is also being sent by Howe on a mission--to meet Washington again, strike up the "old friendship, and convince him to surrender. She is supposed to tell him that the French will not aid their cause, which she does as the curtain for the first act falls. The second act sees General Washington faced by two congressmen. He makes noble speeches about the way of the war, the reason for it, and that he will never give up the revolution, no matter what deals congress might make. It is he and he alone who will deal with the British. At the end of the act he sends Mary back to Howe with a message to meet. The third act meeting with Howe is about to

³Maxwell Anderson, Valley Forge (unpublished manuscript, Copy-right by Maxwell Anderson, 1934).

end, when Mary tells George that the French have signed an alliance with Congress. This brings new life and spirit to the poor band of men and their leader. They now vow to continue the revolution and "never say die."

Principle and General Characteristics.--Maxwell Anderson wrote Valley Forge, in part, as an answer to his critics who wondered why he should write so well of foreign national heroes (Elizabeth and Mary) while overlooking America's own romantic and heroic figures.⁴ The play, in this respect, is romantic, of the historical type. It is an emotional, sentimental glorification of George Washington, the Continental Army, and the spirit of Valley Forge. The principles upon which this play is based are the "reliance upon emotion and intuition," "the inherent goodness of nature," and "freedom of the individual."

The specific romantic characteristics of the play are: (1) "a tendency away from actuality which includes qualities of remoteness and escape; and (2) an emphasis on emotionality and subjectivity." The play is remote in both time and place, being set in Valley Forge in 1778. The emphasis is upon the emotional feelings of admiration for Washington's decision to carry the revolution on despite the forces of nature, weather, and an enormously larger foe.

Plot.--The material for the Anderson chronicle is a part of the past history of America, specifically during our Revolution in 1778. This is romantic subject matter.

The dramatic structure of Valley Forge is loose, episodic, and

⁴Burns Mantle, Best Plays of 1934-35 (New York: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1937), p. 66.

"free in . . . (its) use of elapsed time and shifts in place." It also has a "subplot," which is characteristic of Romanticism. The "subplot" is Mary's relationship with Washington. Robert Benchley calls it a "spurious heart-interest."⁵ and John Howard Lawson, in commenting on its relevance, said that it is a diversion "necessary to keep the play from dying of sheer exhaustion."⁶ At any rate, it is an emotional, sentimental diversion.

Other characteristics of Romanticism in the plot of the play are an early point of attack, and a "mingling of the serious and the comic."

Character.--The central character in Valley Forge is George Washington, whose character traits are mostly romantic. First, he exists "in an environment and atmosphere removed from every-day life." Second, he represents the "idealistic and imaginative side of man." Washington's speeches in the third act illustrate this second characteristic. They are idealistic sentiments spoken by a "hero" of American history. They are noble, patriotic, and brave thoughts--imaginative and idealistic.

The remaining characters, forty-three of them, are very general "types," characteristic of "secondhand" Romanticism. We never really get to know Mary, General Howe, Col. Tench, or Lafayette. There is no particular interest in them from a psychological point of view, hence, they have no particular individual characteristics.

⁵Robert Benchley, "Broadway," The New Yorker, XXXI (December 29, 1934), p. 16.

⁶Lawson, p. 151.

Language.--Dialogue in "historical" Romanticism "tends to be poetic and ornate" and is "often an informal lyricism, rather than a strict poetic form." The Anderson dialogue is written in his typical verse form, and is, hence, romantic. Even though there is some prose, the overall characteristic appears poetic.

Theme.--The specific theme of the events pictured at Valley Forge and on the Island in the Delaware River is one of "political liberty," which is characteristic of "historical" Romanticism. There are other romantic themes too--"themes of nostalgia" and "a desire to ignore the present." In summary, Valley Forge is a glorification of the past--emotional, sentimental, and patriotic.

Summary.--Valley Forge is romantic in all form elements, principle, and general characteristics.

The Petrified Forest

Synopsis.--"Alan Squier is a penniless, disillusioned young writer, an aimless hitchhiker with little hope to give his life meaning. He finds a cause worth dying for at the Black Mesa Bar-B-Q, a lonely outpost in the Arizona desert. Gabby Maple, the fresh, innocent daughter of the dull, self-important owner of the place, is determined to escape her small oppressive world and follow her French mother who had returned to her homeland many years ago. In her longing for fulfillment she offers herself to Alan, who refuses; she is on the verge of giving in to her local admirer, Boze, when the Bar-B-Q is occupied by a gang of fleeing desperadoes. Alan, who lacks the vitality to live but is just strong enough to die gallantly, arranges that his

life insurance will be paid to the girl and then makes Duke Mantee, the famous killer, shoot him. Gramp Maple, who loves to talk of the long-past pioneer days; a stuffy banker and his frustrated wife; a pompous commander of the American Legion; and a radical telegraph lineman lend color to the suspenseful action. Yet there is a message, well integrated into the melodrama: nature, physically overcome by man, hits back by destroying man's individual spirit. The pioneer is gone; and even Mantee, individualism turned to anarchy, is obsolete. The only hope lies in Gabby's aspirations, in the renewal of the spirit. But Alan, the sophisticated, sensitive intellectual, will be buried in the Petrified Forest, the meaning of which he had expounded: 'Platonism -- patriotism -- Christianity -- romance -- the economics of Adam Smith -- they're all so many dead stumps in the desert.'"⁷

Principle and General Characteristics.--Robert Sherwood's guiding aesthetic principle and idea permeating The Petrified Forest is essentially Symbolism. The play, on the narrative level, appears as a western melodrama. However, Sherwood is much more concerned with a "fluidity of emotions . . . sensations" and concepts which have nothing to do directly with sociology, science, or melodrama, but which are "symbolic of existence and . . . [are] immediate to the spirit. What he is attempting to do is to suggest spiritual, intangible values and concepts through a presentation of concrete events, which is a symbolic principle.

"The primary characteristics exhibited by Symbolism--the use of symbols--" is the general characteristic of The Petrified Forest. The symbols in this case are the characters and events at the Black Mesa

⁷Theodore J. Shank, ed., A Digest of 500 Plays (New York: The Crowell-Collier Press, 1963), pp. 357-58.

Bar-B-Q in Arizona. They have their ordinary meaning as a melodrama, but "for those who look deeper, . . . (they) reveal a second, deeper level of comprehension."

Plot.--There are two levels of comprehension in The Petrified Forest -- the symbolic and the narrative. The surface structure of the narrative plot is a romantic melodrama. There are several plots, all revolving around the Squier-Gabby plot. There is action, suspense, and escape as we watch a group of people held captive by a famous killer. These are characteristics of "secondhand" Romanticism.

The important level of comprehension in plays of this style is the symbolic one, where the actions and characters represent a higher, more spiritual (intangible) essence. In The Petrified Forest this symbolic level attempts to show that our present civilization is suicidal. It is drifting, without the nerve, or "guts," to save itself, toward ultimate doom. The antithesis seems to be that our salvation can be found in a renewal of hope, aspiration, individualism, and the spirit. Gabby has this spirit, and her goal of striking out for France is the type of determination needed to overcome this "suicidal tendency." Squier also symbolizes the instinctive rightness of feelings in his action of brotherly love toward Gabby. And yet, Sherwood seems to imply a synthesis which states that much of society's individualism and instinct turns to brutality and evil. This latter point is symbolized in the final action of the play, the brutality of Mantee.

Character.--On the narrative level the characters in The Petrified Forest are romantic types, as in "secondhand" Romanticism. Boze is the primitive, ex-football hero; Mantee is the famous killer who, as played originally by Humphrey Bogart, is Romanticism's romantic criminal;

Squier is the disillusioned young writer; Gabby is the fresh, young, idealistic, innocent daughter; etc.

On the symbolic level these characters take on a second meaning, as seen in the above discussion of principle and plot. Several instances of these symbolic characteristics are: Squier, who represents the intellectual defeatist who wishes to be buried in the petrified forest -- "the graveyard of civilization;" Gabby, who is the hope and aspiration of man; and Mantee, who is the individual turned anarchist.

Language.--The dialogue in The Petrified Forest is in prose, and realistic.

Theme.--The theme of The Petrified Forest, to paraphrase the earlier more detailed discussion of principle (see above), shows that the virtue of fortitude is lacking in our civilization, thereby creating a disillusioned civilization in which the barbarian is becoming more prevalent. Nature, then, physically overridden by evil elements, destroys the individual spirit of man.

Summary.--The Petrified Forest is symbolic in all general characteristics, principle, plot, character, and theme. It uses realistic dialogue.

The Old Maid

Synopsis.--Opening on the same day as The Petrified Forest, and closing within a week of it, was Zoe Atkins' Pulitzer Prize play, The Old Maid. In the first scene Delia Lovell is preparing for her marriage that day to James Ralston. Charlotte, Delia's cousin, interrupts the scene by giving her a cameo, a present from Clem Spender,

an old "flame" of Delia's. There is an indication that he still has a place in her heart. The second scene shows Charlotte working in a day nursery she has established for poor, unfortunate children. Charlotte is going to get married, but she won't give up the nursery as her fiancée, Joseph, wishes her to. As it turns out, Tina, one of the little children is really Charlotte's illegitimate baby, the father being Clem, the former boy friend of Delia. Delia takes it upon herself to call off the marriage between Charlotte and Joseph, who is the brother of James. Fourteen years later Charlotte is found living at Delia's house with Tina, who had been adopted by Delia. Tina does not know who her real mother is, Charlotte being called "cousin." It seems that Tina and Charlotte don't get along too well; Tina thinks that she is just a prudish "old maid." The final scene takes place in 1854 as Tina is preparing to get married to a nice, young man. The wedding is to be tomorrow, and on the final night before the wedding Charlotte has a great motherly urge to say a few words to her daughter, but Delia won't hear of it. Nevertheless Charlotte goes upstairs to talk to Tina and tell her who her real mother is. But, she can't do it. Moved by this, Delia tells Tina that Charlotte "didn't marry a man who loved her very much, and who would have given her everything she wanted -- because she wouldn't give you up. That's why she's an old maid."⁸ Tina is moved by this, and vows that tomorrow as she leaves for her honeymoon the very last thing that she will do will be to lean down and give her last kiss to Charlotte.

Principle and General Characteristics.---In principle The Old Maid

⁸Mantle, p. 171.

is a romantic play. It relies on "emotion" as the prime means of apprehending reality rather than an objective picture of human motives and character. The whole emphasis in the play, especially the emotional final scene, is upon an emotional attachment to Charlotte, who is living with her own daughter, but who can not admit it. A second principle view of the play is that it depicts life, not objectively, but rather "through inspiration, longing, and sympathy." These are the primary emotions which are emphasized throughout the play.

The general characteristics of The Old Maid are also romantic. First, there is the characteristic of the "tendency away from actuality which includes qualities of remoteness and escape." The play takes place in the middle of the nineteenth century, which is remote in time. It is escapist because it fails to make significant comment on the problems presented. There is no social relationships made, and there is no contemporary theme provided. As pure entertainment it is highly effective. A second characteristic is the "emphasis on emotionality and subjectivity." The critics commented upon the play, says Barns Mantle, by saying "that this drama of maternal yearning and motherly love is definitely sentimental, and that it does belong to that school of emotional drama that flourished a generation and more ago."

Plot.--The subject matter for The Old Maid comes from an Edith Wharton novel, and concerns maternal longing, motherly love, and devotion. This emotional and sentimental material is essentially romantic because it is not contemporary, but "from the past," and "sensational" and "mysterious."

The structure of the play is somewhat loose and episodic which

is characteristic of Romanticism. There is no unity of time or place, there are many scenes in a chronological order, and, finally, the plot moves forward in several instances through a "succession of surprises, recognitions, unforeseen events." An illustration of this is the "discovery" of the identity of the infant, Tina; the "discovery" by the family of the "past" of Charlotte; and the unforeseeable coincidence that Clem is the father of Tina, the former friend of Delia, and that his daughter grows up as the daughter of Delia.

Character.--There are essentially two characters who are developed dramatically in the play -- Delia, and the central figure, Charlotte. It is with the latter that our interest is greatest. Both are romantic characters.

Delia is romantic because of her emotional characteristic. All of her actions are guided by the passionate love for Clem. Even after she married James, she still had in her heart the old passion for Clem. The first scene points up that, when she wears Clem's cameo to her wedding. Ever after she always wore that gift, in fact, she even gave it to her daughter when she was married. Her preventing the marriage between Charlotte and Joseph was also prompted by that passion for Clem. She wanted Clem's child, even though she was not the mother. This same passion caused all of her actions throughout the life of Tina, until the sentimental ending.

Charlotte is also a victim of emotion, however it is Delia's emotion and passion, not her own. Throughout the whole play Charlotte is never allowed to initiate any dramatic action. The progressions are made from without the play (the surprises and unforeseen events mentioned above) and from Delia. She is, in a true sense, a victim

of her one mistake with Clem, and Delia's jealous passion which persecutes Charlotte until the end.

In summary, both characters are romantic. First, because both are "very emotional beings, prone to self-pity;" second, because Delia is a "slave of passion, . . . and jealously;" third, because Charlotte is the "weak woman who is caught up in adultery and powerless before her passion;" and finally, because Delia is essentially "viscious" and "heartless."

Language.--The dialogue, in the style of romantic melodrama, is in prose, and realistic.

Theme.--The themes of "secondhand" romanticism are frequently ones of emotion, sentiment, love, melancholy, and anguish. All of these appear in The Old Maid. It is an overwhelmingly emotional dramatization of motherly love and devotion.

Summary.--The Old Maid is romantic in principle, general characteristics, structure, material, and theme, and character. It is realistic in language.

Awake and Sing

Synopsis.--"A Jewish family, the Bergers, live in an apartment in the Bronx, struggling to survive during the Depression. The young son, Ralph, is pulled in three directions. He loves a girl and would like to marry her. His grandfather, who plays Caruso records and reads revolutionary material, urges him to revolt, to try to do something to stop the unhappiness in the world, rather than marry and forget it. His mother violently opposes his marriage because the girl

is poor. The mother wants him to accept the world as it is and help with the struggle to make ends meet. In the end he accepts the grandfather's philosophy and decides to awake and sing."⁹

Principle and General Characteristics.--Clifford Odets' Awake and Sing is a propagandist play of protest and social comment, which shows a genuine, humanitarian concern for social injustice. As such, it is realistic in principle. The realistic principles involved in this play are, first, an emphasis upon selectivity and "a reproduction of contemporary human motives and character." Second, Realism, and Awake and Sing, views environment as a factor which shapes human character. The Berger family, and in particular Ralph, are fighting the results of their minority position in society and the Depression. Both of these are environmental influences. The third principle of Realism is "the idea of progress in improving human relations and behavior." Awake and Sing depicts 1934 social "conditions which are in need of change," the implication being a call for action: "Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust." (Isaiah, 26:19)

The first general characteristic of Awake and Sing is a concern for contemporary life and man's social plight. The concern here is with "contemporary . . . economic, and political conditions, and an interest in the improvement of those conditions." A second general characteristic is a selective, illusionistic technique.

Plot.--The subject matter of Awake and Sing is realistic. It is the story of a contemporary family, middle class life, and economic problems. Further, the treatment of the characters' contemporary

⁹Shank, p. 339.

environment as a factor in determining conduct in Awake and Sing is a realistic quality of story material.

The structure of the play appears quite formless. The reason for this is that the plot line, as such, is quite thin. The individual incidents and beats appear dramatically more dynamic and interesting as illustrations of Odet's thesis and problem than as a progression of the plot as a whole. In this sense the incidents are illustrative rather than casually progressive. This tendency toward formlessness is naturalistic.

Character.--When one thinks of Awake and Sing it is inevitable that memory brings to the surface a group of well drawn, dynamic, realistic characters of an almost "memorable" nature. The first realistic trait of character is that they are contemporary. Second, their personality is to a certain extent controlled by their environment and background. To illustrate, Ralph, the central character, appears as a natural part of his environment, but not totally controlled by it. He has a choice of actions, and as a matter of fact he has several choices open to him. This is the heart of his and the play's conflict. Also, Ralph does act at the end of the play. The relationship here between a choice of actions and environmental control is mutable -- Ralph is given a number of possible responses to his situation and the situation of his family. In the end he reaches a decision which "may change . . . his destiny, or the environment itself."

For the above reasons, based upon the established criteria, the characters in Awake and Sing are realistic.

Language.--Odets' language is more than realistic. Included in the dialogue is much incidental conversation -- in a sort of "symphonic"

atmosphere. The dialogue includes proper dialect, and relates to the characters' station in life. It is mostly naturalistic.

Theme.--In Awake and Sing Odets' protests against the indifference and lack of action on the part of the middle class to extirpate themselves from social and economic misery. And until the final half-dozen lines this was Odets' theme. In the end, however, when Ralph finds courage and understanding, the theme becomes one of Realism -- aid, help, and compassion for the socially oppressed. And so it is a call to arms for the working class, and a protest against the injustice placed upon the poor by the capitalists.

Summary.--Odets' Awake and Sing is realistic in principle, general characteristics, subject matter, character, and theme. It is naturalistic in structure and language.

The Black Pit

Synopsis.--The exposition shows Joe Kovarsky's marriage to Iola. Immediately after the ceremony Joe is dragged off to prison for picketing in a strike. Three years later Joe is released and tries to find a job, but finds that he is blacklisted. He changes his name, goes to another state, but the company detectives still hound him. At the end of the first act Joe agrees to take a job with the old company and remain friendly with the bosses. They now have control over him because of his past. As a "stoolpigeon" Joe has a rough time with his bosses and the miners during the second act. At the end of the act the superintendent forces Joe to tell the name of the union organizer in the mine camp. Of course his

fellows find him out, and he is forced to leave the camp, his wife, and child. In a final effort to regain his self-esteem, Joe goes out on strike with the men.

Principle and General Characteristics.--The world idea behind The Black Pit is realistic. It is another of the many so-called proletarian dramas. It is an obvious attack upon management in the Pennsylvania coal mines, and a call to arms for the labor man. The realistic principles involved are: (1) a "reproduction of contemporary human motives and character;" (2) an attempt to depict a real, actual, illusionistic situation; (3) an emphasis upon environment as a factor in shaping human character; and (4) the implication that human relations and problems can be changed for the better.

The contemporary situation is a depiction of conditions and practices in the labor-management field of coal mining during the 1930's. The emphasis upon environment permeates the play as Joe is driven by events, and fights under the pressures placed upon him by circumstances of the labor situation at the time. Finally, the principle of "progression" and change can be illustrated by the overall thematic concern and the tone of the play.

The general characteristics are also realistic. Briefly they are, first, a "concern for contemporary life" and for man's social plight; and second, a selective technique of the suggestion of reality.

Plot.--The material for The Black Pit is realistic. It is, basically, a contemporary social and economic problem. The conflict is between the laboring class and management, specifically between the poor Pennsylvania coal miners and the unscrupulous bosses. It is manifested through the stranglehold that the bosses (McCulloh)

have on Joe, and how he can be forced into betraying his fellow workers. In addition, it shows the conditions of coal mining as brought about by the strained relationship between the labor man and management -- management specifically attempting to destroy the unionizing efforts of the miners.

The structure of the plot has mostly characteristics of Romanticism. First, it is loose in construction and free in its "use of lapsed time and shifts in place." The play covers about five years in time, and there are eight different locales in the three acts. Second, there are two plots. The one is between Joe, Iola, their child, and Joe's brother, Tony. It concerns their problems with each other and with the miners. The second plot is between the miners and management. The climax of both plots is the strike at the end of the play.

Character.--The Pennsylvania coal miners as drawn by Maltz are realistic. He shows us a minority group of contemporary people who are caught in the injustices of their social and economic environment. While their depressed condition is a direct result of their background and environment, the relation is a dynamic one -- mutable -- and therefore, realistic. Illustrative of this assertion is the case of Joe, who is driven by events and circumstances but fights back. He is essentially a weak man -- a weak man who fights only under extreme pressure. In the end he recognizes what he has become, and makes a conscious decision of the will to act against the social environment which has been his antagonist.

Language.--Maltz tries to depict the mood and atmosphere of the poverty-stricken, uneducated, minority group through the use of very

particularized dialogue. It is extremely naturalistic, with many instances of conversations being repetitious and containing "useless words." In addition, the thick dialect attempts to complete the image of the minority group. The dialect is so detailed that it is, at time, extremely difficult to read the play with meaning.

Theme.--The theme of The Black Pit is action, in the same sense as it is in Awake and Sing. If the little guy is being stepped on, he ought to do something about it. In an effort to regain his self-esteem, Joe and the men "strike" the coal mining company. This is a realistic theme.

Summary.--The Black Pit is realistic in principle, general characteristics, material, character, and theme. It is romantic in structure, and it is naturalistic in language.

Till the Day I Die

Synopsis.--Till the Day I Die is a one-act play, produced first by The Group Theatre along with Waiting For Lefty at the Longacre Theatre on March 26, 1935. The play concerns a group of fighting proletarians in Germany who meet in underground halls against the day when they can take up arms against the Fuehrer. The central characters are Karl and Ernst Taussig, Baum, and Tillie. Ernst is taken in a raid by the Nazis and subjected to torture in an effort to get him to inform on the others. In the end they get him to inform, and his band of associates blacklist him from their ranks. When he returns to them, broken in health and spirit, he commits suicide.

Principle and General Characteristics.--The overall idea behind

Till the Day I Die is realistic. Odets is examining a contemporary political problem -- the anti-Nazi underground in Germany. It is his purpose to make society aware of the problem in hopes "that it may turn its attention to it." Odets offers no particular solution, only a presentation of the maladjustment, a revelation of the status quo. The implication, which is a realistic one, is "that if some action were taken to deal with them (the problems), then the resultant change would lead to progress."

A second principle evident in Till the Day I Die is the concept of environment "as a dynamic element of human experience." The projection of the personal conflict of Ernst as a struggle against his environment becomes the manifestation of the conflict, and hence the central focal point of the social and political protest.

There are two realistic general characteristics of this Odets play. The first is an emphasis upon the form element of character. Odets' concept of change and injustice in this play is seen not as a vast force, but as a personal clash between individual and environment (Ernst and the Nazis). The second general characteristic of the play is the illusionistic picture of events within the scenes.

Plot.--The subject matter chosen by Odets is realistic. It is from contemporary life and treats contemporary environment as an important factor in the determination of human behavior.

Structurally, Till the Day I Die has more characteristics of Romanticism than Realism, despite the dominating realistic principle and general characteristics.

First, the play is basically a one-act play, and within this brief production time the play is quite "free in its use of lapsed

time and shifts in place." There are four different locales, and no attempt to confine the action to the length of the production. Second, there are seven scenes -- a relatively large number for a one-act play. And finally, the dramatic progression is not casually linked as it might be in Realism, but rather is characterized by rapid, illogical, unforeseeable scenes conceived in the manner of melodrama. The first four scenes deal with the capture and torture of Ernst. In the fourth scene the officer tells him of the diabolical plan to make his friends think he has betrayed them. The fifth scene, back in Tilly's room, contains the melodramatic incident of the detectives breaking in, and the last scene contains his suicide. These scenes are powerful, exciting, and remarkable, but they are not logically, causally motivated.

Character.--The character traits in Till the Day I Die are naturalistic. The band of liberals are from the lower middle class -- workers for a new social and political order in Germany -- and are contemporary. Second, they are a natural part of their environment, and are fully controlled by it. None of the characters when confronted with environmental, outside influences makes any decisions or deliberate acts of the will. Tilly's "decision" to vote against Ernst, for instance, is not really a decision. We see no conflict of will, even though we realize that she believes him to be innocent. We do not see this belief challenged nor dramatized. As a result her vote is merely a gesture rather than a decision -- a giving-in to environmental forces.

A second illustration of this naturalistic character trait can be seen in the actions and reactions of Ernst. We always see him before

and after his actions and "decisions;" never is the moment of conscious will and decision dramatized. He always gives in to his environment.

Language.--Odets' dialogue in Till the Day I Die is in prose and is realistic.

Theme.--"Until the Day I Die there is no peace for an honest worker in the world," could well be called the specific thematic concern of this play. Odets is pointing out a problem and not necessarily offering a particular solution. If there is a solution called for, it might be that personal sacrifice and a belief and hope in the power of good will eventually defeat the brute powers of evil. However, essentially, Odets is pointing out a contemporary political problem, offering no direct solution for it. This is a realistic theme.

Summary.--Till the Day I Die is realistic in principle, general characteristics, subject matter, language, and theme. It is naturalistic in character, and has romantic characteristics in the form element of plot structure.

Waiting for Lefty

Synopsis.--The scene is a Taxicab Drivers union meeting where Fatt, in the first scene, backed up by his gunmen, is telling the members of the local that now is not the time for a strike. Members of the union are calling, "Where's Lefty?" Fatt allows some of the members to state their opinions and they do so in five episodes. The first episode is "Joe and Edna." Edna rakes Joe over the coals for allowing the company to get away with the things that they do.

They have little to eat, the month's rent is due, the kids have colds, and he ought to go out on strike. This he decides to do. The second episode is "The Lab Assistant." Miller, the assistant, refuses to make poison gas for the war, quits his job, hits his boss in the mouth, and gets a job as a cab driver. Episode three, "The Young Hack and His Girl," shows that poor Sid, the cab driver, is having difficulties with his girl because of financial reason. "The Labor Spy" episode is Fatts' contribution. He has imported a man from Philadelphia to tell how bad the strike went there. While he is speaking he is identified as a labor spy by his brother, and is kicked off the stage. The final episode is "The Interne." Benjamin, a doctor, is having his patients taken away from him because of political reasons. He resigns and gets a job as a cab driver. In the final scene of the play Keller gets up and accuses the union heads of do-nothing policies. He asks Edna, Sid, Dr. Barnes, and the rest of them to do something. When a man rushes in with the news that Lefty, the delegate who they were waiting for, has been shot in the head, the whole audience rises and cries out "STRIKE, STRIKE, STRIKE!"

Principle and General Characteristics.--This is the third Odets play to be commented upon for this season. In principle, this play is expressionistic. The post 1910-25 form of Expressionism has been characterized as Activist, specifically demonstrating a "mobilization of the mind in the service of humane goals" and "a tendency toward a separation of the art object from empirical reality." The humane goals which Odets is striving to serve is that of the contemporary labor-union problems, specifically the problem of strikes and unfair and crooked union leaders. The reason that this is expressionistic

in this play, and not realistic, is that the overall tone and idea of the play is not to present a real picture of life, but rather snatches and bits of moments of sharp protest, without telling a story as a realist would. He presents impulses of social anger, not illusionistic scenes. This leads to the overall principle of the separation of the art object from empirical reality. The episodes are not real, they are not going on at the moment, and the audience is not asked to believe in them as actual, present events.

Because of these general characteristics the overall principle being Waiting for Lefty is the Activist form of Expressionism.

Plot.--The essential subject matter which Odets is using for the play is realistic. He is dealing with contemporary social, economic, and labor problems, which is realistic.

The dramatic technique of Waiting for Lefty is expressionistic. Odets created a series of scenes to serve as illustrations of moments of sharp, social protest and anger. The scenes (episodes, as he called them) are not real. They are called into being by the persons who are central to them. Joe, for instance, calls into being the scene between himself and his wife in order to illustrate to the workers his reason for being on the platform and for calling for a strike. The episodes are not connected to each other in any causal manner. The only connection between them is the thematic one. They are sloganized and created, rather than products of the needs and desires and motives of the characters. Because of this form, the technique is expressionistic.

Character.--The characters in Waiting for Lefty are realistic. First, they are "contemporary and normal to the contemporary background." Second, their personality as demonstrated by their dramatic

life in the play, as brief and sketchy as it might be, is "conditioned and influenced by [their] environment." The characters in the five episodes are confronted with decisions based upon certain social and economic forces. The decisions which they make are based upon quick, dramatic intuitive recognitions of these forces. Joe and Edna, for instance, are in the first episode confronted directly with the fundamental problems of the worker's family -- clothes, food, and medicine for his children. Joe fails to take any action against these problems until his wife is about to leave him. It is then that his decision comes. He will go down to 174th Street and look up Lefty and see about a strike. He has been faced with a contemporary problem of environment, and has acted upon that with a free conscious effort. The events in the rest of the episodes are similar.

Language.--The dialogue in Waiting for Lefty has characteristics of Expressionism; and in the production notes to the play, Odets suggests language devices characteristic of the Epic style.

The most often used characteristic of expressionistic dialogue in Waiting for Lefty is the "telegraphic" tendencies. There are often, in all of the episodes, "short crisp exchanges of phrases or broken and unfinished sentences."

In Odets' production notes he calls for the use of slogans and music as well as the use of the committeemen on the stage as a kind of chorus to comment upon the action. These devices, along with the use of the soliloquy at the end of the episodes, are Epic language tendencies.

Theme.--Waiting for Lefty is another of Odets' so-called "agit-prop" plays which call for action from the underprivileged members

of society against their persecutors. Specifically, it is an explanation of the revolt of the underprivileged against the evils and injustices of the present system of capitalism, which is a realistic concern.

Summary.--Waiting for Lefty is expressionistic in principle, general characteristics, dramatic structure, and language. It is realistic in its use of subject matter and character, and in its theme.

Ceiling Zero

Synopsis.--The scene is the operations office of Federal Air Lines, Hadley Field, Newark. Jake Lee, Texas Clark, and Dizzy Davis, air force pilots during the war, are now doing the mail run from Newark. Jake is in charge of the airport, and the others are under him. The plot line deals with Dizzy, an irresponsible but likeable playboy. He is reckless in the air with planes, and on the ground with women. There is suspicion that he has been a little reckless with Jake's wife, Mary. His latest attempted conquest is Miss Thomas, one of the hostesses. In order to keep a date, he gets Texas to fly his mail run in terrible weather. Texas crashes, and Dizzy, realizing what a mess he made flies off in a fog against orders and never comes back.

Principle and General Characteristics.--In principle Ceiling Zero is a form of "secondhand" Romanticism. It is a melodrama which "has as its guiding idea excitement, thrills, suspense, and pure dramatic entertainment." Wead has written a very suspenseful and exciting melodrama, especially the second act, which Burns Mantle calls "the most thrilling of any recently produced."¹⁰ A further

¹⁰Mantle, p. 16.

principle of Ceiling Zero is "the reliance upon emotion," which is a characteristic of the very dramatic ending.

The general characteristics of the play are also romantic. First, it exhibits a "tendency away from actuality . . . including qualities of remoteness and escape." In Ceiling Zero the setting for the dramatic action is contemporary, and not necessarily remote. However, the action is remote in the sense that it is removed from the everyday reality as most humans experience it. The lives and experiences of the aviators depicted at Newark are removed from our everyday experiences, and as a result their exciting adventures exist in a sort of "ideal dream world, a . . . land of imagination." In this sense it is escapist drama, and romantic.

A second romantic general characteristic of Ceiling Zero is the "emphasis upon emotionality and subjectivity." The "coldly logical or matter-of-fact has no part in romance," and also it has no part in this play. The actions and events, the storm, the heroic attempt at a landing despite the weather, the love and jealousy, and the heroic ending are emotional and thrilling, not logical and objective.

Plot.--The subject of this melodrama is the trials of a small group of adventurous airplane pilots in a small New Jersey airport. The manner in which this is presented is highly romantic, however the essential material is contemporary, places a great deal of emphasis on nature, and is realistic.

The emphasis in the construction of the plot is toward action at the expense of character development. These action scenes are melodramatic and the thrills arise from "remarkable situations." This all results in exciting, sensational, and unforeseen events, which

is characteristic of "secondhand" Romanticism. The storm and landing in the second act, for instance, is a very sensational scene. The suspense and excitement generated by the reports from the plane is almost unbearable, however it has little to do with the plot, and even less to do with the preceding scene.

Character.--Wead's characters are essentially types, uncomplex, and definitely not studied as to motives. Action takes precedence over character development, in the manner of melodrama. The treatment exposes characters who live in an atmosphere removed from the common everyday experiences of the audience, and so they become, in a sense, strange, idealistic, and romantic. Dizzy, for instance, is a purely emotional character. He is an exciting, strange, unreal, hero with whom the male can easily identify. The rest of the pilots, too, are glamorous, adventurous characters; and Jake's passionate jealousy is characteristic of romantic melodramas.

Language.--The dialogue is in prose, assists in making the situations believable, and is realistic.

Theme.--The overall theme as expressed through the final action of the play (Dizzy's final flight into the weather with a ceiling of zero) seems to imply a pessimistic view of revenge in attempting to show "poetic justice." (It was Dizzy who was responsible for the death of Texas earlier.) In reality it is a concept of moral justice, not pessimistic, in which he who commits evil is punished. The theme is, then, characteristic of "secondhand" Romanticism.

Summary.--Ceiling Zero, an exciting melodrama, is romantic in principle, general characteristics, structure, character, and theme.

It is realistic in language and subject matter.

Kind Lady

Synopsis.--Mary Herries, slightly eccentric spinster of middle years, invites Henry Abbott, whom she finds shabbily dressed at her door, into her home for tea, and discovers him to be an art connoisseur. On the way out, Abbott steals Mary's jade cigarette case. Several days later he returns to explain that he took the case because he needed to pawn it in order to help his sick wife and child, who happen to be outside now waiting for him. Mary, of course, invites them in and sends Abbott out for a doctor. Within a week the Abbotts, aided by three fake relatives, move in on Mary to stay. They eventually dismiss the servants, and hold Miss Herries a prisoner in her own home. They spread the word to her neighbors and acquaintances that she has sailed for Europe on a trip and boarded up the house. For almost a month this is the sad situation as the crooks steal all of the art treasures from her house and try to get her to sign various commitments. Finally, by a clever strategem, Miss Herries effects her release.

Principle and General Characteristics.--Kind Lady, the final successful serious drama of the 1934-35 season, "belongs to the goose-flesh group" of exciting mystery and melodrama plays. In principle it is romantic, the essential characteristics being excitement, thrills, suspense, and the reliance upon emotionality.

Following this principle, the general characteristics of the play are also romantic. They are emotionality, excitement, a disregard for actuality, and an emphasis upon the improbable and bizarre situations.

Plot.--Chodorov's subject matter is romantic. First, it is not contemporary, taking place in London earlier in the century. Second, it is "glamorous, exciting, . . . spectacular, and sensational . . . and mysterious."

The structure of the play is romantic. First, it pays little attention to time, but is unified as to place. Second, the plot is built out of a series of highly surprising and exciting scenes, some of them causally related. These climaxes, revelations, and reverses are well planned and quite effective, but don't grow out of character and are not objective in their statement of the events.

Character.--All of the characters are "recognizable human types, but are removed from ordinary human experience." The Abbotts, the Edwards, and Mr. Rosenberg, while being very cruel and mean to Miss Herries, are, in a way, kind of charming in their manner and treatment of her. Nevertheless, they are a stock type of criminal, and are romantic. There is little attempt to make an objective analysis of the effect of the events on Miss Herries. The author is, rather interested in the events themselves. The characters become tools for the dramatist in his quest for thrills and excitement.

Language.--The dialogue in Kind Lady is in prose, and is realistic.

Theme.--The theme in Kind Lady, as in so many other mystery melodramas, is "moral justice." In the end Mary Herries (the "kind lady") "outwits" the criminals, and is saved.

Summary.--Kind Lady is romantic in principle, general characteristics, plot, character, and theme. It is realistic in language.

Summary of Seasonal Stylistic Characteristics

Principle and General Characteristics.--Most of the plays analyzed from the 1934-35 season are, in principle, romantic. Nine of the seventeen serious plays, 53%, display this characteristic as their overall stylistic attitude and point of views. The majority of these are of the "secondhand" type of modern, romantic melodramas. They are "escapist" in nature, their guiding idea being excitement, thrills, suspense, and emotionality.

The plays which fall into this category are Dodsworth, Small Miracle, Merrily We Roll Along, Dark Victory, Gold Eagle Guy, The Old Maid, Ceiling Zero, and Kind Lady.

The only play which is romantic in principle and not of the "secondhand" type of melodrama is Valley Forge. This play is of the historical type, going back in history to depict an event, and to color it with emotion and sentiment.

The principle next most often prevalent in the plays is that of Realism. Six of the seventeen plays are realistic in principle. These exhibit qualities of an honest concern for contemporary human motives, character, and society. The plays in this category are Judgment Day, The First Legion, The Children's Hour, Awake and Sing, The Black Pit, and Till the Day I Die. All but The First Legion and The Children's Hour belong to the so-called "proletarian drama" or "agit-prop" plays. Their concern is for depicting social, political, or economic maladjustments in society.

Of the remaining two plays, one is expressionistic and one is symbolic in principle and general characteristics. The symbolic

drama is The Petrified Forest; and the expressionistic play is Waiting for Lefty. The latter play is expressionistic of the Activist form, embodying a certain Messianic or social renewal principle.

Plot.--The overwhelming majority of plays utilize realistic subject material for their plots. Eleven plays are of this type, the remaining six using romantic material. The realistic characteristic most often found in the material is contemporary situations and events within the probable everyday experiences of the audience.

Romanticism is the most characteristic dramatic technique in the seventeen plays. Ten of the plays are of this type chiefly because of the emphasis placed upon action, excitement, illogical and emotional events and scenes, and thrills at the expense of an objective study of character and motives. They are loose in structure, do not attempt to keep the unities of time and place, and are not economical in their shifts of locale. The plays in this category are Dodsworth, Small Miracle, Dark Victory, Gold Eagle Guy, Valley Forge, The Old Maid, Till the Day I Die, Ceiling Zero, and Kind Lady.

Three plays appear realistic in technique. These are tightly knit, economical in shifts of time and place, and place a great deal of emphasis on character development, environment as a motivating factor, and illusionism. These plays are Judgment Day, The First Legion, and The Children's Hour.

Two plays are expressionistic in dramatic technique, Merrily We Roll Along, and Waiting for Lefty. Rounding out the list is The Petrified Forest which is symbolic, and Awake and Sing which is naturalistic.

Character.--Again Romanticism dominates as nine of this season's

plays utilize characters who are essentially romantic. These appear in the mystery melodrama type of plays in which, for the sake of expediency, the dramatists utilize recognizable stage types. There is little concern for a study of motives or the effect of environment on actions and decisions.

The next character trait most often found in the plays is Realism. Five plays use characters in which the psychology, motives, and effects of environment are stressed. These plays are Judgment Day, The First Legion, The Children's Hour, Awake and Sing, The Black Pit, and Waiting for Lefty.

The remaining two plays are Till the Day I Die, which exhibits strong naturalistic traits in the development of the characters; and The Petrified Forest in which the characters are symbolic.

Language.--The overwhelming style in the dialogue is Realism. Twelve of the seventeen plays are written in prose, and natural conversation.

Only one play used verse, and that was Valley Forge. This is a romantic characteristic. Three plays, however, used dialogue which is characteristic of Naturalism. These plays are Dodsworth, Awake and Sing, and The Black Pit. Only Waiting for Lefty used expressionistic language.

Theme.--There is an equal division between realistic and romantic themes in the plays of the 1934-35 season. Of the seventeen plays, eight are realistic and eight are romantic. The realistic themes usually deal with contemporary social, political, or economic problems. They can be generally labeled as proletarian drama. The romantic themes are of the "secondhand" type -- escape, emotionality, passion, and moral justice.

Conclusions.--The 1934-35 season was an eclectic season as far as style of drama is concerned. Of the seventeen serious plays which ran over fifty performances, only four plays are written in one style as demonstrated by principle, general characteristics, and the form elements. These are Judgment Day, which is realistic; The First Legion, realistic; The Children's Hour, realistic, and Valley Forge which is romantic. All of the other plays combine stylistic characteristics.

Further, if any trend can be seen in the season, it is that most plays exhibit characteristics of Realism or Romanticism.

In summary of the 1934-35 season the following conclusions are reached: (1) few plays are written in only one style, but are rather composites of various stylistic manifestations in form elements; (2) Realism and Romanticism dominate the stylistic characteristics; and, (3) except for the characteristic of language, which is generally realistic (it is found in 70% of the total language characteristics), Romanticism dominates all stylistic characteristics.

CHAPTER XII

THE 1937-38 SEASON

The purpose of this chapter is to describe dramatic style in successful, serious drama written for the professional New York stage during the 1937-38 theatrical season, June 15, 1937, to June 18, 1938. The procedure for the analysis of each play is the same as it was for the preceding two years (see Chapter X).

One hundred and five plays opened this season, thirty-six less than the 1934-35 season, and one hundred and two less than in the 1931-32 season. Of these, forty-four plays were comedies, fifteen were musicals, and forty-six were serious plays. Out of the forty-six serious plays, thirty-three were first-run productions; only eight ran over fifty performances. The average length of run of those which were under fifty performances was thirteen performances.

According to the established criteria (see Chapter I), the following eight plays will be studied for the year 1937-38. They will be considered in this chapter, as they opened, in the following order:

1. Many Mansions, by Jules E. and Eckert Goodman.
2. Golden Boy, by Clifford Odets.
3. Of Mice and Men, by John Steinbeck.
4. Our Town, by Thornton Wilder.
5. All the Living, by Hardie Albright.

6. One-Third of a Nation, by Arthur Arent.
7. Haiti, by William DuBois.
8. Prologue to Glory, by E. P. Conkle.

Many Mansions

Synopsis.--Peter Brent, hearkening to an inner urge for service in the church, overrides the objections of his family, his fiancée, Joan Hollis, and his local minister, Roger Crandall, and studies for the ministry. His disillusionment begins with the discovery that his fellow divinity students are compromising with the flesh and the devil. As a curate he is discouraged when he would interest young people in the church, is disciplined when he tries to save an innocent girl caught in bad company from arrest, and is finally brought before the bishops and unfrocked for his rebellious acts, but not until he has played the compromising churchmen for their hypocrisies.

Principle and General Characteristics.--Jules Goodman and his son, Eckert, attempt a realistic picture of a contemporary psychological conflict and social problem in Many Mansions. It is, then, realistic in principle, specifically because it "places emphasis upon selectivity and a reproduction of human motives and character," and because of the importance of environment as an element of human experience. Essentially, the play objectively examines, in a realistic manner, the motives, drives, and psychological conflict in Brent as he faces problem after problem in his attempt at the service of God. It also comments and criticizes the conservative position of the clergy in organized religion.

The resultant general characteristics of Many Mansions are also

realistic. First, there is the characteristic of "enlightenment." This is an attempt by a dramatist to inform the audience of certain situations in society which he believes need correcting, or at least need serious consideration. In this case it is the position of the conservative leaders of organized religion which the Goodman's comment upon. They are careful not to name any specific religious group, but make their play applicable to all Protestant groups, and to Catholics.

A second realistic general characteristic of Many Mansions is the "concern for contemporary life." And finally, the realistic emphasis upon character is characteristic of this play. The conflict and religious comment is demonstrated through the trials of the protagonist, Brent.

Form Elements

Plot.--The subject matter for Many Mansions is realistic. The situation is contemporary, and the material for the conflict is a current social problem and an individual's personal psychological problem. The social institution under investigation is organized religion, and the psychological problems are Brent's conflicts with his vocation on the one hand, and outside environmental pressures on the other hand. After he once makes his decision, the conflict is between his vocation and the examples and attitudes of his fellow clergy members.

The structure of Many Mansions is romantic. It is "loose in . . . construction and . . . free in . . . [its] use of elapsed time and shifts of place." The Goodmans exercise a romantic freedom in their selection and presentation of the material in this play. There are twelve shifts of place in the score of years covered by the plot.

In addition, the play is written in "a chronological structure and many scenes." In the two acts of Many Mansions there are fifteen scenes. Act one follows Brent from his initial decision through the seminary where he becomes disillusioned with the type of men who are seminarians, to his ordination. In the second act he attempts to help the girl from being jailed; his conservative superiors unfrock him; and he tells off the church for its hypocritical positions. There is no attempt at a compression of events, as the fifteen scenes and the early point of attack attest to.

Character.--The majority of the character traits in Many Mansions are realistic. First, some characters are "representative," and all "are normal to the contemporary background." Examples of representative characters are Joan and Rev. Crandall, and Bishop Jordan. Their positions and arguments are fully representative of larger positions and more universally applicable.

Second, even though there are twenty-nine characters, most of them are shown in considerable detail and with some psychological insight. We really get to know them more than just by description. The characterizations of Edgar, Mrs. Brent, Martha, and Joan, in the first act, for instance, shows us more than just statements of positions. Their conflict with Peter is more than just a surface statement of opposing ideas, it is an argumentative, progressive scene in which the motives and drives of each side are dramatically more important and revealing. The same can be said of scenes two and seven, in Rev. Crandall's study, where the conflict is a personal one implying motives, personal convictions, and social implications rather than just exciting scenes. Again, the general characteristic

of the importance of individual characters is seen.

Language.--The dialogue is in prose, and is realistic.

Theme.--The theme of Many Mansions is realistic, as it stresses "current sociology, . . . religion, [and] psychology." The play is concerned with the struggle between liberal ideas of the church and organized religion, and the hopelessly conventionalized forces of orthodox Christianity. It calls for a liberalizing of the church and its heirarchy -- a cry not heeded until some thirty years later. In addition, there is a concern for Peter Brent the man, as he fights for a cause and a deep belief, never giving up to the forces of his environment and the pressures from society and its institutions.

Summary.--Many Mansions exhibits realistic traits in principle, general characteristics, subject matter, character, language, and theme. It is romantic in plot structure.

Golden Boy

Synopsis.--Joe Bonapart is a moody young boy of Italian descent whom the people are inclined to laugh at because of his "cockeyed" ideas. At heart he is a musician, and he has a real talent for the violin, but he is torn between that feeling of artistic endeavour and making money as a prize-fighter. He chooses the latter, and becomes quite good. He meets and falls in love with Lorna Moon, the mistress of Tom Moody, his manager. Even though she loves Joe and gives him courage in his fighting profession, she can't leave Tom because he needs her. After each fight Joe becomes richer and more brutal, until finally, as a champion, he kills an opponent in

the ring. Both his hands are now broken, and so is his spirit. He realizes now that his ring victories and his success in the sports world are all hollow and meaningless, and that he had turned his back on the only real happiness he would ever have known -- the life of a musician. Not even Lorna can now lift him from despair. Together they drive to "find some city where poverty's no shame -- where music is no crime! -- where there's no war in the streets -- where a man is glad to be himself."¹ In the last scene Joe's father, and old Italian who wanted Joe to be a musician, and Joe's manager are arguing over Joe's future when a phone call informs them that Joe and Lorna have been killed in an automobile accident.

Principle and General Characteristics.--Odets' hit of the 1937-38 Season is realistic in principle. The early draft of the play carried the subtitle, "A Modern Allegory," referring to the socially desirable way of life and the socially undesirable way as seen in the story of Joe Bonaparte who loved music and beauty but became a killer instead. It is realistic in that it shows a deep concern for society and the individuals whose motives, drives, and inner life make the world a better or worse place in which to live.

The general characteristics of Golden Boy are its humanitarian concern and its comment upon the theory that men are partially products of social pressures. Further, the play focuses its attention upon character, and the inner drives and motives of a central protagonist, Joe, who is torn between two strong drives for self-satisfaction. A final general characteristic is the illusionistic technique in the

¹Clifford Odets, "Golden Boy," in Gassner, ed., Treasury of the Theatre, II, p. 980.

portrayal of a contemporary problem. This later point of the "contemporary problem" is social in nature. The play demonstrates that the "golden boy" becomes a prize-fighter in order to become free of the scorn attached to being an insignificant member of an underprivileged minority group.

Plot.--The subject matter for Golden Boy is realistic. Odets draws upon broadly familiar, contemporary, American material. It involves the sporting world and the world of a poverty stricken minority group in the slums of New York City where social pressures and environment are largely responsible for the actions of its members.

In structure Golden Boy exhibits mostly characteristics of Romanticism. It is episodic, and not economical in its shifts of scenes or elapsed time. It follows the rise and destruction of the protagonist throughout a year and one-half of his life in twelve scenes and six changes of locale. There is a unity in the progression of the play, however, it is a unity of thematic progression, character interest, and visual action. Odets, by using this loose romantic technique, shows us much more action than he usually does in his social dramas.

Character.--Joe and Lorna, the two central characters, are generally realistically drawn. They are "contemporary," "complex," and "composites of varying and contradictory impulses." As illustrative of the latter, Joe is torn between his artistic impulse and the desire to make money and be a material success. Lorna, too, has her conflict -- the spine of her character is "help others," and she is torn between the need to help Joe and Moody.

While there are these realistic traits, there also appears to be

some traces of naturalistic characteristics in the character development of the central figures. In examining the progression of the play there seems to be an "immutable" relationship between their actions and destiny in relation to their environment. Joe is, after all, somewhat determined by the social pressures around him to turn from a sensitive, artistic soul to a brutal, materialistic killer. While society did not create the exploitation of his skill in boxing, it did, in a way, force him to choose prize-fighting in order to escape his economic and social status. However, more important to the play is the psychological drama within Joe, Lorna, and Moody. Their drives and desires are realistically conceived as the central conflict. They are dynamic; they assert themselves, regardless of the argument, and are sharply defined complex individuals. All this makes them more than just pawns of society.

In summary, Odets' characters are realistic, although there is a hint of naturalistic determinism in Joe.

Language.--Odets' language in Golden Boy is realistic. It is prose, life-like, and employs a suggestion of dialect.

Theme.--Odets displays a realistic concern for two contemporary ways of life -- the creative or spiritual as opposed to the materialistic. It is Golden Boy's thesis that our materialistic society diverts its members from satisfying their more human, spiritual needs and desires. A further, second, contemporary thematic concern, which is naturalistic, is found in Joe's motivation for turning from the violin to prize-fighting -- as a means of freeing himself from the taint of being a "nobody" -- a poor, insignificant member of a minority group without material success or fame.

Summary.--Golden Boy is realistic in principle, general characteristics, subject matter, character, language, and theme. It is romantic in plot structure, and has hints of Naturalism in character and theme.

Of Mice and Men

Synopsis.--Steinbeck tells the pathetic story of two migratory farm laborers, George and Lennie, who, together, are attempting to save up enough money to buy a piece of land of their own. "Lennie is a feeble-minded giant, happy when permitted to stroke the soft, furry back of a mouse or puppy, disconsolate when his heavy hand has crushed it. He is totally dependent on his intelligent, good-natured George, who always pulls him out of trouble. Recently they have been forced to flee because Lennie had frightened a girl when trying to fondle her silken dress. At their new job they come close to buying a couple of acres when Candy, an old cripple, offers to pitch in his savings. Soon they will have enough money, if only Lennie can keep away from the Boss' mean belligerent son, Curley, and from Curley's pretty, coquettish wife. It cannot be. Curley's wife provokes Lennie into stroking her hair, then screams in a sudden panic, and Lennie, attempting to quiet her, breaks her neck. When Curley and his men set out after Lennie, George kills his friend to prevent him from being lynched."²

Principles and General Characteristics.--If vice and virtue are products like sugar and vitriol, then George and Lennie, despite

²Shank, p. 360.

any human feelings given them in the play, are governed by a like determinism. In this sense, Of Mice and Men is naturalistic in principle. The essential principle of Naturalism which is found in this play is the deterministic view that "surroundings . . . determine character." Steinbeck creates two characters, Lennie and George, who have a dream of escaping the sordid, economically depressing environment of the itinerant farm laborer of the 1930's. But it is a dream never to be fulfilled because of the defective nature of their social surroundings. Furthermore, Lennie has a hereditary defect from which it is impossible for him to free himself.

There are two general characteristics of Naturalism evident in Of Mice and Men. The first is the application to human life on stage of Emile Zola's principles of scientific determinism. No matter how hard they struggle, and no matter how bright the future looks at one time, George and Lennie are destined to get in trouble and become destroyed by the type of people who surround them and by Lennie's built-in mental defect.

Plot.--The subject matter for plots in Naturalism "are usually brutal, morbid, pessimistic, and dwell upon vice, the squalor of the poor, and misery." The atmosphere surrounding the migratory farm workers as depicted by Steinbeck is brutal, pessimistic, and miserable. The key word to the classification of this material as Naturalism is "dwell." Steinbeck constantly dwells upon the above atmosphere. The bunkhouse conversation between Candy and George, for example, points up the brutal existence of these men; and the depiction of the working conditions which make bright futures nonrealizable is a further example of the constant morbid atmosphere Steinbeck chooses

as his material. And finally, what could be more pessimistic than the final scene when George must put an end to the life of Lennie?

The structure of the play has characteristics of Realism. The plot action centers around George and Lennie and their futile struggle against what fate has determined for people of their background and social level, and is pared down to a single crisis in their life. The structure is relatively compact, in three acts, and is "economical in its shift of time and place." Further, Steinbeck uses a single plot and reduces theatrical conventions to a minimum in order to emphasize illusionism.

Character.--It is the characters who are of particular interest in Of Mice and Men. The whole emphasis of the play is upon George and Lennie and the brutal environment which destroys them. In this sense they are naturalistic. In addition, they are all from the lower classes of society, except the Boss, and their predominant predicament in life and their destiny is determined for them by their environment. This can be seen in the characters of George, Lennie, Crooks, the negro stable buck who is isolated because of his racial status, and the workers, Carlson, Whit, and Candy.

Language.--Steinbeck created quite a stir with his dialogue in Of Mice and Men in 1937, somewhat as Who's Afraid of Virginia Wolf does today. The profanity is, though, realistic prose in the manner of the dialogue as it would be spoken by the characters.

Theme.--The dominant theme in Of Mice and Men is the lack of any hope of escape for the feeble-minded Lennie and his companion, George. Because of a defective social structure and the cruelty of



life, the overall emotion is one of pessimism and, hence, naturalistic.

Summary.--Of Mice and Men is naturalistic in principle, general characteristics, subject matter, character, and theme. It is realistic in structure and language.

Our Town

Synopsis.--The story of life, death, and the hereafter as experienced by the citizens of Grover's Corners, New Hampshire, is told in an episodic fashion by a "stage manager"-narrator and centers around two families, the Gibbs' and Webb's. In the first act we are introduced to the two families. Dr. Gibbs is the town physician, and lives with his wife, his sixteen year old son, George, and his eleven year old daughter, Rebecca. Mr. Webb is the publisher and editor of the Grover's Corners Sentinel. He lives with his wife, his sixteen year old daughter, Emily, and his son, Wally. Quickly Mr. Wilder focuses his attention upon the lives of Emily Webb and George Gibbs as we see them talk to each other from their respective windows. We follow them through high school together, falling in love over sodas at the corner drug store, to their marriage in act two. In the third act, nine years after their wedding, Emily dies while giving birth to her second child. At the funeral the stage manager tells Emily that she can relive any day of her choice. She chooses her twelfth birthday. As that day progresses she learns how painful a return to the living can be when one walks among those for whom the beauties of life are taken for granted. When will people understand, she wonders, Wilder's answer is: only when they are dead and have seen life and the universe in its totality.

Principle and General Characteristics.--The essential principle behind Our Town is romantic. It is summed up in a letter to Jane Crofut, of Our Town. On the envelope it says: Jane Crofut; The Crofut Farm; Grover's Corners; Sutton County; New Hampshire; United States of America; Continent of North America; Western Hemisphere; the Earth; the Solar System; the Universe; the Mind of God. In this sense it is a purely romantic play, having as its principle the place of the individual concept in the totality of the Universe. And that place, according to Wilder's play, is that "everything in existence is a part of everything else."

The general characteristics of Our Town are romantic. They are a tendency away from actuality, a depiction of the strange, and a concern for nature and its process.

The tendency away from actuality is illustrated by the theatricalist, nonillusionistic dramatic technique by which it attempts to project the play's content frankly and directly to the audience without pretending that they are not watching a play. There is no scenery; the narrator creates and dissolves the scenes, helps set up all stage props, and even takes parts occasionally. Further examples of this tendency is the use of dead people, past and future events, and direct address to the audience.

Many of the above techniques are not romantic, but Epic, and will be discussed later under the proper form elements. Even so, the overall tendency is toward a romantic depiction of the strange, a concern for nature, and a tendency away from actuality in material and theatrical techniques.

Plot.--Life, death, and the hereafter as experienced by the

people of Grover's Corners, New Hampshire, around the turn of the century is the subject matter of Our Town. This material, as it is presented, is so broad in scope, so "exotic," "curious," and "strange" that it is able to be defined only as the life in life. This, and the role played by nature in the story, makes the overall characteristics of the material romantic.

In structure there are romantic, epic, and expressionistic tendencies in Our Town.

The first romantic characteristic evident is the "loose construction" and the freedom in the use of elapsed time and shifts in place. There are over a dozen scenes, most taking place in Grover's Corners, but some in "eternity." Another overlapping characteristic is the "chronological structure and many scenes." And a final romantic characteristic is the employment of "prologues and epilogues." The stage manager's opening and closing monologues serve this function.

The Epic plot characteristics are: (1) audience involvement, (2) direct address to the audience, and (3) narration as the principle means of moving the plot. In the first act Professor Willard, of "our University," speaks to the audience and receives replies and questions from audience "members." The stage manager serves as the narrator, which is common to epic plots. In addition, the whole tone of the structure and the use of scenes not causally related is Epic.

The expressionistic technique appears in the distorted picture of reality presented in the third act graveyard scene. Depicting the dead along with the living and the dream-like device of allowing Emily to relive a day in her past are illustrations of this expressionistic distortion of reality.

In summary, the plot technique of Our Town borrows techniques

from Romanticism, Epic, and Expressionism. It is essentially through these techniques that the play becomes theatrical and non-illusionistic.

Character.--As in plot structure, the characters in Our Town are a composite of various stylistic traits, this time of Realism, Epic, and Expressionism.

Expressionistic traits appear in Wilder's depiction of character mixed with a highly selective form of Realism. First, he endows most of the characters with a certain amount of realistic detail. For instance, they are normal to the contemporary background. Wilder makes much of the town atmosphere and environment in the development of the characters. Most of the people, he says, are products of Grover's Corners. They have backgrounds, and psychological problems typical of this town, U.S.A. After establishing much of this, Wilder then proceeds to strip them of that realistic detail -- selecting moments (many abstractly) in their lives to project to the audience. He creates characters, uses characters who have died, and observes and comments upon them in a totally un-realistic manner. All that we are allowed to see is what the stage manager selects for us in order to illustrate certain points in the description of the life and death of the people in Grover's Corners.

This leads to one of the epic character traits, the use of characters in an obvious attempt to project the theme of the play. But the major epic characteristic is the fragmentation of character into actor, commentator, and character. The stage manager, Professor, and Dr. Gibbs illustrate this technique.

In summary, the style of the characters in Our Town is eclectic -- a mixture of realistic, epic, and expressionistic techniques. This,

again, adds to the theatrical, un-illusionistic approach to the play.

Language.--Romantic, epic, expressionistic, and realistic devices are evident in the language of Our Town.

Wilder uses direct address, choral chant (the dead people in the third act), asides, monologues, and actual illusionistic conversations. This mixture of the illusionistic language of Realism with the highly non-illusionistic devices of Romanticism, Epic, and Expressionism again emphasizes the eclectic, and theatrical nature of Our Town.

Theme.--The theme of Our Town is romantic. The concept that everything in the universe of creation is somehow inter-penetrated by the spirit; that all exists ultimately in some order in "the mind of God" is romantic in nature. Wilder does not preach about social problems or conditions; he is not out after reform; he is not didactic. He is merely attempting to picture the joys of nature and the process of human life and the way of the world. This type of concern is Romantic.

Summary.--Our Town is romantic in principle, general characteristics, subject matter, and theme. In structure, character and language it exhibits characteristics of Romanticism, Expressionism, Realism, and Epic. The devices of these latter styles tend to make the play anti-illusionistic -- highly theatrical.

All the Living

Synopsis.--All the Living is the story of a group of doctors, nurses, and patients within a State Hospital for the mentally ill. It is headed by Dr. Burns, the Superintendent, a hard, strict,

politically minded man who has charge of three thousand patients, very little money, few qualified assistants, and no new, liberal ideas on treatment for the mentally ill. Dr. Gilbert Kromer, a staff member, has been working on a formula of "Sulfer X" which he believes will cure Dementia Praecox. Dr. Burns is adamant about not experimenting on humans, so Kromer has been working with rabbits in his laboratory. He has the help and confidence of Miss Ann Stalling, a nurse with whom he is in love, in his so far vain efforts to get his paper published. Into this situation enters the new, idealistic, and liberal Doctor John Merritt. He becomes taken with Kromer's theory, and begins experimenting with the drug on a patient, a young boy named Alec Jenkins who hasn't spoken in years. During the progress of the play Merritt falls in love with Ann, and in the end, when Kromer has begun to doubt his theory, and his own sanity, Merritt gives Alec a final dose of "Sulfer X" in front of the shocked Superintendent and the staff. Alec speaks. Merritt has saved Kromer, and proved the theory. He leaves the hospital, and in the last scene Kromer sacrifices his prior claim on Ann so that she can leave with Merritt. Kromer stays to continue his research.

Principle and General Characteristics.--All the Living is an impressive humanitarian documentary of life in hospitals for the insane. Not only does it attempt an objective, somewhat "preachy" look at asylum conditions (from the point of view of the patients), but it also examines the responsibilities, duties, motives, and conditions of the administrators and doctors who work under handicaps in this anonymous hospital. And yet, with all of this didactic stress, Albright manages to come up with a very dramatic and interesting

story of human character. In these respects the play is realistic in principle.

Albright documents conditions under which this hospital is operated. It is a city with, as Merritt puts it, dozens of buildings and miles of land set aside for dead people who walk -- the mistakes and corpses that society wants to forget. There is little money for new construction, or help, or research into better treatment. What money is available is used to build buildings to house the ill, rather than to treat them. There are three thousand patients here, and yet only four resident physicians -- no time for individual care or help. These are the conditions Albright brings to the attention of society.

The general characteristics of the play are also realistic. First, there is a concern for contemporary life -- a desire to "enlighten and emancipate the human condition by presenting contemporary arguments and critically examining contemporary issues." A second realistic characteristic is a selective, illusionistic overall technique of presenting the issues and human motives. And a third, is the emphasis upon character development in the conflict.

Plot.--The main subject of Albright's play is realistic. It is from contemporary life, and concerns current social problems. The material is a psychological study of character motives and character relationships of Kromer, Burns, Merritt, and Stalling. There is also a love story woven throughout the play, and much material reflecting the sub-par conditions at the hospital.

The plot structure is also realistic. It is compact, carefully written, and the exposition is integrated well into the rising action. In addition the late point of attack creates a "retrospective" method

of dramaturgy. An illustration of this is the large amount of retrospective material woven into the plot concerning the former relationship between Kromer and Merritt, the initial action which prompted Kromer to undertake psychiatry, and the earlier work and experimentation with "Sulfer X."

A final realistic characteristic of the plot technique is the selective technique and the "attempt to reduce theatrical convention to a minimum in order to be as illusionistic as possible."

Brief mention ought to be made about the use of scenes which have little to do with the plot and story, but which do operate to point up the conditions of the patients and help to provide the everyday atmosphere of the hospital. Several examples of this type of scene are the first act scene with patient Mrs. Selks, and her husband; and the scene at the end of the act, a much longer one, in which we see patient trouble. This is with Hazel, Stalling, Gimmie, Keys, Preacher, etc. These two scenes, and several others like them give the audience an opportunity to see the problems of the hospital and to give the atmosphere of a hospital for the mentally ill. This technique is used sparingly, somewhat like the same technique used in Detective Story, and breaks up the plot line enough to ease tension and recall some of the social problems involved in the operation of the hospital.

Character.--The central characters are realistic. They are contemporary composites of varying psychological impulses, and are a natural part of their environment. Kromer, Merritt, Stalling, and Burns are complex characters and are studied as to motives, drives, and psychological complexities. Kromer, for instance, has a complex

nature. He had always wanted to be a somebody, and when he realized at a young age that he couldn't be an Olympic champion he turned to writing history. When that wasn't successful he took up medicine. When he wasn't satisfied with that he "created a kingdom" for himself in his laboratory. He treats others as though they were his subjects, picking friends who will treat him like a tin god. In the end he begins to have unreal images. Stalling and Merritt, too, have their inner problems.

The minor characters, the patients, are types in the manner of romantic melodramas. There is Gimmie, who goes around picking up useless papers and trash; and Adams, who imagines crows in his corn; Kate, who has delusions of being poisoned; Gardy, who sells the White House and certain air line companies; and many others who demonstrate the plight of the mentally ill and Albright's sympathy for the mentally ill.

Language.--The dialogue is in prose, and realistic.

Theme.--The theme of All the Living is realistic, and shows that devotion to a humanitarian cause, no matter what the obstacles are, is a duty of man. Specifically, it relates to the medical profession's duty to work for the betterment of patients, despite pressures from external sources. Albright also is concerned with conditions and the contemporary treatment of the insane.

Summary.--All the Living is realistic in principle, general characteristics, subject matter, structure, character, language, and theme. There is a tendency to utilize romantic characters in the minor roles of the patients.

One-Third of a Nation

Synopsis.--One-Third of a Nation was a production of the Federal Theatre Project of the WPA. It is a so-called "Living Newspaper" play. As such it has no plot involving a conflict affecting a character or set of characters. Instead there are a number of scenes and sub-scenes (episodes) all involving the theme, "What are we (the American people) going to do about inadequate housing?" The title and concept for the play comes from President Roosevelt's statement that one-third of the nation is ill-housed.

Since a synopsis of the "plot" is not really possible for this play, but in order to give the reader a general idea as to the nature of the play, three of the eighteen episodes are summarized in the following paragraphs.

Act I, Scene 4: "Looking Backward." The Little Man is shown searching for an apartment to live in. He is told that his chances are 3,600 to 1. Sub-scene A: "Why They Came -- Irish Family." An Irish family leaves a cottage, green grass, and the warm Ireland sun for America. They expect a great improvement here, but we find them in a one-room flat where they are outnumbered by the roaches, and the toilet is always stopped up. Sub-scene B: "What They Saw -- Steve and Joe." This scene shows Steve, Joe, and Mary living in mass confusion in a crowded alley-apartment. Joe and Mary leave at the end of this brief episode to steal some money which Mary's boss has hidden at the office. Sub-scene C: "What They Got -- Jewish Family." What they got from their American housing was cholera, tuberculosis, and spinal meningitis.

Act II, Scene 3: "What Price Housing?" This episode shows a well intentioned philanthropist who begins to build housing to rent for seven or eight dollars. After taxes, mortgages, labor, building errors, and insurance the rent has tripled to twenty-five dollars.

Act II, Scene 5: "Looking Forward." This is the final scene in the play. It shows a Little Man who discovers that the \$526 million voted by Congress for housing will give New York City \$30 million to do a \$2 billion job. At the same time the military appropriations are over \$3 billion. The conclusion of these figures and the play is: "We're going to holler, and we're going to keep on hollering until they admit in Washington that it's just as important to keep a man alive as it is to kill him."

Principle and General Characteristics.--The essential idea behind the Federal Theatre Project's Living Newspaper production of One-Third of a Nation is an attempt to create a piece of didactic theatre which will aid in the instruction and reformation of society. It is further based upon the idea that through such instruction the audience will be able to form judgments and take action. These are specifically Epic principles.

The general characteristics of One-Third of a Nation are also those of the epic style: a didactic quality, and an anti-illusory treatment of form elements, and an attempt to be as faithful as possible to objective facts (Living Newspaper) by being objective, non-emotional, analytical, and documentary.

Plot.--The subject of One-Third of a Nation comes directly from a President Roosevelt's speech in which he claimed that one-third of our nation is ill-housed. From this, the production examines that

situation from 1705 to the present. There is no story line, no conflict, no real illusionistic scenes, no progression, but rather there are "various facets of . . . life in society" all demonstrating a social issue. This is characteristic of the epic style.

The technique is totally epic in construction. It is presentational, episodic, and lacks a plot; it uses "blackouts," audience involvement, film, and dances. The scenes are short, some are stenographic, and there are many of them. Finally, each scene is treated for itself instead of the usual practice of relating one scene to another. All of these techniques are epic.

Character.--The characters are also "drawn" in an epic, non-representational manner. There are over one-hundred roles possible in One-Third of a Nation. Most of them are fragmentations of characters as we usually experience them in drama -- sometimes they are seen as actors, sometimes as narrators, sometimes as commentators, and sometimes as characters or even audience members. They have no names, no psychological aspects, no realistic, particular individual traits. They are all representative composites of the Poor American, who for the past two hundred and fifty years has been unable to find decent housing. In summary, the characters in One-Third of a Nation "are used in an obvious manner to project the theme of the play."

Language.--The language in epic theatre carries the message of the play clearly and concretely; it is therefore fundamental and rarely ornamental. This is the nature of the use of language and oral communication in One-Third of a Nation. The specific techniques used are announcers, newspaper clippings, songs, titles, narration, soliloquies, direct address, projections on screens, and voices of inanimate things.

These are all characteristic of the epic theory of language communication.

Theme.--One-Third of a Nation exhibits the thematic concerns of the realistic and epic styles.

Because of the dominance of the epic style in principle, general characteristics, and the form elements of plot, character, and language there is a temptation to read into the element of theme a similar dominance. However, there are characteristics of realistic thematic concerns. Realistic themes depict a "deep concern for contemporary social problems" and "a sympathetic interest in the common man." Also, "social, political, and economic protest" is a thematic concern of Realism. All of these can be seen in the Living Newspaper production of the housing problem in the United States.

"The major theme of Epic theatre is that society is alterable," and social problems centering around "the misery of the lower classes" need to be changed. A further theme of the epic style is "the need to reform society." Again, all of these are concerns of One-Third of a Nation.

In conclusion, it can only be said that One-Third of a Nation exhibits realistic and epic themes.

Summary.--Arthur Arent's, and the Federal Theatre Project's, One-Third of a Nation is epic in principle, general characteristics, plot, character, and language. It is epic and realistic in theme.

Haiti

Synopsis.--Haiti is the second Federal Theatre Project play to top fifty performances during the 1937-38 season. This one deals

with the revolt of the Haitian natives under Christophe early in the Nineteenth Century. Henry Christophe, emperor of the Haitian domain, is forced to retreat into the mountains when the French invade and take over the island in 1802. The play picks up the story sometime later when the French have become weakened by tropical fever and internal dissensions. Christophe decides that it is now time for him to return, and his forces sweep down from the hills and force the French into the sea. In between there are some quite complex scenes and subplots of spying, intrigue, and a love story between a French girl and a Haitian soldier.

Principle and General Characteristics.--Haiti is an historical romance, its primary aim being the telling of the exciting, historical story of Haiti's fight for freedom from France in the early Nineteenth Century. Specifically, it involves the romantic principles of the reliance upon emotion, sentiment, and excitement; the inherent goodness of nature and man; and the political freedom of the individual.

The emotional and sentimental aspects of the play are best illustrated in the patriotic scenes in the middle of the first act, and toward the end of the third act. Nature and the course of human affairs is inherently right and just in giving victory to the righteous. There is never any doubt, despite the fact that the play must follow history, about who will be victorious. The only doubt or suspense which exists is in the love conflict.

The general characteristics of Haiti are: (1) "a tendency away from actuality which includes qualities of remoteness and escape;" and (2) "an insistence upon freedom and a corresponding rebellion." The remoteness is seen in the exotic setting, and the Haitian rebellion

against French colonial rule.

Plot.--The content of the play exhibits romantic characteristics. The story is, first, "glamorous, exciting, and admirable." The little intrigues during the second and third acts, the dilemma of Odette in not being able to decide to follow the head or the heart -- France or Haiti -- her father or her lover, and the thrilling scenes of final combat are illustrative of this characteristic. Second, in setting it is "exotic," and in situation "spectacular and sensational."

The structure is also romantic. First, it is "loose in construction" and "free in elapsed time." There is not a single, straight line plot toward the freedom of Christophe and the Haitian people. That would be uneventful. Instead there are spies, traitors, lovers, turncoats, and murderers involved, which lengthens the plot and makes it somewhat loose.

Second, there are two plots. Christophe and the French are involved primarily in one, and Odette, LeClerc, and Jacques are in the second. Odette, a French woman falls in love with Jacques, a Haitian. The conflict in this plot is between love and reason or love and duty. The primary question is, should Odette be loyal to her father and the French, or turn to her lover and aid the Haitians?

Those are the essential romantic characteristics of structure. Others which can be mentioned in support of the romantic assertion are the progression of the plot "by means of overheard conversations and actions beheld by concealed personages," and "thrills arising from remarkable situations."

Character.--The central characters, on both sides of the conflict, are romantic. They are, first, heroic, emotional, and exaggerated.

The exploits of Christophe are heroic; the decision of Odette is heroic; the lovers and father are emotional, especially the deep emotion in the scenes between Odette and her father. Second, they "represent the idealistic and imaginative side of man." Concerning the more minor characters as illustrative of this criteria, there are the servants, soliders, Phillipe, and Guy. The latter two who, in the carrying of messages, spying, and plain "James Bondish" type of intrigue, appear highly romantic and idealistic.

Language.--The dialogue is in prose, and realistic.

Theme.--There are several thematic concerns in Haiti, all of them generally romantic. These are: the "duty over love" theme; the freedom from situations of social disorder; "the romantic past;" and "the theme of political freedom and the rebellion against injustice, tyranny, and inequality."

Summary.--The story of Haiti's rebellion against French domination in the Federal Theatre Project play Haiti is romantic in principle, general characteristics, plot, character, and theme. It is realistic in language.

Prologue to Glory

Synopsis.--Prologue to Glory opens in a blackberry thicket near Tom Lincoln's farm in Illinois. Abe Lincoln, the twenty-two year old son, is reading aloud to his little friend, Denny. Reading, we learn, is what Abe likes most. From this introduction to Abraham Lincoln, we are shown a number of events in his early life. Scene two is in New Salem, at a junction of the street where the Rutledge Inn

stands. Here he meets Ann Rutledge after he wins a wrestling match. The next scene involves Abe as a clerk in Offut's store, and a warm, tender scene with Ann follows. At the end of the scene Ann gets Abe to speak the next night at a forum. The following scene is in the Forum Club where Abe, as a debator debates the question, "Resolved that bees are more valuable than ants." He wins, and announces "myself as candidate for Sangamon County, to the Legislature of the State of Illinois." The first scene in the second act ends as Abe goes off to the campaign -- his last good-by is to Ann. In scene three Ann dies, and Abe is emotionally very upset. He is, in fact, about to get rid of any plans for politics or law, for coupled with this blow is the fact that he lost the election. In the end, however, Abe decides to go to Springfield to make his way in politics. As the curtain falls, Abe is walking up the slope toward Springfield.

Principle and General Characteristics.--The principle and guiding idea behind Prologue to Glory is romantic. Its purpose is a glorification of the American past, in particular the figure of Abraham Lincoln. It aims at showing a little publicized part of Lincoln's life as a youth in his early twenties, and how those years were, so to speak, the "prologue" to his public life. It doesn't so much examine his character and motives as a leader and statesman as it does present some of the romanticized "legends" about the youth of this former president. It is, in this sense, an emotional, sensational, and somewhat patriotic play. And yet, as an historical play, it reveals sympathetically the homeliness, simplicity, and sincerity of the people and the times.

As an historical romance the general characteristics of the

play are a quality of "remoteness and escape" into the glories of the past, an emphasis upon the emotional and sentimental, and a depiction of the historically "particular and picturesque."

Plot.--The subject matter is also romantic. Conkle chose the early life of Abraham Lincoln for his material. Prologue to Glory depicts Lincoln's early days from his boyhood on his father's farm to his departure for Springfield. During the two acts the audience watches Abe the railsplitter, the strong wrestler, the reader, the speaker and debator, the beloved of Ann Rutledge, the store clerk, and the man who loses his love and his first election. It is glamorous, admirable, exotic, and remote -- characteristic of romantic material.

The large scope of this type of material obviously necessitates a similar romantic scope in technique. This is the case with Prologue to Glory. It is "loose in construction and . . . free in its use of elapsed time and shifts in place." There are eight scenes in eight different locales, and the progression is episodic, selecting particular events and actions to show the early Lincoln life.

Character.--There are over sixty characters in Prologue to Glory, none of them developed in any great detail except Ann and Lincoln. The whole play centers around Abe, and in each scene he is the central character, developed through his actions and "speeches." By the very nature of his character he is removed from our ordinary experience, exalted, and put on an idealistic and imaginary plane above the common man. It is essentially a romantic picture. As to the remaining characters, they are general "types" as in "secondhand" Romanticism. Examples of these characters are Anderson, the wrestler,

Denny, Abe's friend, his Aunt Polly, and his father.

Language.--Conkle's dialogue is prose, and is realistic.

Theme.--One of the characteristics of romantic themes is that they "turn to . . . the romantic past." They may have an aspect "of the escapist theme of nostalgia . . . including the desire to avoid the present." These are clearly present in Conkle's play of Abraham Lincoln.

Summary.--Prologue to Glory is romantic in principle, general characteristics, plot, material, character, and theme. It is realistic in language.

Summary of Seasonal Stylistic Characteristics

Principle and General Characteristics.--There is an equal division between Realism and Romanticism as the dominant style in principle and general characteristics during the 1937-38 season. Out of the eight plays which ran over fifty performances, three exhibit characteristics of Realism, and three exhibit characteristics of Romanticism in principle.

Many Mansions, Golden Boy, and All the Living are realistic in their overall idea and point of view. All three attempt a selective reproduction of contemporary life, problems, and character motives and drives. They are concerned with a portrait of actual life in some of its selective, inner ramifications. Many Mansions, for instance, deals with organized religion and human inner conflict; Golden Boy with human conflict and social pressures; and All the Living with medical responsibility and the contemporary problem of the rehabilitation of the mentally ill.

The general characteristics of these plays are also realistic. They exhibit the quality of "concern for an honest portrayal of contemporary life, its problems, people, and solutions." They are, in that sense, "humanitarian."

The three plays which are romantic in principle and general characteristics are Our Town, Haiti, and Prologue to Glory. The latter two are historical romances which attempt to reproduce events, characters, and an atmosphere of some historical period. Our Town is romantic in the sense that it examines individual man's place in the totality of the Universe and nature.

The general characteristics exhibited by these three plays are also romantic. They have a tendency away from actuality which includes qualities of remoteness and escape; an emphasis upon emotionality and subjectivity; and a predilection for depicting the particular and the strange.

The two remaining plays are naturalistic and epic in principle and general characteristics. Of Mice and Men is the naturalistic play, primarily because of the importance it places upon heredity and environment as being determinants in man's destiny, and One-Third of a Nation is epic in principle.

In summary, six out of the eight plays are equally divided between Realism and Romanticism in principle and general characteristics. Only one play is epic, and one is naturalistic in this area of stylistic identification.

Plot.--In subject matter the exact same division occurs as it does in principle, i.e., three are realistic and three are romantic, one is epic, and one is naturalistic. However, in structure Romanticism dominates.

The same three plays which were realistic in principle and general characteristics are realistic in subject matter. These are Many Mansions, Golden Boy, and All the Living. Likewise, the material in Our Town, Haiti, and Prologue to Glory is romantic, and in Of Mice and Men it is naturalistic, and in One-Third of a Nation it is epic.

In structure Romanticism is evident in 54% of the total structural characteristics of the eight plays. Many Mansions, Haiti, Golden Boy, and Prologue to Glory are fully romantic in structure, while Our Town exhibits some characteristics of romantic structure, along with characteristics of Epic and Expressionism. The principle romantic structural traits found in the four plays are a loose structure, lack of compression, an early point of attack, and a disregard for economy in shifts of time and place.

Two of the eight plays (25%) are realistic in structure. These are Of Mice and Men and All the Living. The remaining play, One-Third of a Nation, is epic in structure.

In summary, three plays use realistic material, three use romantic material, and one each uses epic and naturalistic material. In structure Romanticism appears in 54% of the total stylistic manifestations of structure. The remaining styles and their percentage of occurrence in the form element of structure are: Realism, 25%; Epic, 16%; and Expressionism, 4%.

Character.--There is a widely divided occurrence of Realism, Romanticism, Naturalism, and Epic in the depiction of character in the plays read. Realistic character traits appear totally in Many Mansions and All the Living; partially in Golden Boy and Our Town. In Haiti and Prologue to Glory the general characteristics of character

are romantic. Naturalism appears as the dominant trait in Of Mice and Men, and partially in Golden Boy. One-Third of a Nation uses epic characters, and there are both epic and expressionistic characters in Our Town.

In summary, the following percentage of occurrence is evident in the form element of character for the 1937-38 season: Realism exists in 37% of the stylistic manifestations; Romanticism in 25%; Naturalism in 18%; Epic in 16%; and Expressionism in 4%.

Language.--Again, as in the previous season, the overwhelming majority of plays exhibit realistic characteristics of language. Out of the eight plays read this season, only One-Third of a Nation and Our Town have unrealistic language techniques. The former play uses essentially epic techniques, and Our Town uses epic, romantic, and expressionistic devices along with certain realistic traits.

Theme.--As in principle and general characteristics there is a dominance of Realism and Romanticism in the form element of theme. Realism appears as the dominant thematic pattern in Many Mansions and All the Living, and as one of the thematic concerns in Golden Boy and One-Third of a Nation -- Golden Boy is realistic and naturalistic, and One-Third of a Nation is realistic and epic. The themes of Our Town, Haiti, and Prologue to Glory are totally romantic. The remaining play, Of Mice and Men is naturalistic in theme.

The realistic themes involve contemporary social problems -- mental illness and state hospitals in All the Living, organized religion in Many Mansions, and inadequate housing in One-Third of a Nation. The romantic themes are essentially historical nostalgia and escape, as in Haiti and Prologue to Glory. In Our Town it is a fundamental

concern with nature and the place of the individual man in the scheme of the universe and nature.

Conclusions.--The 1937-38 season was an eclectic season as far as style in individual dramas is concerned. Only one play can be said to exhibit a consistency of style in all elements. That play is All the Living. All the other seven plays have characteristics of at least two styles in their form elements.

There are two trends which can be seen in this season. First, is the overall dominance of Realism and Romanticism in principle, general characteristics, and form elements.

A second trend which can be seen is the appearance of the Epic style in principle, general characteristics, and form elements. This is the first year that Epic techniques have been found in any significant amount in the plays. This is due this season to the plays One-Third of a Nation and Our Town, two anti-illusionistic plays which rely heavily on epic techniques for their non-illusionistic atmosphere.

In summary of the 1937-38 season the following conclusions are reached: (1) the vast majority of plays are eclectic, not being written in any one style, but rather appearing as a constellation of styles; (2) Realism and Romanticism dominate all of the stylistic manifestations by a three to four ratio; (3) except for the characteristic of language, which is generally realistic (it is found in 78% of the total language characteristics), Romanticism dominates all stylistic characteristics; and (4) Epic Theatre makes its appearance as a significant stylistic element.

CHAPTER XIII

THE 1940-41 SEASON

The purpose of this chapter is to describe dramatic style in successful, serious drama written for the professional New York stage during the 1940-41 theatrical season, June 18, 1940 to June 15, 1941. The procedure for the analysis of each play is the same as it was for the preceding three seasons.

Only seventy-one plays opened on Broadway during the 1940-41 season, which is thirty-four less than the 1937-38 season, and one hundred and thirty-six less than the 1931-32 season. Of the seventy-one plays which opened, thirty-seven were comedies, fourteen were musicals, and only twenty were serious. Of the twenty serious plays, fifteen were first-run productions; five ran over fifty performances. The average of those under fifty was eighteen performances.

According to the established criteria, the following five plays will be studied for the year 1940-41. They will be considered in this chapter, as they opened, in the following order:

1. Johnny Belinda, by Elmer Harris.
2. Big White Fog, by Theodore Ward.
3. Flight to the West, by Elmer Rice.
4. Native Son, by Paul Green and Richard Wright.
5. Watch on the Rhine, by Lillian Hellman.

Johnny Belinda

Synopsis.--The play is set in 1900 on an island in the Atlantic off the coast of Newfoundland. The story centers around the life of a lobster fishing community, and in particular one young girl who is deaf and dumb. Her name is Belinda McDonald, and according to her father "she was took down with a faver when about a year old"¹ and hasn't heard or talked since. Into the life of Belinda and the community comes Dr. Jack, who immediately becomes the only one to take pity on her. Eventually he teaches her to communicate in sign language, for which her father, Black McDonald, calls him "a worker of miracles." One of the young men of the community, Locky McCormick, rapes Belinda after a festival. After the child, Johnny, is born Dr. Jack decides to marry Belinda and take care of her and the baby, but before he can do that he must go to Montreal for a year or so to earn some money. While he is gone Locky and his wife, who have not been able to have any children of their own, get legal adoption papers for Johnny based on the belief that she is immoral and unfit to raise a child. As Locky is about to forcibly take the child from Belinda, she shoots and kills him and is arrested for murder. The final scene is the trial. Belinda, her father now dead, is assisted by Dr. Jack. The case is decided in her favor on a verdict of self-defense, and she is realeased in the custody of Dr. Jack. As the curtain closes she utters her first word, "John--ny." She and Dr. Jack depart hand-in-hand.

¹Elmer Harris, Johnny Belinda (New York: Dramatists Play Service, 1940), p. 22.

Principle and General Characteristics.--Johnny Belinda, which ran for 321 performances at the Belasco Theatre, is a romantic drama in principle. It is romantic for two reason. First, it promotes the concept of the inherent goodness of nature and man. Second, it is in the form of a romantic, "secondhand" melodrama, the emphasis being on emotion and sentiment.

The concept of the inherent goodness of nature and man can be illustrated by citing the conclusion and the faith that it shows in man's ability to judge goodness and evil without any physical, tangible evidence. There is no evidence available at the trial, either for or against Belinda. All that is known is that she did kill Locky. Consequently, the only way out for her is through a blind, optimistic faith in goodness somehow shining through her countenance. This it does, as Belinda and Dr. Jack make an honest, good impression on the judge. This type of philosophy is not realistic, but romantic.

The general characteristics, then, of the Harris play are a tendency away from actuality, including the qualities of remoteness and escape; and emphasis upon emotionality and subjectivity; and a concern for nature.

Plot.--The subject matter of Johnny Belinda is romantic. The play takes place in 1900 on an island off Newfoundland. The subject is the "picturesque" life of a remote lobster fishing community and in particular one young girl who is deaf and dumb. Into her life comes a doctor who teaches her to speak -- "a worker of miracles."

Illustrative of the above three characteristics is, first, that the play is remote in time, place, and subject matter. Second, the overall quality of the play is emotionality, not objectivity.

In comparison, for instance, to The Miracle Worker, which treats a similar problem, Johnny Belinda takes none of the objective looks at the problems of teaching mutes, training them, their need for love and discipline, or their instincts for communication. As a matter of fact we don't get to know anything at all about Belinda. We never know her feelings, her drives, her fears, her loves, or her problems. The play focuses its attention instead on the wrongs done this poor girl, how she is taken advantage of, the destiny of her child, and the honest, heroic love of Dr. Jack. It is an emphasis upon situation, not character, and an emphasis of emotion and sentiment, not objectivity.

The plot of Johnny Belinda is also romantic. It is episodic, loose in construction, has an early point of attack, and the emphasis is upon events and action rather than character drives and development. Johnny Belinda contains ten scenes with five shifts of locale. Mr. Harris doesn't even attempt to mention the time sequence, although a good estimate might be around two years. The center of interest is not on the character of Belinda or Dr. Jack, or even Johnny, whose name appears as the title. It is rather on the events which happen to them, which is a romanticism of the "secondhand" type. An illustration of this technique is the rape scene and the manner in which the effects of the scene are related to the characters in the play. The rape and pregnancy of Belinda is not revealed to the characters in the play until two scenes later. The delay is very effective in creating suspense. Another illustration is the immediate reaction of Black McDonald, Belinda's father, to the news. At once he is in a rage, attempting to beat the information out of her so that he may avenge this crime. Harris, in other words, chooses exciting, emotional events and scenes to dramatize, instead of character conflicts.

In summary, the dramatic technique is romantic because of the emphasis on thrills, excitement, and action.

Character.--The central characters in Johnny Belinda are romantic. Belinda, her infant son, her father, Dr. Jack, and Locky are the main characters in this melodrama. The romantic characteristics which they possess are: (1) they are removed from everyday life; (2) they are emotionally motivated; and (3) they are "commonplace."

First, the characters are removed from contemporary life. They live in 1900, in a far-off fishing village near Newfoundland. Second, their actions and reactions are always emotional, passionate, and extreme. Instances of this have been cited above, but others are Dr. Jack's "love at first sight" reaction to Belinda; Black McDonald's reaction to his daughter's pregnancy; Dr. Jack's reactions to the rumors in town that he is the father; and Stella and Locky's actions as they attempt to "steal" Johnny from Belinda.

A final characteristic concerns the minor characters, the townspeople. They are romantic in the sense of being "recognizable stage types." Locky is the tough bully who picks on anybody smaller than himself; Mrs. Lutz and Mrs. McKee are the gossips; Rev. Tidmarsh is the minister who always has a "tis better" or a quote from the Bible on his lips; Pacquet is the big, dumb, strong storeowner; and there are many more who fill up the town.

Language.--The dialogue in Johnny Belinda is in prose, contains some dialect suggestions, and is realistic.

Theme.--"Poetic justice" can be termed the theme of Johnny Belinda. After so many hard times, Belinda, in the last line, can now speak the

name of her child and live in happiness with Dr. Jack. The ennobling power of love can be seen as another of the thematic concerns of Harris.

Summary.--Johnny Belinda is romantic in principle, general characteristics, material, structure, character, and theme. It is realistic in its use of language.

Big White Fog

Synopsis.--The scene is the home of Victor Mason on Dearborn Street in Chicago during the 1920's. Victor is a well-educated Negro. He is also an idealist, and during the course of the first act he comes to believe that the only way out of the misery imposed upon his race in America by the white people is to build a Negro Republic in Africa. He invests his money in the scheme with Marcus Garvey, the leader of this movement. But fate and his minority position is too much for him. He loses all of his money and sinks lower into misery. His daughter becomes a prostitute, his son turns to communism, and his wife and mother-in-law turn against him. In the end he is killed by police as the authorities try to evict him from his home.

Principle and General Characteristics.--Big White Fog is a naturalistic drama in principle essentially because of its pessimistic, deterministic view of the life of the Negro in America. Because of the racial injustice perpetrated against him there is no opportunity for advancement or to build a life on hopes and dreams.

Even though the dominant view of life seems to be one of social determinism, there is also evident a note of Realism in principle and general characteristics. This is seen in the concern Ward shows in

contemporary man, his social problems, motives, drives, and hopes. The overall idea is deterministic, but the vehicle for that idea is a current social situation which the author presents with concern in the hopes of drawing attention to certain social maladjustments.

The general characteristics of Big White Fog are also both naturalistic and realistic. The naturalistic characteristics are an objective analysis of an aspect of human endeavor, and the application to the drama of Zola's principle of scientific determinism. It is the view of this play that Mason and his family were forced into destruction by their environmental and hereditary influences. The realistic general characteristics are a humanitarian concern for contemporary man and his socio-economic problems, and a selective illusionistic technique of dramatic presentation.

Plot.--The subject matter is realistic in Big White Fog. It is contemporary, places emphasis upon contemporary man's psychological drives and motives, and current social problems. Even though the play is set in Chicago during the years 1922-32, which is ten to fifteen years in the past, the essential conflict and problem presented is still contemporary in nature. It is not a problem which was prevalent only in the 1920's, but still exists in 1940 when the play was first produced. Because of this nature of the material, it is classified as realistic.

The technique of Big White Fog exhibits realistic and romantic characteristics. Realistically it demonstrates an economy in the depiction of locale, the entire action taking place in the Mason home in Chicago.

However, there appears to be more romantic traits than realistic ones.

First, it has an early point of attack. This necessitates a second romantic characteristic, the loose structure exhibited by the large number of events depicted over a ten year period. Third, Ward's technique then leads to a depiction of much of what realistically would be expository material.

In summary, the material is realistic in nature, and the structure exhibits essentially romantic characteristics.

Character.--The predominate traits in character portrayal in Big White Fog are naturalistic. First, the entire Mason family, Elen, Caroline, Philip, Wanda, Percy, and Victor are "subject to the deterministic laws of heredity and environment." There is no doubt that all of Victor's efforts to extricate his family and race from the oppression of the white majority will end in vain.

Wanda's turn to prostitution is caused by her environmental and economic predicament; Percy, in his rage at America's "democratic" attitude toward the Negro, turns to communism; and Victor's death at the final curtain is a fitting end to what lengths the white community and the power of the state will go to in order to persecute the Negroes. A second trait of Ward's characters is that they are from the lower class of society, socially, and economically.

Language.--The dialogue in Big White Fog is in prose, and is realistic.

Theme.--There are realistic and naturalistic thematic patterns evident in Big White Fog. The naturalistic theme is a "concern for the influence upon humanity of heredity and environment." In addition, the play is "pessimistic" since the Mason family which is "caught up

in . . . deterministic influences" has "no hope of escape."

The realistic thematic concern appears as "a humanitarian concern for contemporary man and society." While Ward offers no solution to the problem of the Negro in the city of Chicago, he does point out that the idealist (who today would be called "Black Nationalist") who believes that the Negro problem can be solved by a blind belief in a pure Negro State, does not have the true answer to the problem. The fact that the Negro is oppressed is enough for Ward to state.

Summary.--Big White Fog is naturalistic and realistic in principle, general characteristics, and theme. It is naturalistic in character, and realistic in subject matter and language. The structure exhibits characteristics of realism and romanticism.

Flight to the West

Synopsis.--This Elmer Rice play is another of the political, anti-Nazi plays of the decade. The entire play is set in a Pan-American clipper from Lisbon bound for New York. The passengers are: Edmund Dickens, blinded by Nazi atrocities in Germany, and his wife, Marie, who is a Nazi-hater because of what they did to her husband and the rest of her family; Louise Frayne, an aggressive newspaper woman; Archibald Gage, a big oil executive from the Southwest; Count Vronoff, supposedly a visiting professor from Europe to Berkley; Dr. Herman Walther, attached to the German ambassadorial corps in Washington; Howard Ingraham, a quiet, intellectual, author of political theory; and Hope and Charles Nathan, a young couple. The play concerns two points of emphasis. The first is the social, political, and moral opinions and convictions of each of the above passengers. In a kind

of flying debate each character expresses in conversation and argument a point of view toward current political issues, specifically Nazi Germany and America's attitude toward Hitler. The second emphasis of the play is on the story line. Count Vronoff is recognized by one of the passengers as a man by another name. A quick cable by Louise Frayne identifies him as a Nazi spy, and indeed he is, for we can see him plotting his California activities with Walther. The plane then makes an unscheduled landing in Bermuda where authorities permanently "detain" the Count. Later, after the plane leaves Bermuda, Marie Dickensen, whose hate of the Nazi, Walther, has been building up to the boiling point as she hears him preach the Hitler doctrine, grabs a gun hidden earlier by Vronoff, and aims it at Walther as she cries, "Assassin!" Charles, the young husband who had not made up his mind yet as to what position he must take in the world of cruelty, instinctively throws himself toward her shouting, "No! Don't do that!" Her shot wounds him. That action gives everyone who was undecided about their political belief courage. They decide the instinctive thing to do in the world is the humanitarian action, while the Nazi's logic and science is in error.

Principle and General Characteristics.--Because of the social and political implications of the play and the illusionistic characteristics, this play is realistic in principle. There is more to Flight to the West than the melodramatic plot of the spy Vronoff and his leader, Walther. The running debate between the diverse group of passengers provides Rice with a forum for the presentation of a wide range of political views. Some of the "debators" and their views are: Gage, the business man, believes that dictators like Hitler and Mussolini

have no designs on America, and we ought "to play ball with them" and "not stick our necks out;" Frau Rosenthal, bitter after her horrible experiences in Germany, has given up hope for the world and her race, and she warns everyone on board that racial persecution will spread throughout the world; Walther, of course, expounds upon the Nazi point of view that Hitler must use force to "liberate" the rest of Europe; Ingraham, the author, has been agitating for disarmament, but finding rabid isolationists using his theories in ways he never intended, is now confused; Charles, the young married man, is a pacifist at heart, but confused over all of the hate and brutality he has seen in Europe; and Marie, whose hate of the Nazi's turns her to brutality.

The general characteristics of Flight to the West are a humanitarian concern for contemporary issues, and a selective, illusionistic technique in the presentation of the material. The social issue is the current attitudes toward Naziism and American involvement in the political affairs of Europe. It is "humanitarian" because it asks for an involvement in a world where injustice, misery and brutality must be conquered by sanity and decency.

In summary, the principle and general characteristics are realistic because of the contemporary social and political concerns, the humanitarian concern for contemporary man, and the overall illusionistic technique.

Plot.--The material is realistic because it is taken from "contemporary life," and concerns current political questions.

The structure is also realistic, with elements of naturalism's attempt at a formless impression. The spy plot, really a minor part of the play, is realistic, tightly constructed, and contains a late

point of attack. However, woven in between this plot is the "debate" and discussion of political theories and points of view. These scenes accomplish several purposes. First, they help to create realistic detail in character. After hearing the political views and beliefs of each passenger, and why they hold them, the audience has a clear picture of each one as a distinct individual. Second, these scenes tend to provide a respite from the spy plot, thus creating suspense and heightening the tension and drama. And third, they help to provide an atmosphere and illusion of actuality. By removing the emphasis from the obvious plot line, the natural atmosphere of the appearance of an air flight is created.

In summary, the subject matter is realistic, and the structure exhibits characteristics of Realism and Naturalism.

Character.--The characters in Flight to the West are realistic. They are contemporary and a natural part of their heredity and environment. The personality and beliefs of Frau Rosenthal, Walther, Charles, the Dickens family, Gage, and Ingraham are all linked to either heredity or environment. Rosenthal, for instance, is a jewess who lived in Germany and was involved in its massacre and inhumanity; Gage's attitudes are conditioned by his business and economic status; and Ingraham's beliefs stem from his intellectual environment where terms such as "isolationism," "liberal," and "Nazi" do not have the brutal reality of experience attached to them. Rice's technique of character description in this play is to gather together a passenger list that is representative of various national backgrounds and experiences. The arguments, then, and the descriptions of characters gleaned from those arguments are developed and motivated by both the

history shaking events of the day and the environmental heritages of each. In this sense they are realistically conceived as natural to their contemporary background and conditioned and influenced by their environment.

A third realistic trait of character is that the central characters are "often composites of . . . varying and contradictory impulses." Charles, his wife, Rosenthal, and Ingraham are torn between alternative positions.

In summary, due to the contemporary nature of the characters, the importance of heredity and environment on their present beliefs, attitudes, and actions, and the complexities of the central figures, they are realistic in style.

Language.--The dialogue in Flight to the West is in prose, and realistic.

Theme.--The theme of Flight to the West is realistic. It demonstrates a humanitarian concern for a contemporary social and political maladjustment, Naziism. In the words of Ingraham at the final curtain, "In the long run, madness will lose; because madness is disease and sanity is healthy." No healthy man can believe in the victory of madness over sanity. Through faith and the courage of humanitarian convictions man's instinctive, irrational acts of goodness will defeat the "rational, logical, scientific" acts of the Nazis.

Summary.--Flight to the West is realistic in principle, general characteristics, subject matter, character, language, and theme. There are naturalistic and realistic traits in structure.

Native Son

Synopsis.--Native Son is another look at the problems of the Negro in America. This play, in ten scenes, traces the brief career as a social outcast of Bigger Thomas. In the opening of the first scene we find a prosecuting attorney summing up his case to the jury against Bigger, "a half-human black ape" accused of "a brutal and perverted murder." As the court scene fades we are taken back in time to Bigger's family and apartment where Bigger must kill rats before the family can sit down to eat. Bigger is on relief, but the owner of the apartment house offers him a job as a chauffeur. In scene three Bigger is given the job by Mrs. Dalton, blind wife of the apartment building owner. At the home he meets Mary Dalton, rich, sexy, playful daughter of the family. She makes fun of Bigger and plays coquettish with him. In scene four Bigger carries Mary home from a drunk party, and then, in her bedroom he accidentally kills her when he puts a pillow over her face to keep her from making noise, for if he were caught in the bedroom, even though he is there to help Mary in, he would be in serious trouble. He is now frightened, and in panic he carries the body down to the basement and burns it in the furnace. In the fourth scene Bigger lies about the whereabouts of Mary, and by implication accuses Mary's boyfriend of the crime. In the next scene Bigger and his girlfriend write a kidnap letter to the Daltons in an attempt to get some money. A reporter assigned to the story at the house "breaks down" Bigger and gets him to imply that the girl is dead and that the body is in the furnace. He is eventually captured and stands trial. Paul Max is his attorney, and the defense

centers not so much around Bigger's guilt or innocence, but the guilt and innocence of society and the Jim Crow system which breeds a Negro like Bigger. The plea loses, and society takes Bigger's life.

Principle and General Characteristics.--Native Son is essentially realistic in principle, but also partially naturalistic.

It is realistic in its overall idea mainly because it attacks head-on a serious contemporary social problem, that of the plight of the Negro in America. The play focuses its attention on the social forces which have created a fever of hate and excitement toward the Negro in a large city. Bigger Thomas is a product of an irresponsible attitude in society which hemmed in the Negro by poverty, idleness, economic injustice and racial discrimination. He is also a product of the American tradition which says that in this country all men are free; but who, in reality is only free to fear and hate society.

The naturalistic principle involved is clear in Max's final speech to the jury. "Bigger Thomas is an organism which our social system has bred," he states. He was born dead and he represents a tiny aspect of a national problem. The principle here is determinism, the play attempting to show that the Negro in America is determined by society's policy of segregation, hate, and fear to run afoul of the law. It is clear, especially, in this play since Bigger's crime was accidental, not a deliberate act of the will. He was forced into this act.

In summary, Native Son is realistic in principle because it is a modern problem play, humanitarian, and concerned with the vital social question of racial prejudice. It is naturalistic in principle and general characteristics because of its insistence on the dynamic

role played by social and economic environment and hereditary on man's destiny.

Plot.--The subject matter is realistic. It concerns contemporary people involved in a current, social problem. In addition "the treatment of character's contemporary environment is a factor in the determination of human conduct and destiny."

The structure of Native Son demonstrates characteristics of romanticism and realism.

The realistic characteristic is a selective, illusionistic technique within the scenes. Native Son attempts to present the deep motives and drives of contemporary characters by asking the audience to "accept the picture as true." It does this by attempting to give the impression in all ten scenes "of being the real thing." It is illusionistic, then, through selection within the scenes.

The romantic characteristics of Native Son are: (1) a loose structure; (2) a freedom in the "use of elapsed time and shifts in place;" (3) "the use of a chronological structure and many scenes;" and (4) an early point of attack which necessitates the depiction of much "expository" material. There are ten scenes in the play, and nine shifts in locale. The scenes are not tightly knit around the plot, but are at times tangential to the story line. Scene two, for instance, shows Bigger and his buddies out on the street around 47th Street in Chicago. In the scene Bigger, Gus, Jack, and G. H. argue, fight, swear, plot, and play. It is intended to show the leisure life of the negro who has no job, no money, and no direction.

In summary, Native Son is realistic within each of the ten scenes. However, in the overall structure of the scenes the play is romantic.

Character.--The predominate character trait in Native Son is naturalistic. Bigger Thomas is the central character and his fate and destiny is central to the play's theme and idea. His character development and portrayal is based solely upon his surroundings. We see him trying to adjust himself to the white man's laws and prejudices; and we see him fail and fall victim to the conditioning of his environment which made him fear the white man's laws. He really had no chance or choice. He is a victim. He was "born dead -- dead among the wild forests of our cities, and amid the rank and choking vegetation of our slums." Because of this insistence upon the deterministic view of Bigger, and all the Negroes in the play whom he represents, the character trait is naturalistic. This same theme of character is also evident in Mary who is also a victim of her social position of riches, idleness, and beauty.

Language.--The dialogue in Native Son is in prose, and is realistic.

Theme.--Naturalistic and realistic themes are evident in Native Son. Realistically the play is a social criticism of the problem of racial prejudice. In the words of Max, "Such living corpses as Bigger Thomas here are warning us to stop it, stop it now before it is too late."

Naturalistically it shows a "concern for the influence upon humanity of heredity and environment." The white man's treatment of the Negro determines Negro destiny in this country.

Summary.--Native Son is realistic and naturalistic in principle, general characteristics, and theme. It is naturalistic in character,

realistic in language and subject matter, and realistic and romantic in structure.

Watch on the Rhine

Synopsis.--Lillian Hellman's anti-Nazi play opens in the Farrelly house on an estate twenty miles from Washington, D. C. Fanny is waiting for her daughter Sara, and Sara's family, to come home from Germany. They have not been home for twenty years. When they arrive we discover that Sara's family has had to endure many hardships in Germany recently, partly because Kurt, her husband, has not practiced engineering for a long time. Staying at the house are Martha and Teck de Brancovis, Rumanian royalty, who have "friends" at the local German embassy. When Kurt and Teck get into conversation and Kurt lets Teck know that he is an anti-Nazi, the two realize their roles as deadly enemies. Later, in the second act, Teck discloses that he has discovered that Kurt is a key member of an underground group fighting the Nazis in Germany, and that two of the other key members have been captured in Germany. Further he knows that Kurt will try to deliver his fighting companions and that in Kurt's luggage is \$23,000 to be used in the anti-Nazi cause. Teck's deal is to be paid \$10,000 of the \$23,000 to keep him from revealing Kurt's whereabouts to the German embassy. Kurt's dilemma is between paying a part of the precious fund for his own safety, or risk being caught. Though his situation is desperate, he plans to leave for Germany at once. In act three Kurt and Teck fight. Overpowering him, Kurt takes Teck outside and kills him to protect his cause. In the end he borrows the family car, leaves his wife and children, puts Teck's body in it, and drives

off to make his way back to Germany to fight for freedom.

Principle and General Characteristics.--Watch on the Rhine is essentially realistic in principle and general characteristics. It is a dramatic, serious, "true-to-life" look at significant, contemporary "underlying currents of social development." Specifically Miss Hellman examines two contemporary problems. The first is a look at an American household which has attempted to segregate itself from contemporary social problems. In their attempt to lead a civilized life apart from a world torn by strife, they are now faced with decisions of social and political importance. They can report Kurt's crime immediately and kill his chances to get back to Germany and work against the Nazis, or they can commit themselves to social and political order and give him two days head start before calling the authorities. The second social concern inherent in the play is seen in the sympathetic treatment given to the victims of Nazi oppression. In this sense Watch on the Rhine is a type of realistic social-protest play. It is anti-fascist and anti-Nazi. The situation reflects real, actual contemporary human, social, and political problems.

The first specific general characteristic of Watch on the Rhine is "a concern for contemporary life" by "presenting contemporary arguments and critically examining contemporary issues." The arguments and issues are presented as a choice between active support of liberal ideas, or default into the dynamic religions of Nazism and other forms of fascism. The play brings home this choice to the 1940 American public who imagined neutralism as a possibility. The second general characteristic is a selective, illusionistic technique in the portrayal of current life.

Plot.--The subject matter of Watch on the Rhine is realistic.

It concerns a contemporary upperclass family and immigrants. The material is current social problems of war, and loyalty and duty to humanitarian causes.

The structure is also realistic. It is compact, has a late point of attack, and reduced theatrical convention to a minimum. The play is written in a conventional three act structure, with the exposition well woven into the rising action. Much of the exposition is delayed until late in the second act. For instance, all of the facts about Kurt's \$23,000 and his affiliation with an organized anti-Nazi movement are not revealed until Teck tells everyone of his blackmail plot. Finally, the play is unified as to time, place, and action. There is one plot, one setting, and the entire play covers a week in time.

Character.--The depiction of character in Watch on the Rhine is also realistic. The persons involved are drawn with much realistic and psychological detail and with considerable sympathy. The only exception to this is the character of Teck, who is drawn with no sympathy. Illustrative of this is the lack of convincing motivation given for his evil actions. The remaining characters are all contemporary, complex, and "composites of varying and contradictory impulses." Kurt, Sara, her mother, and even the little children are faced with decisions and impulses of a contradictory nature. Specifically, the choices are freedom and happiness in this country with their father by ignoring a "duty" to accept and be involved in the cause of freedom in Germany, or sacrifice, death, and sadness by committing themselves here in this country to the cause of justice in Nazi Germany.

Language.--The dialogue in Watch on the Rhine is in prose, and

realistic.

Theme.--The theme of Watch on the Rhine is a realistic one showing "a deep concern for contemporary social problems, and contemporary individual human problems." Specifically, Miss Hellman demonstrates a "social, political . . . protest." She calls for an end to noninvolvement in the inhuman conditions in Europe, and for a beginning of American involvement in anti-Nazi activities. She displays sympathy for those who would fight in this uneven struggle to try to restore shape to a twisted world. Before he leaves Kurt promises his children that they will live to see the day when that distortion and injustice will be eliminated.

Summary.--Watch on the Rhine is realistic in principle, general characteristics, plot, language, character, and theme.

Summary of Seasonal Stylistic Characteristics

Principle and General Characteristics.--Realism dominates the stylistic characteristics in principle and general characteristics for the 1940-41 season, as it exhibits 60% of all characteristics in this category. Of the five plays read Watch on the Rhine, and Flight to the West are totally realistic in principle and general characteristics; and Native Son and Big White Fog are partially realistic. The reason for this is that these four plays are concerned primarily with an illusionistic picture of contemporary social and/or political ideas. Flight to the West and Watch on the Rhine are involved with the Nazi regime and America's political posture toward Hitler, and Native Son and Big White Fog deal with the Negro problem in America.

Naturalism also appears as a minor general characteristic in two plays of the season, Native Son and Big White Fog. The nature of the naturalistic principle involved in both plays is the deterministic view that the Negro is forced into inhuman actions and states of misery and poverty because of his race and the white man's segregational policies.

Only one play, Johnny Belinda, exhibits romantic principles and general characteristics.

In summary, Realism dominates the principle and general characteristics of two plays and shares characteristics in two others with Naturalism. One play is romantic in these categories.

Plot.--In subject matter Realism is characteristic of four of the five plays, Big White Fog, Flight to the West, Native Son, and Watch on the Rhine. They all have as their material contemporary social and/or political problems and situations. Johnny Belinda is romantic in subject matter.

In dramatic technique Realism is evident in all but one play. Watch on the Rhine is totally realistic in structure, while Native Son and Big White Fog exhibit some characteristics of Realism along with characteristics of Romanticism. Flight to the West is realistic and naturalistic in plot. The final play, Johnny Belinda, is romantic in technique.

Character.--There is an equal division between Realism and Naturalism as the dominant style of character during the season. Characters in Flight to the West and Watch on the Rhine are realistic, while those in Native Son and Big White Fog are naturalistic, and in Johnny Belinda they are romantic.

Language.--All five plays of the 1940-41 season read for this study utilize realistic dialogue.

Theme.--Again Realism dominates a form element as four of the five plays exhibit realistic themes. Flight to the West and Watch on the Rhine are totally realistic in theme, while Big White Fog and Native Son exhibit both realistic and naturalistic themes. The realistic themes are the concerned social-protest plays, and the naturalistic thematic patterns show up as a deterministic view of the Negro's plight in Big White Fog and Native Son. Johnny Belinda is romantic in theme.

Conclusions.--The 1940-41 season again shows that very few plays are consistent in the use of style in all form elements, principle, and general characteristics. Only two plays this season can be said to exhibit a consistency of style in all elements. These are Johnny Belinda, Romanticism; and Watch on the Rhine, Realism. All of the other three plays have at least two styles in their form elements.

There are two trends which appear in this season. The first is the overall dominance of Realism in principle, general characteristics, and form elements. A second trend appears in the absence of Symbolism, Expressionism, and Epic which are the three most non-illusionistic styles. None of the five plays exhibit any of these dramatic styles in any form elements.

In summary of the 1940-41 season the following conclusions are reached: (1) the vast majority of plays are eclectic, not being written in any one style, but rather appearing as a constellation of styles; (2) Realism dominates all of the stylistic manifestations by a three to five ratio; (3) the non-illusionistic styles of Symbolism, Expressionism, and Epic are not represented in any of the plays.

CHAPTER XIV

CONCLUSION

The purpose and plan of this chapter is three fold: (1) to summarize the findings in Chapters X - XIII; (2) to draw conclusions from that summary; and (3) to interpret the conclusions and draw personal implications. The overall plan of the chapter consists of four parts: (1) procedure, (2) summaries, (3) conclusions, and (4) implications.

Procedure

The working hypothesis of this study, as stated in Chapter I, is: "In regard to modern dramatic styles, what were the trends in successful, serious American drama on the professional New York stage during the 1930's?" Having sampled the ten year period through a stylistic analysis of four seasons, it is now the purpose of this chapter to attempt to answer that question. Since each play and the seasonal summaries were reported in terms of stylistic manifestations in principle, general characteristics, and form elements, it seems consistent to report this section in the same manner.

Before proceeding in this manner, there are two general conclusions which determine the specific method of reporting in this chapter. Because these two conclusions are important to the procedure used in this chapter, they will be mentioned now.

First, in almost all cases, it is impossible to describe the

overall style of a play in any meaningful general terms. Plays do not appear as realistic, or naturalistic, or romantic, or as being written in any one style. Instead, they usually appear as combinations, or constellations, of various styles. Of the thirty-six plays considered in this study, only eight, or 22%, are written totally in one style as manifested in principle, general characteristics, and form elements. As a result of this finding, the only meaningful manner of describing the style of a given play is specifically in terms of the stylistic manifestations in each of the form elements and in principle and general characteristics.

Second, to take the above conclusion one step further, most plays even exhibit characteristics of more than one style within a particular form element or the category of principle or general characteristics. Slightly over half of the thirty-six plays exhibit characteristics of more than one style in at least one category, and some have multiple stylistic characteristics in several categories. As a result of this finding, it is not possible to draw definite conclusions in the following sections relative to the number of plays which are realistic, or naturalistic, or romantic, or epic, or symbolic, or expressionistic in a particular form element, principle, or general characteristics.

Therefore, the only meaningful descriptive procedure available for each form element is in terms of the following five statements:

- (1) the number of plays which exhibit a purity of style in the particular form element;
- (2) the particular style manifested in each of those plays;
- (3) the number of plays which exhibit a mixture of styles in the form element;
- (4) the particular styles which constitute those mixtures;
- and (5) the total number of plays in which each particular

style occurs in each element. It must be remembered, concerning this last statement, that the total number of plays given includes both plays in which the particular style was the only one manifested in that form element, and plays in which the style occurred as one of two or more styles in the same form element of that particular play. For example, when it is stated that five plays exhibit characteristics of Naturalism in principle, that number includes three plays which are totally naturalistic in principle, and two plays which were naturalistic and realistic in principle.

The above procedure, then, will be followed in the summaries below.

Summaries

Principle

Summary.--The term "principle" as a criteria for style description is understood to be "a general term encompassing the various concepts of idea, world-view, philosophy, attitude, and point of view."¹ In the four seasons examined in this study two trends are evident concerning stylistic principle. These are, first, the dominance of Romanticism and Realism, and second, the overall purity of style exhibited in the area of principle.

Thirty-four out of the thirty-six plays studied exhibit a purity of style in principle, and two show a mixture of styles in this category. Of those thirty-four, fifteen are romantic and twelve are realistic. In the remaining seven plays three are naturalistic, two are expressionistic, and one each is symbolic and epic.

¹See Chapter II, p. 16.

Two plays, only 6%, exhibit characteristics of more than one style in principle. Both plays are classified as a combination of realistic and naturalistic principles.

It is also possible here to make a conclusion as to the specific principle involved in the romantic and realistic plays. The majority of the romantic plays are of the "secondhand" variety. They are melodramas, usually mystery plays, or plays in which excitement and thrills dominate. Most realistic plays are "social criticism" plays, in which the author centers his interest on some contemporary social, economic, or political problem.

In summary of principle in the thirty-six plays, Romanticism appears in a total of fifteen plays (42%), Realism in fourteen (39%), Naturalism in five (14%), Expressionism in two (6%), Epic in one (3%), and Symbolism in one (3%).

Conclusions.--Based upon the above findings, the following definite trends in principle are evident: (1) Romanticism is the style found most often in principle, as it is evident as the sole stylistic characteristic in in principle in fifteen (42%) of the plays examined; (2) the second most frequently observed style in principle is Realism, since it appears in fourteen (39%) of all plays; and (3) the plays which are romantic in principle are generally of the "secondhand" type, and the plays which are realistic are generally concerned with contemporary social maladjustments.

General Characteristics

Summary.--The term "General Characteristics" as a criteria for style description is understood to be the "qualities, expressions,

dominant features . . . form relationships . . . [and] the overall impressions of the style arising from the view of the play as a whole."²

Each style examined exhibited particular general characteristics, and these characteristics were identified in the analysis of the plays in Chapters X - XIII. Several general trends can be seen concerning style in general characteristics of plays written in the 1930's. These are, first, the dominance of Romanticism and Realism; second, the overall purity of style exhibited in general characteristics; and third, the similarity in stylistic manifestations between principle and general characteristics.

Thirty-three out of the thirty-six plays studied exhibit a purity of style in general characteristics, and three show a mixture of styles in this category. Of those thirty-three, fifteen are romantic and ten are realistic. This compares closely with the figures given for principle, which was thirty-four plays which exhibited a purity of style, fifteen of them romantic and twelve realistic.

In examining this relation between principle and general characteristics only two plays (6%) show a difference in style in the two categories. These plays are Mourning Becomes Electra and Judgment Day. All other plays have the same stylistic traits in the category of general characteristics as they do in principle.

In the remaining six plays, the ones which are neither romantic or realistic in general characteristics, two are naturalistic, two are expressionistic, one is epic, and one is symbolic.

Concerning the four plays which show a mixture of styles in general characteristics, two are naturalistic and realistic, one is

²See Chapter II, p. 18.

naturalistic, romantic, and realistic, and one is romantic and realistic. No particular trend is discernable here.

In summary of general characteristics in the thirty-six plays, Romanticism appears in a total of fifteen plays (47%), Realism in fourteen (39%), Naturalism in five (14%), Expressionism in two (6%), Epic in one (3%), and Symbolism in one (3%).

Conclusions.--Based upon the above findings, the following definite trends in general characteristics are evident: (1) Romanticism is found most often in general characteristics, as it is evident as the sole characteristic in fifteen plays (47%), and as a characteristic in combination with other styles in two more plays; (2) the second most frequently observed style in this category is Realism, since it appears in fourteen (39%) of the plays; (3) Romanticism and Realism combine to dominate all other styles to the extent of appearing in 86% of all plays; (4) thirty-four plays (94%) have the same stylistic manifestations in general characteristics as they do in principle.

Plot

Summary.--The term "plot" as a criteria for style description is understood to mean "the structuring or patterning of the events of the play and includes such aspects as subject matter, action, conflict, point of attack, exposition, climax, and resolution."³ There is one major conclusion evident in the area of plot as defined above. That is that a majority of plays studied show little consistency in the style of the subject matter of the plot and the style of the plot structure itself. Dramatists seem to have no hesitation to use, for

³See Chapter II, p. 19.

instance, material which has the essential characteristics of Realism in an expressionistic or romantic plot. Due to this major finding, the following sections under plot deal first with a summary of the style of subject matter, then of plot structure and dramatic technique.

Thirty-five of the thirty-six plays exhibit a purity of style in subject matter. The only one which does not is O'Neill's Mourning Becomes Electra which is classified as realistic and romantic in subject matter. Of the thirty-five plays, thirty-one of them are realistic or romantic. Eighteen are realistic and thirteen are romantic. The realistic subject matter treated in the majority of those eighteen plays is contemporary social, economic, religious, racial, or political problems. The majority of plays which exhibit characteristics of romantic subjects were of the "secondhand" type of Romanticism -- mystery, suspense, and thrill plays.

To summarize subject matter, Realism appears in nineteen plays (53%), Romanticism in fourteen (39%), Naturalism in two (6%), Expressionism in one (3%), and Epic in one (3%).

As was previously stated, there is no direct relationship between the style of the subject matter and plot technique. There are, however, two general conclusions relative to style in structure which can be mentioned at this point. They are, first, the existence of a relatively large number of plays in which the characteristics of two or more styles appear in the dramatic structure, and second, the dominance of characteristics of Romanticism in this category.

Only twenty-eight of the thirty-six plays exhibit a purity of style in structure, which is lower than in any other form element. Of those twenty-eight, fifteen are romantic, which is over twice as many plays as are realistic which is next with seven. Of the remaining

six plays, three are expressionistic, one is naturalistic, one is epic, and one is symbolic.

The remaining eight plays, then, exhibit characteristics of more than one style in structure. Of these eight, Realism appears in seven and romanticism in six. Broken down further, five are romantic and realistic, two are naturalistic and realistic, and one is romantic, epic, and expressionistic.

In summary of structure in the thirty-six plays, Romanticism appears in a total of twenty-one plays (58%), Realism in fourteen (39%), Expressionism in four (11%), Naturalism in three (8%), Epic in two (6%), and Symbolism in one (3%).

Conclusions.--Based upon the above findings, the following definite trends in the form element of plot are evident: (1) there is no consistent stylistic relationship between subject matter and dramatic structure; (2) nineteen plays (53%) exhibit realistic characteristics in subject matter; (3) Romantic or realistic characteristics appear in the subject matter of thirty-three plays (92%); (4) structure is the most stylistically diverse of all the form elements, as eight plays (22%) show a mixture of stylistic characteristics in structure; (5) Romanticism appears as the dominant style in structure, twenty-one (58%) plays exhibit substantial romantic characteristics; and (6) romantic or realistic characteristics appear in the plots of 97% of all plays.

Character

Summary.--The term "character" as a criteria for style description is understood to mean "the persons who appear in the drama and who carry

out the dramatic action of the plot."⁴ There are two general conclusions evident from the stylistic analyses of character in the four seasons. These are, first, the dominance of traits of Realism, and second, the overall dominance of both Realism and Romanticism in this category.

Thirty-two of the thirty-six plays studied exhibit a purity of style in the form element of character, and four show a mixture of style in this category. Of those thirty-two, fourteen are romantic and ten are realistic. In the remaining eight plays, five are naturalistic in character, one is expressionistic, one is epic, and one is symbolic.

Four plays exhibit a mixture of style in character. One has epic, expressionistic, and realistic traits, one has naturalistic and realistic traits, one has romantic and realistic characteristics, and one demonstrates naturalistic, realistic, and romantic character traits.

In summary of the form elements of character in the thirty-six plays, Romanticism appears in a total of sixteen plays (45%), Realism in thirteen (36%), Naturalism in seven (19%), Expressionism in two (6%), Epic in two (6%), and Symbolism in one (3%).

Conclusions.--Based upon the above findings, the following definite trends in the form element of character are evident: (1) Romanticism is the style most often manifested in character, as it is evident as a stylistic characteristic in sixteen plays (45%); (2) Realism is the second most frequently evident style, as it exists in thirteen plays (36%); (3) Romanticism and Realism again dominate a form element to the extent of appearing in 81% of all plays; (4) a strong relationship can be seen between style in character and the overall principle of plays, as twenty-eight plays (78%) exhibit a similarity of style in

⁴See Chapter II, p. 19.

the two categories; and (5) based upon the latter conclusion the dominance of romantic characters results from the predominance of plays which are romantic in principle.

Language

Summary.--The term "language" as a criteria for style description is understood to be "the dialogue spoken by the characters" for the purpose of "revealing character, directing attention, and developing the plot."⁵ In the thirty-six plays examined in this study there is one major trend evident in language, and that is the overwhelming dominance of Realism.

Thirty-three out of the thirty-six plays exhibit a purity of style in the form element of language, and three show a mixture of style. Of those thirty-three, twenty-eight are realistic. In the remaining five plays, two are naturalistic, one is romantic, one is expressionistic, and one is epic.

Only three plays exhibit characteristics of more than one style, and Realism appears in combination in all three. One is expressionistic and realistic, one is romantic and realistic, and the last is romantic, expressionistic, epic, and realistic.

In summary of language, in the thirty-six plays, Realism appears in a total of thirty-one plays (86%), Naturalism in three (8%), Expressionism in three (8%), Epic in two (6%), and Romanticism in two (6%). There is no discernable relationship between style in language and style in principle, general characteristics, or any form element.

Conclusions.--Based upon the above findings, the following definite

⁵See Chapter II, p. 19.

trend in the form element of language is evident: the vast majority of plays, thirty-one (86%), exhibit characteristics of Realism in dialogue.

Theme

Summary.--The term "theme" as a criteria for style description is understood to be "the overall meaning and significance of the action of the drama. It's aspects include the ideas, arguments, and thoughts expressed in a play."⁶ In the four seasons examined in this study two trends are evident concerning style in theme. These are, first, an equal division between Realism and Romanticism as the dominant style in theme, and second, a strong similarity between the style in theme and the style in principle.

Thirty-one of the thirty-six plays studied exhibit a purity of style in theme, and five show a mixture of style. Of those thirty-one, fifteen are Romantic and ten are realistic. In the remaining six plays three are naturalistic, two are expressionistic, and one is symbolic.

Five plays exhibit characteristics of more than one style in theme. Of those five, Realism appears in all five and Naturalism appears in three. Three are realistic and naturalistic, one is realistic and epic, and one is realistic and romantic.

The romantic themes seen in the majority of plays are those of "secondhand" Romanticism. They usually are concerned with escape, poetic justice, or uncontrolled emotions. The realistic themes most often seen are concerned with matters of contemporary social, economic, political, or racial reform.

⁶See Chapter II, p. 19.

In summary of the form element of theme in the thirty-six plays, Romanticism appears in a total of sixteen plays (45%), Realism in fifteen (42%), Naturalism in six (17%), Expressionism in two (6%), Epic in one (3%), and Symbolism in one (3%).

Conclusions.--Based upon the above findings, the following definite trends in the form element of theme are evident: (1) Realism and Romanticism dominate in theme to the extent of appearing in thirty-one plays (86%); (2) there is a close relationship between style in theme and in principle, as thirty-three plays (92%) exhibit similar stylistic characteristics in both categories.

Conclusions

The purpose of this chapter was to answer the question, "In regard to modern dramatic styles, what were the trends in successful, serious American drama on the professional New York stage during the 1930's?" Specifically, that question has been answered in detail in the various categories of stylistic investigation in the preceding section. It now remains to draw general statements from those conclusions concerning general trends in the 1930 drama.

Based upon the findings in each of the specific categories of principle, general characteristics, and the form elements of plot, character, language, and theme in thirty-six successful, serious American dramas on the professional New York stage during the 1930's, the following trends are evident in answer to the above question:

1. Each play written during this period appears as a constellation of styles. Eighty-eight percent of all plays studied exhibit characteristics of more than one style in principle, general characteristics,

or form elements.

2. The majority of plays considered exhibit characteristics of more than one style within a particular form element or within the categories of principle or general characteristics, although usually this mixture occurs within one of the form elements.

3. The pattern which appears most frequently is Romanticism in principle and general characteristics, Realism in subject matter, Romanticism in structure and character, Realism in language, and Romanticism in theme.

4. Romanticism and Realism significantly dominate all other styles in the plays considered.

5. Of the remaining modern styles, the following appear and are listed in order of their frequency of appearance: Naturalism, Expressionism, Epic, and Symbolism. Together these four plays do not equal the number of times Romanticism and Realism appear.

6. No significant positive relation exists between the four seasons examined.

Implications

The purpose of this section is to briefly state certain inferences suggested to the writer by the research done in establishing the stylistic criteria in Part I and its use in Part II, and inferences suggested by the seasonal summaries and conclusions concerning style in the 1930's as reported in this chapter.

First, a secondary value of this study, as implied in Chapter I, was to attempt to establish some definite criteria for discovering and measuring stylistic manifestations in drama. Part I of this study

is concerned with that task. One major question concerning the successful completion of that task needs answering: Is the criteria capable of being applied to dramas so that style can be discovered? In other words, do the criteria work?

In any art form there are "rules" and "criteria" against which critics are constantly measuring art objects. In painting there are standards and criteria for good composition and for measuring form and style. In music there are criteria for the sonata and the symphony. In drama there are similar criteria which we all learn and against which critics can measure plot, action, exposition, dialogue, and more. The critic or scholar who maintains that his, or any, criteria are perfect yardsticks for discovering empirical data about an art object, forgets the nature of the object he is studying and the process through which it was brought into being. Every artist is different; every artistic impulse is different; and every creative process under which a dramatist works is singular and unique. Dramatists usually do not create works in order to conform to a particular form or style set up in advance by critics, theorists, or other dramatic works. Those few dramatists who have attempted this have usually not been successful dramatists. In other words, no criteria can perfectly measure an artistic product, and no artistic product can perfectly measure up to outside criteria.

And so, if at times the criteria in Part I do not quite fit a particular drama or form element within that drama, or if it appears that the writer is bending or stretching a point in Part II because he must somehow show that every form element in every drama must somehow measure up to the criteria as established, then these criteria,

these analyses, and these dramas are consistent with the inevitable nature of aesthetic criticism.

This writer does not mean to offer the above as an excuse so that he may give a negative response to the question as to whether the criteria in Part I work, but rather as a qualifying statement for the answer that the criteria seem to work as well as can be expected. The only major difficulty in its application that was encountered appears in attempting to arrive at one, single conclusion relative to style in a particular form element in a play. Quite often the cause of the difficulty appears to be that some of the characteristics of styles overlap, and that, therefore, the criteria have not been refined enough. Possibly this is an answer. But a part of the problem can also be found in the extremely eclectic stylistic nature of the dramas. Dramatists are just not bound to the creation of dialogue, or characters, or plots which conform to some stylistic criteria. The creative process denies this.

In summary of this first point, then, it is the opinion of this writer that the criteria developed and used in this study, although possibly not perfect, appears practical and may be useful in other research seeking new insights into dramatic style.

Second, the conclusions concerning style in dramas of the 1930's which were studied, leads to several questions for further thought and possible study.

During second and third decades of the Twentieth Century, the New Stagecraft theories, the German expressionists, and the Russian theatricalists began to exert an influence on the Realism in drama and production that had begun in Europe a half-century earlier. One of the ideas which originally prompted this study was to discover to what

extent these European stylistic movements and innovations might have been felt in the professional American theatre. The obvious answer, based upon the conclusions in this chapter, appears to be that in the 1930's American drama did not reflect the European movements and experiments in style which arose during the 1920-1940 period. But, in examining only successful plays in the professional American theatre, possibly original experiments in style were overlooked. Is it possible that these plays which were studied were successful because they didn't deviate from the stylistic norm of the day? If a stylistic study were made of plays which the American public didn't accept, would Symbolism, Epic, and Expressionism appear more dominant? Would a study of "off-Broadway" plays reveal more diverse pattern of different styles? These and other questions like them are prompted by the basic question: "Why was style in successful serious American drama on the professional New York stage predominantly realistic and romantic?" This study suggests this question as a basis for further thought and possible investigation.

Third, and finally, there remain the six theatrical seasons not included in this study. To what extent would an investigation of those years change the implications this study leaves concerning style in the 1930's? Would those six seasons reveal substantially the same conclusions? Or, would they appear stylistically different? This writer suggests this as another area for further study.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX I
LIST OF PLAYS READ AND ANALYZED

THE 1931-32 SEASON

PLAY AND AUTHOR	OPENED	NUMBER OF PERFORMANCES
<u>After Tomorrow</u> , Hugh Stange and John Golden	8/26/31	77
<u>The House of Connelly</u> , Paul Green	9/28/31	91
<u>Two Seconds</u> , Elliott Lester	10/9/31	59
<u>Mourning Becomes Electra</u> , Eugene O'Neill	10/26/31	150
<u>The Black Tower</u> , Ralph Murphy and Lora Baxter	1/11/32	72
<u>Trick for Trick</u> , Vivian Crosby, Shirley Warde, and Harry W. Cribble	2/18/32	69

THE 1934-35 SEASON

PLAY AND AUTHOR	OPENED	NUMBER OF PERFORMANCES
<u>Dodsworth</u> , Sidney Howard	2/24/34 8/20/34	147 168
<u>Judgment Day</u> , Elmer Rice	8/12/34	93
<u>Small Miracle</u> , Norman Krasna	9/26/34	119
<u>Merrily We Roll Along</u> , George Kaufman and Moss Hart	9/29/34	155
<u>The First Legion</u> , Emmet Lavery	10/1/34	112
<u>Dark Victory</u> , George Brewer and Bertram Block	11/7/34	51
<u>The Children's Hour</u> , Lillian Hellman	11/20/34	247
<u>Gold Eagle Guy</u> , Melvin Levy	11/28/34	65
<u>Valley Forge</u> , Maxwell Anderson	12/10/34	58
<u>The Petrified Forest</u> , Robert E. Sherwood	1/7/35	197
<u>The Old Maid</u> , Zoe Atkins	1/7/35	305
<u>Awake and Sing</u> , Clifford Odets	2/19/35	209
<u>Black Pits</u> , Albert Maltz	3/20/35	85
<u>Till the Day I Die</u> , Clifford Odets	3/26/35	136
<u>Waiting for Lefty</u> , Clifford Odets	3/26/35	168
<u>Ceiling Zero</u> , Frank Wead	4/10/35	104
<u>Kind Lady</u> , Edward Chodorov	4/23/35	

THE 1937-38 SEASON

PLAY AND AUTHOR	OPENED	NUMBER OF PERFORMANCES
<u>Many Mansions</u> , Jules E. Goodman and Eckert Goodman	10/27/37	158
<u>Golden Boy</u> , Clifford Odets	11/4/37	250
<u>Of Mice and Men</u> , John Steinbeck	11/23/37	207
<u>Our Town</u> , Thornton Wilder	2/4/38	336
<u>All the Living</u> , Hardie Albright	3/24/38	53
<u>One-Third of A Nation</u> , Arthur Arent	1/17/38	237
<u>Haiti</u> , William DuBois	3/2/38	
<u>Prologue to Glory</u> , E. P. Conkle	3/17/38	

THE 1940-41 SEASON

PLAY AND AUTHOR	OPENED	NUMBER OF PERFORMANCES
<u>Johnny Belinda</u> , Elmer Harris	9/18/40	321
<u>Big White Fog</u> , Theodore Ward	10/22/40	64
<u>Flight to the West</u> , Elmer Rice	12/30/40	136
<u>Native Son</u> , Paul Green and Richard Wright	3/24/41	114
<u>Watch on the Rhine</u> , Lillian Hellman	4/1/41	378

APPENDIX II

STYLISTIC CHARACTERISTICS OF PLAYS

THE 1930-31 SEASON

PLAY	PRINCIPLE	MATERIAL	P L O T		CHARACTER	LANGUAGE	THEME	GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS
			STRUCTURE					
After Tomorrow	Naturalistic	Naturalistic	Realistic and Naturalistic		Naturalistic	Realistic	Naturalistic	Naturalistic
House of Connelly	Realistic	Realistic	Realistic		Realistic	Realistic	Realistic	Realistic
Two Seconds	Expression- istic	Expression- istic	Expression- istic		Expression- istic	Realistic and Expression- istic	Expression- istic	Expression- istic
Mourning Becomes Electra	Naturalistic	Realistic and Romantic	Realistic and Romantic		Naturalistic Romantic and Realistic	Realistic	Naturalistic	Naturalistic Romantic and Realistic
The Black Tower	Romantic	Romantic	Romantic and Realistic		Romantic	Realistic	Romantic	Romantic
Trick for Trick	Romantic	Romantic	Realistic and Romantic		Romantic	Realistic	Romantic	Romantic

THE 1934-35 SEASON

P L O T

PLAY	PRINCIPLE	MATERIAL	STRUCTURE	CHARACTER	LANGUAGE	THEME	GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS
Dodsworth	Romantic	Realistic	Romantic	Romantic	Naturalistic	Romantic	Romantic
Judgment Day	Realistic	Realistic	Realistic	Realistic	Realistic	Realistic	Realistic and Romantic
Small Miracle	Romantic	Romantic	Romantic	Romantic	Realistic	Romantic	Romantic
Merrily We Roll Along	Romantic	Realistic	Expressionistic	Romantic	Realistic	Romantic	Romantic
First Legion	Realistic	Realistic	Realistic	Realistic	Realistic	Realistic	Realistic
Dark Victory	Romantic	Realistic	Romantic	Romantic	Realistic	Romantic	Romantic
Children's Hour	Realistic	Realistic	Realistic	Realistic	Realistic	Realistic	Realistic
Gold Eagle Guy	Romantic	Romantic	Romantic	Romantic	Realistic	Realistic	Romantic
Valley Forge	Romantic	Romantic	Romantic	Romantic	Romantic	Romantic	Romantic
Petrified Forest	Symbolic	Romantic	Symbolic	Symbolic	Realistic	Symbolic	Symbolic

THE 1934-35 SEASON CON'T.

P L O T

PLAY	PRINCIPLE	MATERIAL	STRUCTURE	CHARACTER	LANGUAGE	THEME	GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS
Old Maid	Romantic	Romantic	Romantic	Romantic	Realistic	Romantic	Romantic
Awake and Sing	Realistic	Realistic	Naturalistic	Realistic	Naturalistic	Realistic	Realistic
Black Pit	Realistic	Realistic	Romantic	Realistic	Naturalistic	Realistic	Realistic
Till the Day I Die	Realistic	Realistic	Romantic	Naturalistic	Realistic	Realistic	Realistic
Waiting for Lefty	Expression- istic	Realistic	Expression- istic	Realistic	Epic Expression- istic	Realistic	Expression- istic
Ceiling Zero	Romantic	Realistic	Romantic	Romantic	Realistic	Romantic	Romantic
Kind Lady	Romantic	Romantic	Romantic	Romantic	Realistic	Romantic	Romantic

THE 1937-38 SEASON

PLAY	PRINCIPLE		MATERIAL		STRUCTURE		CHARACTER		LANGUAGE		THEME		GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS
Many Mansions	Realistic	Realistic	Romantic	Realistic	Realistic	Realistic and Naturalistic	Realistic	Realistic	Realistic	Realistic and Naturalistic	Realistic	Realistic	Realistic
Golden Boy	Realistic	Realistic	Romantic	Realistic	Realistic and Naturalistic	Realistic	Realistic	Realistic	Realistic	Realistic and Naturalistic	Realistic	Realistic	Realistic
Of Mice and Men	Naturalistic	Naturalistic	Realistic	Realistic	Naturalistic	Realistic	Realistic	Realistic	Naturalistic	Naturalistic	Naturalistic	Naturalistic	Naturalistic
Our Town	Romantic	Romantic	Expression- istic Romantic Epic	Realistic Expression- istic Epic	Romantic Epic Expression- istic Realistic	Romantic Epic Expression- istic Realistic	Romantic Epic Expression- istic Realistic	Romantic Epic Expression- istic Realistic	Romantic Epic Expression- istic Realistic	Romantic Epic Expression- istic Realistic	Romantic Epic Expression- istic Realistic	Romantic Epic Expression- istic Realistic	Romantic Epic Expression- istic Realistic
All the Living	Realistic	Realistic	Realistic	Realistic	Realistic	Realistic	Realistic	Realistic	Realistic	Realistic	Realistic	Realistic	Realistic
One-Third of a Nation	Epic	Epic	Epic	Epic	Epic	Epic	Epic	Epic	Epic	Realistic and Epic	Epic	Epic	Epic
Haiti	Romantic	Romantic	Romantic	Romantic	Romantic	Romantic	Romantic	Romantic	Romantic	Romantic	Romantic	Romantic	Romantic
Prologue to Glory	Romantic	Romantic	Romantic	Romantic	Romantic	Romantic	Romantic	Romantic	Romantic	Romantic	Romantic	Romantic	Romantic

THE 1940-41 SEASON

PLAY	PRINCIPLE	P L O T		STRUCTURE	CHARACTER	LANGUAGE	THEME	GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS
		MATERIAL						
Johnny Belinda	Romantic	Romantic		Romantic	Romantic	Realistic	Romantic	Romantic
Big White Fog	Naturalistic and Realistic	Realistic		Realistic and Romantic	Naturalistic	Realistic	Naturalistic and Realistic	Naturalistic and Realistic
Flight to The West	Realistic	Realistic		Realistic and Naturalistic	Realistic	Realistic	Realistic	Realistic
Native Son	Realistic and Naturalistic	Realistic		Realistic and Romantic	Naturalistic	Realistic	Realistic and Naturalistic	Realistic and Naturalistic
Watch on The Rhine	Realistic	Realistic		Realistic	Realistic	Realistic	Realistic	Realistic

APPENDIX III

SAMPLE DIALOGUE FROM DODSWORTH

SCENE THREE

The cork and chromium of the S.S. "Untima's" smoke room belong to the more recent aspects of modernistic decoration taste. We see only a corner of the room; the end of the bar; a table out in the open; two or three more tables recessed against the wall, with small sea-going windows which look out on darkness above them; a door which gives on the deck and a second door which gives in the direction of internal dance music. It is the evening of the Captain's dinner.

A dance orchestra is audible off-stage. CLYDE LOCKERT--attractive, fortyish, tropic-bronzed, British, dinner coat--sits at one of the tables smoking a cigarette and sipping a brandy and soda. A young American couple--HUSBAND and WIFE--are just finishing their drinks at another table, while two AMERICAN LADIES sit at a third table figuring. The latter belong to the far-flung matronly type which travels with the pince-nez and the large handbag. They are modestly dressed for the evening. Two JEWISH GENTLEMEN are finishing their drinks at the bar. The BARMAN and two STEWARDS are in attendance. A 2ND AMERICAN COUPLE enter from the music as the scene begins.

2ND AMERICAN WIFE (as they cross towards the opposite door).
Of course I want to go to the Crillon!

2ND AMERICAN HUSBAND. But we've always gone to the Grand.

2ND AMERICAN WIFE. Well, I don't see why you're afraid to spend a little money!

(they go out.)

1ST JEWISH GENTLEMAN.
Hennessy, that's good brandy.

2ND JEWISH GENTLEMAN.
Martel is better.

BARMAN. Martel is good brandy, too.

(A 3RD AMERICAN COUPLE
have entered from the deck.)

1ST AMERICAN WIFE (finishing
her drink at the table). Oh, French
customs don't amount to anything!

1ST AMERICAN HUSBAND.
They're pretty tough on cigarettes.

1ST AMERICAN WIFE. Well,
just don't mention 'em. I've
hidden them in your pockets.

DODSWORTH

3RD AMERICAN WIFE. But I want a drink!

3RD AMERICAN HUSBAND. You'd better dance off what you've had.

3RD AMERICAN WIFE. I thought that's why we were walking around the deck!

(They go out towards the music.)

1ST AMERICAN HUSBAND (looking at his watch). If we're to get off this boat at seven-thirty . . .

1ST AMERICAN WIFE. Just one more dance!

1ST AMERICAN HUSBAND. All right. Steward! Check, please.

(He pays and they go out.)

(The 1ST AMERICAN LADY pauses in her figuring.)

1ST AMERICAN LADY (to her companion). It's always such a problem to know what to tip.

(The two JEWISH GENTLEMEN have paid for their drinks and are moving towards the door which gives on the deck.)

1ST JEWISH GENTLEMAN. I tell you, I crossed on the "Berri," the "Mauri" and the "Aqui" and the "Lewiathan" and the "Perris" and the "Isle de France" and the "Bremen" and the "Europa" and the "Mejestic" and the . . .

2ND JEWISH GENTLEMAN. If you stay with the same boat every trip you get service.

1ST JEWISH GENTLEMAN. I'm so vell known I don't hev no trouble.

(They pause at LOCKERT'S table.)

Good evening, Major Lockert. You aren't dancing?

LOCKERT. Not at the moment, no.

2ND JEWISH GENTLEMAN. You had quite a gay time at Mr. Dodsworth's table!

LOCKET. Ah, well, last night of the crossing, you know. Like Christman Eve!

2ND JEWISH GENTLEMAN. Would you take a turn on deck with us, Major Lockert?

LOCKERT. Thanks, no. I'm waiting for Mrs. Dodsworth.

1ST JEWISH GENTLEMAN. She's a lovely woman. She's vort' waiting for.

(They continue on their way.)

DODSWORTH

2 ND JEWISH GENTLEMAN.
Well, we'll go out and get a
breath of fresh air.

1ST JEWISH GENTLEMAN.
Sure. The air don't cost
nothing.

2ND JEWISH GENTLEMAN.
It'll be a long time before we
breathe sea air again.

(They go out to the deck.)

1ST AMERICAN LADY. Just "The Well of Loneliness" and "The
Chateaux of Old Touraine."

2ND AMERICAN LADY. Then a dollar's planty for the library
steward.

(STEWARD has entered from the music room and gone to the bar.)

Did I remember to speak about salad in Egypt?

1ST AMERICAN LADY. I don't think so.

2ND AMERICAN LADY. Typhoid.

(She bends once more over her calculations.)

STEWARD (to the BARMAN, with a slight German accent). Four
champagne cocktails. Three whiskey sodas.

(A slightly intoxicated AMERICAN who has not yet discarded his
paper hat bursts in from the music.)

AMERICAN. Steward, make those all champagne cocktails!

STEWARD. Seven champagne cocktails.

(The AMERICAN'S WIFE follows him in.)

AMERICAN WIFE. I want another gin fizz, darling.

AMERICAN. You've had enough gin fizzes, sweetheart.

AMERICAN WIFE. Well, my pet, if you expect champagne to improve
matters . . .

AMERICAN. Get tight if you want, honey. It' the last night!

(To the STEWARD):

1ST AMERICAN LADY (suck
ing her green creme-de-menthe
frappe). The smoke room was so
gay last night when Mr. Dodsworth
auctioned off the Pool. Tonight
I think I'd rather watch the
dancing.

2ND AMERICAN LADY (look-
ing up from her figuring).
Have you taken many books
out of the library?

DODSWORTH

Six champagne cocktails and one gin fizz.

STEWARD. And a gin fizz, sir.

APPENDIX IV

LETTER FROM MRS. ELLIOTT LESTER

August 13th, 1964

Mr. John Clifford
College of Communication Arts
Department of Speech
Michigan State University
East Lansing, Michigan

My dear Mr. Clifford:

I have been away and found your letter on my return home. Mr. Elliott Lester died on Feb. 23rd, 1951. The Copyright was not renewed on the play "Two Seconds". I do not have a copy of the play available to send you.

If you do decide to include this play in your thesis perhaps I may be able to furnish you with some of the details concerning the writing and production of the play. Mr. Lester conceived the idea of making the stage play look like a black and white movie film. All scenes were in shades of white, grays and black with the exception of the final scene when the current was supposed to be turned on in the electric chair and then everything was lit by a red glow. Of course there was no color film being used at that time.

At the close of each scene whatever sound heard when the stage was darkened was continued over into the next scene. For instance the sound of the riveter's drill became the sound of a vacuum cleaner in the following scene. The 22 scenes were set-up on a jack-knife

set and opened into place when the lights returned.

Good wishes for the success of your thesis.

Sincerely,

MRS. ELLIOTT LESTER

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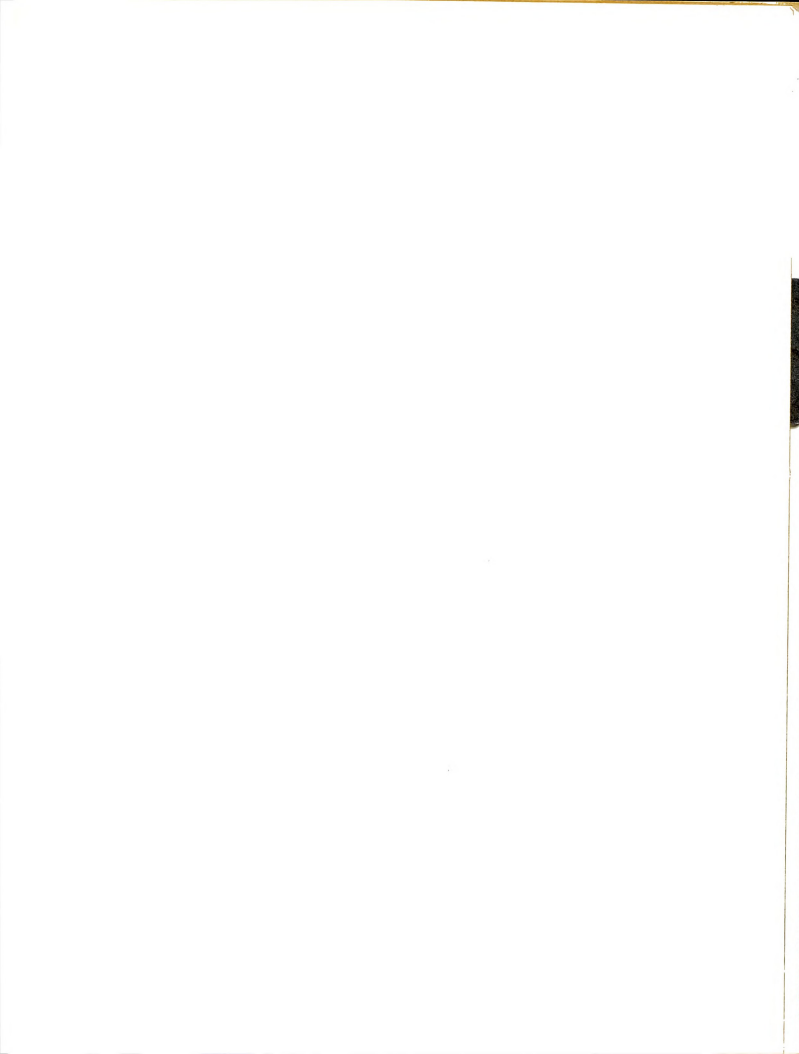
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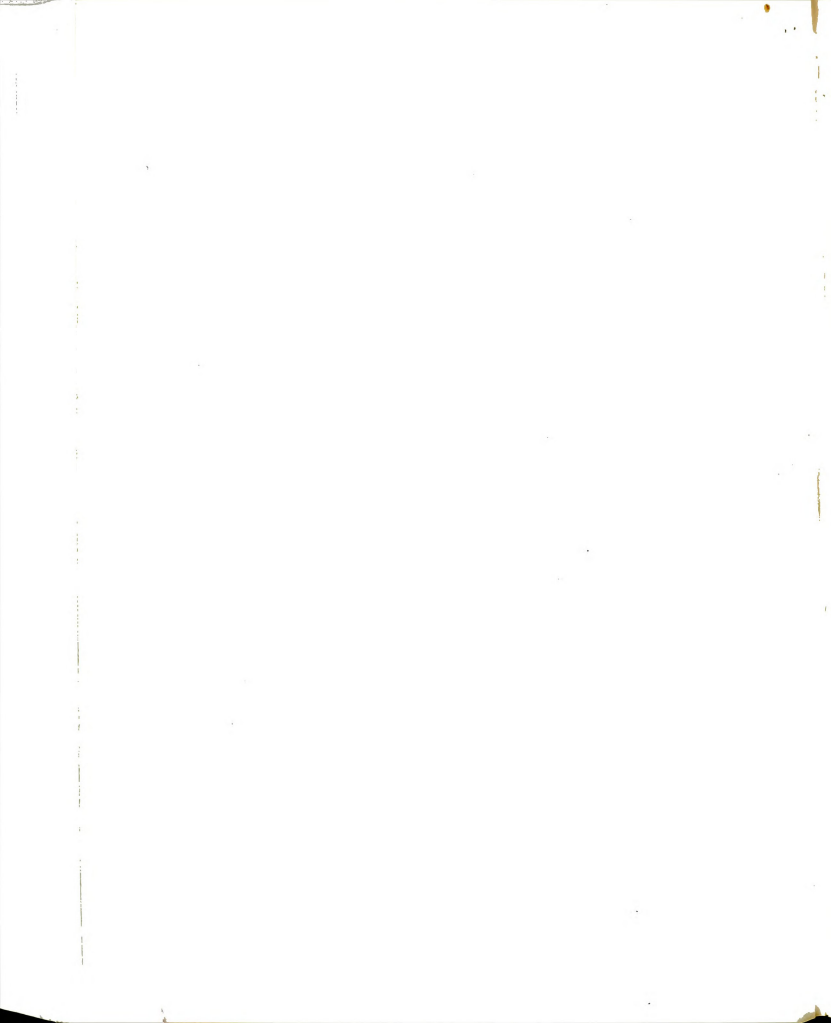
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