THEATRICAL CRITICISM IN THE NEW YORK EVENING POST, 1801-1830

Thesis for the Degree of Ph. D.

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This is to certify that the

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ABSTRACT

THEATRICAL CRITICISM
IN THE NEW YORK EVENING POST, 1801-1830

by

Armand Elroy Falk

The object of the present study is to give an account of theatrical criticism in the New York Evening Post from its inception to 1830. The "theatrical critic" is one to whom the drama exists primarily as a performance in the theater. He is influenced in his critical principles, his attitudes and his judgments by his presence in the theater where he is subjected to all the arts of the playwright, actor and producer. All the writings about current productions will be examined, whether they deal with plays, new or old, or with the acting and other aspects of the performances. At one extreme will be the discussion of the financial and personal affairs of the theaters, their managers and patrons; at the other discussions of drama in general, its artistic principles and its social function. Theatrical criticism, where it attempts to be criticism worthy of the name, will reflect the contemporary ideas about drama, will give the historian of the drama important information, and will afford vivid glimpses of the living drama. Sometimes the theatrical critics will represent the learned English critics who clung to the established theories; at other times they will represent the common playgoers of New York.

Occasionally, however, they will be seen striking out on new lines themselves and demanding, through the very nature of their own task, new ways of looking at drama and new principles by which to judge it.

Whatever the intrinsic merit of these reviews, there can be little doubt, considering the central importance of the Evening Post, its consistently moderate stance, and its gradual shift with the political and social trends of the day, that they furnish a reasonably accurate index to changing American tastes in the early nineteenth century. With their different vocabularies, their different standards, their different aims, these reviews have been as much the product of their times as the theater has been which they have covered. The present study attempts to deal exhaustively with the reviews contained in one periodical during one period of the history of American theater. It is intended to lead to a more comprehensive survey of the body of opinion and information which remains untouched in early American periodicals.

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IN

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By

Armand Elroy Falk

A THESIS

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To my wife goes gratitude for patience and forbearance which were only part of a very real and material contribution.

Finally, I wish to dedicate my efforts to the memory of my mother, Palma Rocelia Falk, 1905-1966.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

A. THE AMERICAN SCENE

The period between the Revolutionary War and Andrew Jackson's first term as President was marked by several distinct changes in American letters. In retrospect the most important of these was a shift from a derivative neo-classicism to the beginnings of a native romanticism. In addition, the first internationally known American writers made their appearance; the work of American poets, novelists and playwrights appeared in quantity in England for the first time; and English actors and actresses finally began to find the trip to America financially and artistically rewarding.

Many of these cultural changes could not have been foreseen during the Federalist decade, 1790-1800. Then the great men of the American Revolution had set themselves to the task of political consolidation, uncertain at the end of the Constitutional Convention of 1787, and by 1800 had forged the nation's political framework. But the tempering remained. In the decade following the ratification of the Constitution, its originators and the implementers of its theory had gone--Franklin, Hancock, Washington, Patrick Henry in the 1790's; Sam Adams, Hamilton, Robert Morris, Thomas Paine in the

early 1800's. To a new generation--Henry Clay, John C. Calhoun, Daniel Webster, Andrew Jackson--fell the task of overcoming sectionalism and infusing the country with a national spirit.

It has become commonplace to use as symbols of this change the men who best represent the beginning and the end of the period, Thomas Jefferson and Andrew Jackson. The Federalists saw Thomas Jefferson as a threat not only to their own power, but to society and the nation. They viewed him as a man of illusions and "unbounded power of evil." His own words seemed to bear out the fears of the Federalists when he stated, in retrospect, "The revolution of 1800 was as real a revolution in the principles of government as that of 1776 was in its form."[1]

But Jefferson's "revolution" was destined to be abortive, for by 1815, under the pressure of British power, his position was increasingly assuming the coloring of Federalism, and the rights of the states were being sacrificed to the exigencies of war. Agrarian theories succumbed as the embargo stimulated the development of domestic commerce and industry.

But in other and more important respects, the knell of Federalism which Jefferson sounded was final. By 1821 that party had

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[1]Richard Hofstadter, William Miller and Daniel Aaron, The American Republic to 1865 (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1959), p. 293.

become the party of the past. New York State, earlier a bastion of Federalism, found it expedient to replace its Federalist constitution. Seven years earlier it had reversed the political structure of the Assembly 74-38 and had sent Congress twenty-one Republicans and only six Federalists.[2] Only in New England, where the embargo forced it, did Federalism survive.

Had the nation not already made great progress toward democracy by 1820, the period from 1820-1828 might almost be considered another "revolution." As it was, however, the election of Jackson in 1828 was only the climax of the strong impulse toward democracy that had begun long before and had swept through the American states. The crest on a breaking wave of human experience, Jacksonian democracy went far beyond changes in political institutions. It underlined the nationalistic tendencies of the United States, it increased individualism and enterprise, it affected education, the professions, literature and religion, and it made clear the differences between American society and European society. Before 1815 America might still have become several distinct nations, but between 1815 and 1828 the course of American development became fixed and its divergence from older societies was defined.

Political change had its counterpart in letters and the period from 1776 to 1830 was broadly the transitional period during which

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[2] Henry Adams, The Formative Years (London: Collins, 1948), p. 874.

literary neoclassicism was receding and nineteenth century Romanticism was approaching. The neoclassicists were, for the most part, those writers born prior to the Revolutionary War--Dwight, Barlow, Brackenridge, Trumbull. They had much the same intellectual orientation as the men who made the American Revolution. Their work was nearly completed by the turn of the century. The next generation consisted of the writers born after the Revolution, but prior to the turn of the century--Irving, Cooper, Paulding, Bryant, Drake, Halleck. They emerged from neoclassicism but worked some important modifications upon it. These are the literary figures of the period of this study and they bear comparison intellectually to Jefferson, John C. Calhoun, Henry Clay, Daniel Webster and Andrew Jackson.

In addition, the growth of literary nationalism underscored the distinctiveness of American culture. Complaints had been voiced as early as 1729 that there was a need for an intellectual life adequate to the time and the country, but the most important years in the campaign for an American literature were post-1800.

In the midst of the period under examination, the Federalists were accused of maintaining that American letters "must wait for all improvements from abroad, acquire a literary tone from the mother country . . . and wait for decision on its merits or demerits, from the higher authorities of London."[3] On the other hand, the Democrats felt that the transition to national letters should be easy. One

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[3]North American Review, I(1815), 312-313.

of the first proponents of radical, rapid change was Noah Webster, who demanded no "American apologetics" and called for purely American critical standards in 1800. Walter Channing found it lamentable that the Revolution had not caused a confusion of tongues to facilitate the formation of a national literature.[4]

The War of 1812 added impetus to the struggle and the periodicals of the time gave expression to it. The Port-Folio made a typical statement about this feeling in 1816.

> We are yet without a name distinguished in letters. But this reproach must also pass away. In forming their style and manner, let our writers emulate the ambition, diligence and zeal that have so eminently characterized our gentlemen of the sword, and the object for which they contend must be inevitably attained. Many years cannot run their course, till our country shall have become as renowned in literature, as she is in arms.[5]

The attacks on America by such critics as Sydney Smith and Mrs. Trollope brought strong reactions in the United States and served to promote the cause of literary nationalism. One of the best pre-Emersonian statements was that of William Ellery Channing in 1829. He found it fruitless to look to other civilizations, the past, patriotism and romantic love for themes. American literary accomplishments should be those which were distinctly American, they should not be divorced from its institutions or life. Channing's inspiration was a life in which man could rise to his full stature through the release of all human potentialities in ways hitherto undreamed--

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[4]Earl Bradsher, "The Rise of Nationalism in American Literature," Studies for William A. Read, ed. N. M. Cafee and Thomas Kirby (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1940), pp. 272-274.

[5]Port-Folio, I(January 1816), 76.

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science, refinement of taste and imagination, moral and religious truths.[6] Channing's vision of America's promise was seen by few in the first three decades of the nineteenth century.

Against this background the theatrical criticism of the New York Evening Post, one of the few bodies of criticism that spans the period from 1800-1830, will be examined. Many studies have been made before of American theaters and performers in New York and elsewhere. In some of the biographies and histories, attempts have been made to recover from old periodicals the contemporary opinions about theaters, actors and plays. One work, The American Theatre as Seen by Its Critics, 1752-1934 edited by Montrose Moses and John Mason Brown, has attempted, in their words, to recapture a sense of what our theater of the past was like when it still belonged to the theater and not to the historian. But of their collection of 104 critical essays, barely a dozen were drawn from the years before 1852. The present study attempts to deal exhaustively with the reviews contained in one periodical during one period of the history of American theater. It is intended to lead to a more comprehensive survey of the body of opinion and information which remains untouched in early American periodicals.

I have borrowed the distinction between "theatrical criticism" and "dramatic criticism" from Charles Harold Gray's Theatrical Criticism in London to 1795. The "theatrical critic" is one to whom

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[6]William Ellery Channing, "Remarks on National Literature," Works, I (Boston: American Unitarian Association, 1871) 243-280.

the drama exists primarily as a performance in the theater. He is influenced in his critical principles, his attitudes and his judgments by his presence in the theater where he is subjected to all the arts of the playwright, actor and producer. The "dramatic critic" may at times dissociate the experience in the theater from that which he has in his own private imaginative reading of the play.

Since the object of the present study is to give an account of theatrical criticism in the New York Evening Post, all the writings about the current productions will be examined, whether they deal with plays, new or old, or with the acting and other aspects of the performances. At one extreme will be the discussion of the financial and personal affairs of the theaters, their managers and patrons; at the other, discussions of drama in general, its artistic principles and its social function. Theatrical criticism, where it attempts to be criticism worthy of the name, will reflect the contemporary ideas about drama, will give the historian of the drama important information, and will afford vivid glimpses of the living drama. Sometimes the theatrical critics will represent the learned English criticis who clung to the established theories; at other times they will represent the common playgoers of New York. Occasionally, however, they will be seen striking out on new lines themselves and demanding, through the very nature of their own task, new ways of looking at drama and new principles by which to judge it.

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B. AMERICAN JOURNALISM

To determine the significance of the Evening Post and relate it to drama, American journalistic and theatrical history must be sketched. One of the distinctive features of American society at the beginning of the nineteenth century was its already well-established dependency upon the press. References to the newspaper reading propensities of Americans were frequent in the early journals and travel books of America's European visitors. Not only did these early tourists comment on the appearance of a newspaper in the hands of workingmen at all hours of the day, but some inferred that the success of the American experiment in its early stages was due to the newspaper. Alexis de Tocqueville stated, "Only the journalists strike me as truly American. They are certainly not great writers, but they speak their country's language and they make themselves heard."[7]

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[7]Alexis de Tocqueville, Democracy in America, trans. George Lawrence (New York: Harper and Row, 1966) p. 439.

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At about the same time, another traveller declared, "The influence and circulation of newspapers is great beyond anything ever known in Europe. In truth, nine-tenths of the population read nothing else . . . Every village, nay, almost every hamlet, has its press . . . Newspapers penetrate to every crevice of the Union."[8]

American newspapers had naturally taken their cue from the English newspapers, but the development of the colonial newspaper had lagged behind the English journals for reasons that are obvious: population in America was too small and scattered, illiteracy remained quite high, trade and commerce were undeveloped, and intercolonial communication was slow. Consequently, the American Revolution brought about two important changes in American journalism. Both of these were intimately related to the development of the country, one politically and the other economically.

Prior to the Revolutionary period, the American newspaper was pretty generally made up of materials taken from London journals. What space remained, usually about one-third of the newspaper, was composed of items on ship arrivals, deaths, sermons, political appointments, storms, Indian depredations, piracy, counterfeiting, fires, accidents, court actions, etc. In the beginning this material was treated as orderly history, which gave rise to the situation of John Campbell of Boston, who once fell thirteen months behind in the printing of these news items. One of the earliest developments of significance in American journalism was the conviction that the news should be current.

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[8]Thomas Hamilton, Men and Manners in America, II (Edinburgh: Blackwood, 1833), 73-74.

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Of much greater importance to American political growth was the belief that the newspaper should be outspoken. The era of the political press in America can be dated to the general resistance to the Stamp Act in 1765. But Sam Adams' struggle against the coercive bill epitomized an age which inherited a legacy dating from the suppression of Benjamin Harris' Public Occurrences Both Foreign and Domestick in 1690 and including James Franklin, Peter Zenger and many others. By the end of the War of Independence, the newspaper press had gained greatly in stature and possessed the confidence of the political leaders.

The second major change in American journalism was concomitant to the evolution of American commerce. Publication of the earliest American newspapers was looked upon as a public service, frequently in connection with the post office. Soon, however, the influence of the English journals was felt, and advertising was introduced. In time, it came to provide a substantial portion of the support of journalism and by 1800 represented one-half the contents of many newspapers.[9] Samuel Loudon's Mercantile Advertiser, founded in 1792, and Noah Webster's American Minerva, later the Commercial Advertiser, begun in 1793 were both portents of the time to come when, between 1810 and 1820, half the daily papers in America bore the word "Advertiser."[10] By 1830 sixty to eighty percent of many dailies consisted of advertising.

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[9]Frank Luther Mott, American Journalism, 1690-1960 (New York: Macmillan, 1962), p. 201.

[10]Bernard A. Weisberger, The American Newspaperman (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), p. 70.

The typical paper during the period from 1801 through 1830 devoted three-fourths of the first page to advertising and the remainder to literary miscellany or political essays; page two contained foreign and domestic news or a political speech or letter; page three, containing the editorial column and local items, was filled out with advertising; and the last page was all advertising.[11] Before 1801 many newspapers maintained a column or two of comment by the editor, in addition to the comments and letters interspersed throughout the paper.

The divided nature of American journalism in the early nineteenth century was well described in the comments of two Americans. As early as 1816, John C. Calhoun had concluded that banks had "in great measure, a control over the press."[12] Conversely, James Fenimore Cooper was satisfied that the public press "as a whole" owed "its existence to the schemes of interested political adventurers."[13] The truth lay somewhere in between. The dynamics of American journalism at this time sprang from the dependence of political parties and business enterprises upon public favor.

But while political and commercial matter dominated the newspapers, other material was not excluded. The tradition of the newspaper as a means of entertainment can be traced in America to

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[11] Mott, American Journalism, p. 202.

[12] John C. Calhoun, Works, ed. Richard K. Cralle, II (New York: Appleton and Company, 1881), 162.

[13] Elwyn B. Robinson, "The Dynamics of American Journalism from 1787-1865," Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography, LXI (1937), 435-445.

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James Franklin's New England Courant in 1721, which in turn had taken its inspiration from the Spectator and Guardian. The newspaper's contribution to drama also began early in the eighteenth century when theatrical notices became common in the papers of Charleston and other southern towns. In 1732 the New England Weekly Journal published The London Merchant, or the History of George Barnwell.[14] After midcentury theatrical notices appeared in the Philadelphia and New York newspapers. In 1782 theatrical criticism appeared in the Maryland Journal. The self-appointed critic, "Philo-Theatricus," wrote a review of "The Tragedy of Venice Preferr'd" on March 9th of that year. Thereafter reviews appeared regularly during the life of the paper.[15]

Newspaper editors were consistent publishers of poetry through the nineteenth century, but the tendency after the appearance of the magazine in the mid-eighteenth century and the expansion of book publishing in the early nineteenth century was toward less purely literary offerings in the daily or weekly journal. Nevertheless, as shall be shown, the newspaper remained quite prominent in entertainment and arts simply because the magazine was exceedingly unstable.

The newspaper was only slightly more stable, however, and a reflection of the tumultous state of American journalism may be found in a statistical analysis of the New York City press. Of seventy-eight

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[14]Sidney Kobre, The Development of the Colonial Newspaper (Pittsburgh, 1944), p. 47.

[15]Ibid., 163.

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newspapers of all types, weekly, monthly and daily, which appeared in New York City between 1801 and 1820, only five, the Commercial Advertiser, the Evening Post, the New York Gazette, the Mercantile Advertiser, and the Spectator spanned the period. Three of these, the Evening Post, the Commercial Advertiser, and the New York Gazette, were the only dailies to survive out of the twenty-one founded during the period.[16] It is necessary to note also that at least one historian found two of these newspapers to be important in the 1820's. Payne stated, "with the exception of Mordecai M. Noah of the New York Advocate, William L. Stone of the Commercial Advertiser, and William Coleman of the Evening Post, the papers were unimportant and the editors too much given to personal and futile abuse."[17]

The early newspaper editor had been in reality a printer first and an editor later. It was only with the Revolutionary War that he assumed a function distinct from that of the printer. Of prime importance to the intent of this study is the fact that during this period the printer-as-editor gave way to the editor-as-man-of-letters. As a consequence of the newspaper's avowed intent to mold public opinion, the editorial column gained prominence during this period and its author became increasingly cultured, if not genteel. The partisan newspaper of Jefferson's day was apt to be under the control of an educated man with a firm point of view which he was willing to put at the disposal

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[16]Clarence S. Brigham, History and Bibliography of American Newspapers, 1690-1820 (Worcester: American Antiquarian Society, 1947), pp. 606-706.

[17]George H. Payne, History of Journalism in the United States (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1920), p. 242.

of a like-minded individual in public life. Money might be involved, but only to keep the paper operating, not to buy ideas. The finest examples of the new breed of editor in the post-war period were probably Philip Freneau of the National Gazette in 1791 and William Coleman of the Evening Post in 1801. Both men were on a cultural level far superior to that of the ordinary printer who learned to read and write at the font.

In addition to being cultured, the head of a newspaper in the early national period was also forced to be a man of action. Most editors would probably have subscribed in part to the statement of William Cobbett in his Porcupine's Gazette in 1797, "Profession of impartiality I shall make none . . . I have not descended from the Censorial chair merely to become a newsmonger . . . I have not taken up that cut-and-thrust weapon, a daily paper, without a resolution not only to make use of it myself, but to lend it to whomsoever is disposed to assist me."[18] Henry Adams referred to William Duane of the Aurora as "a scurrilous libeler" and went on to add, "but so was Cobbett; so was William Coleman; so was Joseph Dennie of the Portfolio."[19]

Perhaps the contrast between the newspaper about to be examined and that of a later day is best illustrated by two statements of purpose. The first is a summary of the prospectus of the Gazette of the United States, April 15, 1789. The editor here claimed his ambition for

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[18] Weisberger, p. 47.

[19] Adams, p. 61.

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the paper to be the organ of the government, to print debates and important papers and to contain serious and thoughtful articles on government. He wished for the patronage of the people of wealth and culture and offered them such reading as would please them. He also wanted the good will of the "mechanics."

The second statement is that with which Benjamin H. Day introduced the New York Sun on September 3, 1833. "The object of this paper is to lay before the public, at a price within the means of everyone, all the news of the day, and at the same time offer an advantageous medium for advertisements."

While the American newspaper appeared by the end of the eighteenth century to be firmly established as a molder of opinion and purveyor of partisan politics, the American magazine was struggling merely to survive. Of the forty-five magazines founded prior to 1794, only one, the New Hampshire Jounal, or Farmer's Weekly Museum saw the nineteenth century. In New York City, of the thirty-nine magazines which appeared between 1801 and 1830, not one existed continuously throughout the period.[20]

The nature of these magazines was as varied as the society in which they were created and their circulation was limited: the Port Folio never published more than 2,000 copies, the North American Review had five or six hundred subscribers in 1820. They combined

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[20]Statistics are drawn from Frank Luther Mott, A History of American Magazines, 1741-1850 (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1930).

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politics with literature and borrowed freely from all sources, a characteristic they shared with the newspapers. The periodical essay was the staple for magazines throughout this period. Later, fiction became the chief reliance for the weekly miscellanies and the women's magazines. Another common source of material was biography and biographical anecdote.[21]

Until the rapid rise of the theater took place in New York toward the end of the third decade of the nineteenth century, little theatrical criticism appeared in magazines. The attitude toward the theater in America prior to 1794 was typified by a remark in the American Magazine and Monthly Chronicle. Speaking of "Operas, Plays, Ridottos, Masquerados, etc." the writer said, "If, in this detach'd quarter of the globe, we are, as yet, strangers to these names, and to the things meant by them, 'tis one circumstance of our felicity. May we always continue to be so."[22] Even so, by the end of the century notices of plays appeared, as they had been appearing for decades, and the New-York Magazine included a department called the "Theatrical Register" which ran for a year and a half. Probably written by William Dunlap, it was the most important body of dramatic criticism in an American magazine in the eighteenth century. One theatrical magazine, the Thespian Oracle in Philadelphia, lasted one issue.

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[21] Ibid., pp. 173-174.

[22] American Magazine and Monthly Chronicle, I (December 1757), 117.

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Under such circumstances, periodicals devoted entirely to the theater would seem to be inconceivable, but following the turn of the century seven theatrical magazines appeared before 1830. The Theatrical Censor in Philadelphia lasted almost one year. John Howard Payne's Thespian Mirror in New York survived for three months in 1806. Another Theatrical Censor in Philadelphia lived for three months. The Thespian Monitor persisted throughout the 1809 season, as did the Rambler's Magazine and New York Theatrical Register for the Season 1809-1810. The last of the post-1800 drama magazines to appear before 1830 was Whim, published for a season (1814) in Philadelphia. Perhaps the most important of the mgazines was the Mirror of Taste and Dramatic Censor, in four volumes of six numbers each, which appeared during 1810 and 1811 in Philadelphia. It contained portraits of actors and interesting and valuable criticism of the stage and of theatrical life.[23]

Some general magazines also wrote about the theater. Prior to 1801 two magazines in New York City had given some attention to the theater, the Monthly Magazine published from April 1799 to December 1800, and the Weekly Magazine published from July 1, 1795, to August 23, 1797. Outside of New York, the Philadelphia Monthly Magazine carried an article on the actress Mrs. Merry in 1798.

With the founding of the Port Folio in Philadelphia in January 1801, the most significant periodical devoting a portion of its space to the theater appeared. For the first eight years of its

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[23] Mott, American Magazines, pp. 165-166.

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existence, the Port Folio contained almost everything produced in light literature in the United States. It represented the literary efforts of the time and excluded neither the meritorious nor the dull. Although it was noted for its conservatism, it showed inconsistencies. At times it was ready to welcome innovations contradicting every established canon.[24] The magazine had a regular department of drama and had a longer life than any previous American magazine, surviving until December 1827.

In Boston, the Boston Weekly and its successor the Emerald ran consecutively from October 30, 1802, until October 15, 1808, and after the first issue regularly devoted space to a "Thespian Department." Also in Boston, the Polyanthos carried theatrical notices and its editor, Joseph T. Buckingham, incurred the wrath of Edgar Allan Poe's father for his remark, "Little Pickle, by Mrs. Poe, if we may be allowed the use of a pun, was a very green Little Pickle."[25] Buckingham later gave special attention to Boston theaters in his New England Galaxy, 1817-1834.

In Baltimore, the Portico, which stressed literary criticism, divided its attention among poetry, fiction and drama from January 1816 to June 1818. A weekly record of the New York theater appeared in the New York Mirror after its founding in August 1823. This week-by-week story of productions was supplemented by editorial commentary and theatrical sketches. William Leggett's Critic also

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[24] Adams, p. 1010.

[25] Polyanthos, IV (March 1807), 281.

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appeared briefly in New York from November 1, 1828, to May 2, 1829, and contributed some theatrical criticism.

Other magazines usually remained silent in regard to the theater and broke out only in criticism of abuses. Biglow's American Monthly Magazine in May 1817 found it necessary to apoligize for beginning a department called the "Thespian Register" and the Monthly Anthology was critical of some female patrons of the theater in February 1810. The Portico, although devoting considerable space to theatrical criticism, found it necessary to sum up the theater in 1817 as "Nought but ignorance and vulgarity clamorously enjoying the lowest obscenity and farce."[26]

C. AMERICAN THEATER

In 1800 America was also feeling the effects of a growing demand for theatrical entertainment. Like the periodicals, the theater was a social phenomenon requiring large numbers of people with a certain amount of leisure time. It is unnecessary to trace in detail the development of the theater in America prior to this period, but a sketch is essential to an understanding of conditions at the turn of the century. The earliest known theatrical performance occurred in Virginia in 1665 and apparently was an amateur production. Thirty-seven years later, incipient theatrical interest in America promoted the appearance in South Carolina of Anthony Aston, a travelling professional actor from England via Jamaica. There were

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[26] Portico, III (May 1817), 371.

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doubtless other performances and other performers, but even though the South was comparatively cordial in its welcome to travelling performers, the conditions of life in America were not. In New England the puritanical prejudice and intolerance to the stage fed on the memories of the reigns of James and Charles.

Paradoxically, perhaps the greatest impetus to drama in America was given by the very event that for a period of twenty years caused its official banishment--the Revolutionary War. By 1752 theaters had been erected in New York City and in Williamsburg and also in that year the first important company of players arrived in America, led by Lewis Hallam. During the next twenty years theatrical seasons were held in New York, Philadelphia, Annapolis, Charleston and other smaller towns. The proprietors of the company usually were faced with the construction of a building to accommodate the troup and very commonly encountered the resistance of a large segment of the population. Although the moral opposition gradually weakened, the political opposition increased in the period just prior to the war. Just as the drama became accepted as an educational force and intolerance and prejudice broke down, opposition to all things English increased and legal restrictions became more stringent.

In 1774 the Continental Congress passed a resolution which made an economic rather than a moral judgment. They asserted that, "we will . . . discountenance and discourage every species of extravagance and dissipation, especially all horse-racing, and all kinds of gaming, cock-fighting, exhibitions of shews, plays, and other

expensive diversions and entertainments."[27] Though Congress had no power to enforce its ruling, it was accepted with varying degrees of alacrity by the colonies and, reinforced by the exigencies of war, most theaters were closed. The decrees laid down by some of the colonies remained on the books until as late as 1793, but in many cases the theaters had no sooner closed than the British re-opened them. The colonials responded to the amateur theatricals of the British and public interest was maintained in the acted drama throughout the war. The professional British approach to drama also aided in maintaining high standards. More importantly, the Revolution provided a wedge for American playwrights in the form of the political pieces written by Mercy Otis Warren, Hugh Henry Brackenridge and Jonathan Mitchell Sewall, some of which were published but not produced.

With the end of the war the professionals began to return. Prohibitory acts were repealed in colony after colony until the last fell in Rhode Island and Massachusetts. The first successful American play, Royall Tyler's Contrast, appeared in 1787, and with the rise of competition among theatrical companies, the quality of acting rose. Although it remained almost entirely derivative, the theater felt the impulse toward expansion and improvement that was the result of the successful completion of the war and the establishment of the new nation. With the appearance of William Dunlap and the opening in 1798 of the Park Theater in New York City, America served notice

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[27] Journals of the Continental Congress 1774-1789, ed. Washington Chauncey Ford, I (Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1904), 78.

that it no longer intended to be a mere outpost of the London stage.

If the battle with moral authorities had ended, much remained to be done in other areas. From 1798 to the end of the second British war, the American theater was engaged in a constant struggle to survive. The theater stood in desperate need first of all of a large play-going public. In the larger towns, yellow fever struck with tragic regularity, killed many, turned the cities into ghost towns and postponed season openings until December. In addition public apathy as a result of the dearth of effective plays was common, for the few American plays did not yet draw crowds and English drama was entering a period that had not been matched in barrenness for over two centuries. National affairs also lured men's attention away from the drama. Conditions were such that the prosperity, in fact, even the very existence, of the theater was tenuous. Dunlap's bankruptcy in 1805 was largely the result of the theatrical depression that was also felt in Boston and Philadelphia.

The crucial period came after the War of 1812. In 1816 Mr. and Mrs. John Barnes arrived in New York, marking the first of the growing tide of prominent English actors. Professor Odell judged that their arrival made the New York Company the finest in the nation. The most tangible evidence of the New York stage's solid position was he erection of the Bowery Theater in 1826. And the Bowery, which offered the first serious competition to the Park Theater, was by no means the only competition, for the Chatham Garden had opened in 1824 and operated until 1827 and the LaFayette had served the public

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from July 1825 until it burned in April 1829. Similar ventures in Boston and Philadelphia met with disaster.

Additional support for the New York theater's growing strength resulted from New York's position as the logical port of entry to the United States for English performers. Consequently, New York came to benefit from the initial appearances of these stars in America as well as gradually becoming the booking agency for the rest of the nation. While the star system clearly weakened the theater in the long run, it is equally obvious that it was of inestimable immediate benefit to the New York theater.

New York City also had a share in the center of American dramatic writing between 1800 and 1830. Of the half-dozen dramatists of ability who bridged the gap between William Dunlap and the later so-called Philadelphia school, Samuel Woodworth, Mordecai M. Noah and John Howard Payne all produced their work in New York City. Of native-born actors, James H. Hackett was the most prominent to debut in New York. Philadelphia maintained her dominance in this respect largely through the appearance of Edwin Forrest in 1820, but even then New York was alluring to the aspiring as well as the successful, and by the end of the third decade of the nineteenth century Forrest was in New York, too, along with foreign-born Henry Placid, Junius Brutus Booth, Henry Wallack and George H. Barrett. By the end of the first quarter of the nineteenth century, American theater in general was giving strong evidence that it was rapidly coming of age.

By 1830, then, the stage in the United States had established itself and New York City appeared to be its center. The drama, although for the most part undistinguished, was increasingly showing the effects of the emphasis on American materials for American audiences. Of the list of approximately 1,600 plays appended to Arthur H. Quinn's study of American drama to 1860, 450 were published or produced prior to 1830. That many of these plays did not impress the reviewers will become obvious as we examine the reviews. That many of them were not even produced initially in American theaters is a peculiarity that has already been touched upon. Furthermore, increasing leisure and the growing popularity of stage productions brought a demand that additional notice be taken of the theater in American newspapers and magazines. The result was a body of criticism of significant size which was devoted to the productions of the American stage, whether English or American.

CHAPTER II

THE EVENING POST

A. ORIGINS

In the city of New York the Evening Post presented a contrast to the tumultuous and brief careers of most of the newspapers and magazines around it. In an age when, as has been shown, newspaper circulation was limited, the Evening Post almost immediately reached a circulation of 1,600 copies. In an era when average magazine and newspaper life was two years or less, the Evening Post survived, almost intact, for over one hundred years. With few exceptions the s tance it took on political and social matters was comparatively moderate and it maintained its dignity nearly all the time.[1]

After the Federalist defeat in 1800, Alexander Hamilton felt the need to bolster the party and re-establish his dominance of it. It was clear that he needed a strong newspaper in the center of Federalism at that time, New York City. It was equally apparent that to edit this paper he needed a man as vigorous as James Cheetham of the American Citizen, but of better education and taste, to expound his doctrines. Nowhere was there a Federalist editor comparable to James T. Callender, Thomas Paine, B. F. Bache, Philip Freneau or

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[1] I am indebted throughout the following section to Chapters 1-5 of Allan Nevins, The New York Evening Post: A Century of Journalism (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1922).

William Duane. The new editor would be expected to become the leader of the Federalist press from Maine to Charleston and give guidance to such papers as the Columbian Centinel of Boston, the Courant of Hartford, Philadelphia's Gazette of the United States, and Baltimore's Federal Gazette. Consequently, early in 1801, a group including merchants Samuel Boyd, Joshua Sands and Archibald Gracie; politicians William Woolsey and Richard Varick; lawyer John Wells; and Alexander Hamilton pledged a total of $10,000 to establish a newspaper and to find a suitable editor.

Few American newspapers to this time had been as fortunate in their initial supporters or as financially blessed as this one. Perhaps most fortunate of all, however, was the selection of the printer and the editor. Michael Burnham, the printer, had the financial perspicacity to make the paper an economic success, but more important, William Coleman had the taste andeducation to make it a journalistic success.

The man who was later to be called by his opponents "the Field Marshall of Federal Editors"[2] came from the world of polite and conservative letters. He was a graduate of Phillips Andover Academy and a friend of Charles Brockden Brown, Joseph Rodman Drake and Fitz-Greene Halleck. In addition, he was a constant reader and his editorials showed a knowledge of the standard English authors--Shakespeare, Milton, Hume, Johnson, Fielding, Smollett and numerous

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[2]Payne, p. 192.

eighteenth century poets and essayists. He had a knowledge of Latin and Greek as well, which he was to demonstrate on occasion in his new capacity.

Nor was Coleman entirely without journalistic experience, as he had established a newspaper in Greenfield, Massachusetts, the Impartial Intelligencer, for which he had written but had not edited. His main accomplishments when called upon at age 35 by Hamilton were a successful law practice in Greenfield, two years in the Massachusetts House, and a good start toward becoming a local dignitary. He had studied law under Robert Treat Paine and was an intimate friend of the Reverend Aaron Bancroft. Aside from his financial reverses when he invested in the Yazoo Purchase, the only thing which seemed to cause him regret at this time was a partnership he had entered briefly with Aaron Burr.

Not only was Coleman educationally well qualified for the post, but he was a man of independent mind, who was to demonstrate repeatedly during his tenure as editor that he chose his own path. He was to resent throughout his life the imputation that he was a tool and mouthpiece of any man, and his position on the Evening Post seemed to be attributable more to the fact that he and his supporters were politically compatible than to any personal and political accommodation on Coleman's part. Coleman rarely sacrificed the paper's integrity to any special interest.

The positions that the Evening Post took in the decade before 1812--anti-war, anti-embargo, anti-administration--were those of the majority of men of property, lawyers, the faculty of Columbia College,

pastors of leading churches, and professional men in general. Allan Nevins concluded that, of the dailies extant in the first decade of the nineteenth century, "the Evening Post was the most important; its scope was the widest, its editorials were the best written, and its commercial news was as good as that obtained by Lang or Belden,"[3] the latter being editors of commercial sheets in town. Although its editor descended on occasion ot personal calumny and accusations, especially regarding Jefferson, one must remember that this was an age of vitriol in a journalism that had not yet discovered how to attack an idea and not a name. In general, the Evening Post was distinguished by a breadth and coolness reflecting the sagacity of the Federal leaders who helped shape its policy.

In addition to an independent turn of mind, Coleman was distinguished from his fellow journalists by the fact that he consistently left the pages of the Evening Post open to charitable and reform projects. Bryant observed later that Coleman "was much occupied with matters of local interest, the sanitary condition of the city, the state of its streets, its police, its regulations of various kinds."[4] No other New York editor of the time took such an interest in civic improvement and Coleman's concern was not restricted to areas in which he was not financially involved. In 1818 he took a stand against the lotteries which represented five to seven percent of his

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[3]Nevins, p. 77.

[4]Ibid., p. 65.

advertising revenue. He frequently courted the wrath of the merchants by insisting that the appearance of fever should be reported immediately and not concealed to avoid loss of business.

In many respects, however, Coleman remained typical. He was reported to have resorted to fisticuffs on occasion, and in 1818 he received a beating from which he never completely recovered at the hands of Henry B. Hagerman, about whom he published a story that would be nearly impossible to repeat in a modern newspaper. Once, referring to William Duane, his rival in Philadelphia, Coleman cited Milton's lines on the devil at Eve's ear and then begged the devil's pardon for comparing him in any shape with Duane. Of Cheetham, Coleman once said that he was so used to lying that, given the choice of truth or mendacity, he invariably preferred the latter.

Although the Evening Post remained a Federalist organ while the party dissolved, Coleman admitted after the elections of 1816 that the Federalist party was finished. In 1819 he actually defended Monroe, and by 1824 the Evening Post joined mildly in supporting Andrew Jackson. When Bryant assumed the editorship, the transition to a democratic stance was accelerated, and in 1828 the newspaper supported Jackson for his views on tariffs.

From its inception, the Evening Post was, as its founders intended, one of the most influential papers in the nation. Its patrons were, as a rule, politically minded merchants. Shortly after its founding, James T. Callender, a Democratic editor, gave his estimate of the newspaper's influence. "The people of America derive

their political information chiefly from newspapers. Duane upon one side, and Coleman upon the other, dictate at this moment the sentiments of perhaps fifty thousand American citizens."[5]

The Evening Post after 1816 was one of only a half dozen journals with men of brains and principle at their head. At that time its circulation had reached 1,600 copies exclusive of the country edition, and it was the third largest newspaper in New York. Its rivals, the Mercantile Advertiser and the Daily Gazette, rarely had more than 1 1/2 to two columns of news and frequently carried only a half column. From 1801 to 1825 the Evening Post ordinarily devoted four to five columns to news. In New York City, and to a lesser extent much of the North, the Evening Post was the single most influential periodical in America. It was also one of at most three periodicals in the nation which published continuously throughout the period and maintained a consistent attitude toward arts and letters.

In his old age, we are told, Coleman delighted to speak of his friendship with Irving, Halleck, Drake and Paulding. His newspaper was in time turned over to Bryant. Because the Evening Post circulated among the most cultivated and intellectual people of the city and because it had never forgotten that one object stated in its prospectus was "to cultivate a taste for sound literature," it became the medium for most famous set of satirical papers, save the "Biglow Papers" in American literature, the "Croaker Papers." This series alone must have

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[5] Ibid., pp. 23-24.

established the Evening Post as one of the few literary periodicals in the United States.

Coleman always attempted to keep his pages open to literature. He had established a literary department with the founding of the newspaper, and within a month he had published an original poem by "Peter Pindar" (Dr. John Wolcot), an English satirist with whom Coleman corresponded. In 1803 Coleman published a poem by the banker-poet Samuel Rogers, then highly respected. In 1804 the poem "Lines Written on Leaving Philadelphia" by Thomas Moore appeared in the Evening Post. Between original contributions, Coleman published a large number of excerpts from new English books and periodicals. Naturally, a daily department was open to much indifferent and downright bad writing, but the fact remains that the Evening Post was a consistent purveyor of literary material in the United States. It is also clear that through the practice of excerpting, the Evening Post itself received much wider circulation than the 2,000 or so copies printed would indicate. The "Croaker" poems were printed in periodicals all over the North and as far south as Washington, despite the local nature of their subject.

Insignificant as America's achievement in literature and art may have been during the eighteenth century, a large part of what was accomplished must be attributed to the desire of merchants and businessmen for entertainment and intellectual stimulation. It is not to be wondered at that the cultural centers of America were also the commercial capitals, New York, Philadelphia and Boston.

But a transformation was taking place in the centers of culture in America at the end of the eighteenth century. Boston was still distinguished for its general cultivation and high esteem for learning, but New England appeared to be at fallow. Furthermore, Philadelphia's cultural and commercial predominance was waning, as many of her best writers left to seek a more stimulating atmosphere and her merchants lost their transoceanic and tramontane monopolies. V. L. Parrington saw Philadelphia as a city "content with the ways of the eighteenth century, immersed in an oldfashioned culture."[6]

In New York City, however, a different atmosphere prevailed. Allan Nevins evoked the literary aura of New York at this time in a striking though partial description.

> A mellow atmosphere hangs over the literary annals of New York early in the last century. We think of young Irving wandering past the stoops of quaint gabled houses, where the last representatives of the old Dutch burghers puffed their long clay pipes; or taking country walks within view of the broad Tappan Zee and the summer-flushed Catskills, halting whenever he could get a good wife to favor him with her version of the legends of the countryside. We think of that brilliant rainbow which Halleck stopped to admire one summer evening in front of a coffeehouse near Columbia College, exclaiming: "If I could have my wish, it should be to lie in the lap of that rainbow and read Tom Campbell"; of Paulding, Henry Brevoort, and others of the "nine worthies" holding high revel in "Cockloft Hall" on the outskirts of Newark; and of Drake, the handsomest young man in town, like Keats studying medicine and poetry, and like Keats dying of consumption.[7]

William Coleman's New York was ready to assert her temporary

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[6]Vernon L. Parrington, Main Currents in American Thought, II (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1927) 179.

[7]Nevins, p. 96.

primacy in literature. Irving was studying law with Brockholst Livingston; Paulding was living with his sister, Mrs. William Irving; Cooper was at school in Albany; Halleck was playing about Guilford Green; and Bryant was about to begin his youthful writing at Cummington. In New York City, Charles Brockden Brown was watching the sales of Arthur Mervyn; Noah Webster had established a newspaper; Tom Paine was dividing his last days between New York and New Rochelle; Philip Freneau frequently came over from New Jersey; and William Dunlap was managing the Park Theater. There was about New York at this time an intellectual and semi-literary atmosphere.

B. THE THEATER AND THE EVENING POST

Perhaps the first printed theatrical criticism in America appeared in the Maryland Gazette in 1759. It was brief and carried on the English tradition of including copious quotations from the play. No great increase in dramatic criticism appeared subsequent to this early effort for the very good reason that, as was earlier pointed out, little time or inclination for play-going were evident.

In 1796 we find the beginnings of dramatic criticism in New York City. In that year William Dunlap related how John Wells, Elias Hicks, Samuel Jones, William Cutting, Peter Irving and Charles Adams (son of John Adams) met after visiting a play, wrote critiques and secured their publication in the daily press. Although these meetings had ended by the beginning of the period under study, a precedent had been set to which the Evening Post in 1801 and after may have been indebted. John Wells was the law partner of William Coleman. In addition, the Friendly Club of the 1790's included such

New York prominents as Dunlap, physician Elihu Hubbard Smith, Edward Miller; lawyers Anthony Bleecker, John Wells, William Johnson and James Kent; and the Reverend Samuel Miller, Charles Adams, W. W. Woolsey, Charles Brockden Brown and William Coleman.[8]

The first dramatic review to appear in the Evening Post was of William Dunlap's Lover's Vows, which was currently appearing at the Park Theater in New York City. The review appeared in the third issue of the newspaper, November 18, 1801. It seemed that the editor was determined to begin at once to fulfill the obligation incurred in his prospectus which, in part, declared that, "the design of this paper, is to diffuse among the people correct information on all interesting subjects; to inculcate just principles in religion, morality and politics; and to cultivate a taste for sound literature." The prospectus was printed on the front page of the paper for the first week and, save for an almost immediate retraction of a policy of receiving unsigned letters, remained the guideline of the newspaper's policy for more than a century.

This first review gave the impression that theatrical criticism was to be a regular feature of the newspaper. It was a full column long and was boldly headed, CRITIQUE No. 1. The initial issue of the newspaper coincided with the opening of the theatrical season two days before, which gave the impression that the editor, upon whom almost all of the work of issuing the paper fell, found time to attend the theater during the newspaper's no doubt hectic first days, and,

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[8]Eleanor Bryce Scott, "Early Literary Clubs in New York City," American Literature, V (1933) 6-8.

furthermore, wrote a lengthy criticism. More likely, however, it had been written by someone not directly connected with the Evening Post. Whatever the case, a paragraph in the editorial "we" prefaced the criticism and denied specifically the implication that dramatic reviews could be expected regularly. "We shall be governed," the editor stated, "by circumstances that may occur, and let our inclination in all cases decide, whether we shall resist or yield to the impulse."

Circumstance and inclination must have been favorable that year, for by December 31, 1801, the Evening Post had published ten reviews, none shorter than one-third column, four slightly over one column long, and one of nearly two columns. They were all signed by "Thespis" and six of the ten were on plays written or adapted by William Dunlap. The remaining four covered two plays by Shakespeare, Othello twice and Richard III, and Prince Hoare's farce, the Prize. Clearly the Evening Post was taking an immediate and strong interest in the theater, especially considering that the average space devoted to news and editorials combined seldom ran to more than four or five columns.

In 1802 "Thespis" continued reviewing until May 21, one month before the closing of the theater season in New York. All of the plays had been produced at the Park Theater. On November 26 a new signature appeared and the last two reviews of the year were signed "Arouet." A total of twenty-six critiques had appeared in 1802.

1803 was notable first of all because an unsigned article appeared in the theatrical section for the first time, harbinger of a characteristic that was to dominate from this time on. In addition,

the number of reviews published dropped to eleven for the entire year. In 1804 the number was reduced again, this time to seven. Early in 1805 the manager of the Park, William Dunlap, was forced to announce bankruptcy. Although the theater continued to operate under new management in 1805, the Evening Post did not publish any theatrical matter until late June. Once reviews began appearing again, however, the paper published thirteen in the remainder of the year.

Fourteen appeared in the first six months of 1806, but with that of June 24, the year's critical work ended abruptly. At the end of that season, the new managers of the Park, Johnson and Tyler, went their separate ways, and Thomas Abthorpe Cooper took over with William Dunlap as his assistant. Thus ended the Evening Post's first five years of theatrical criticism. Nearly one-third of the reviews that were to appear before 1830 had been published. During the next ten years fewer than forty were printed.

Overall the number of reviews published per year ranged from none in 1815 and 1827 to twenty-six and twenty-seven in 1802 and 1826. During thirteen of the years under study more than ten were published, and also during thirteen of the years fewer than ten appeared. They were scarcest during the second war with the British and in the years of political unrest that preceded and followed this era. From 1810 to 1816 no more than four plays were discussed in any one year. The financial difficulties of the Park Theater, as in 1804-1805, and the recurrent yellow fever epidemics, as in 1803, coincided with a scarcity of criticism in the columns of the newspaper.

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The years following 1827 found the Evening Post publishing a total of forty-four dramatic reviews, fifteen each in 1828 and 1829 and fourteen in 1830. Five plays by American authors were discussed in 1828 and 1829. In 1830 half of the plays treated were written by Americans and the year after almost the entire space devoted to drama was given over to American material.

The individual reviews varied greatly in length. Several were merely a few lines long, and some were combined with longer reviews of other plays. The longest by far was a four column criticism of James Fennell's The Wheel of Truth, which was also partly a defense since the play was an attack on critics, particularly the Evening Post critic. Early in the newspaper's history, the average review was one column long but within five years a half-column was most common and toward the end of the period nearly all were less than one-half column.

Only the first twenty-eight were uniformly headed. Each bore the title, "Theatrics, Critique No. 1" or 2 or whatever, and the epigraph, "Still pleased to praise but not afraid to blame." In this series, however, there appeared two number sixes and no nine or ten. From the end of this series the headings were not uniform and such headings as "theatrical," "benefit," (often with the person's name), "For the Evening Post," and, toward the end of the period, an abbreviated title of the play or the name of the actor being featured.

The productions discussed ranged from the plays of Shakespeare to the current favorites on the London stage. Occasionally plays appeared in America in the same year that they won success in London, and frequently they reached America within two years. Forty-four reviews were of plays written by American playwrights. These tended to come early or late in the period. Twenty-seven were published in 1819 or later, the remainder before 1811. By far the most consistently reviewed playwright was Shakespeare, who accounted for fifty-nine of the reviews. His closest rival was George Colman the Younger, with sixteen. Isaac Bickerstaffe was reviewed fourteen times and William Dunlap thirteen. Thomas Otway's plays, The Orphan and Venice Preserved, received eight reviews.

One hundred of the reviews were of British works produced subsequent to 1790 and when one includes in this total the forty-four discussions of American plays, approximately half the total reviews were of contemporary drama. Of the remainder, excluding the fifty-nine treatments of Shakespeare, only one was of a play that antedated 1680, that of Philip Massinger's A New Way to Pay Old Debts, twenty-five were of plays produced between 1680 and 1730, seventeen of them dramas by Rowe, Otway and Southerne, and forty-five covered plays produced initially between 1730 and 1790. The remaining six were of Italian grand opera.

The works most frequently discussed were Shakespeare's Othello and Richard III, eleven and ten times respectively. Other Shakespeare plays often reviewed were King Lear, seven, Romeo and Juliet, six,

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Macbeth and Hamlet, five each, and The Merchant of Venice, three. As will appear shortly, much of the Shakespeare criticism was of actors and acting, a common practice in all the reviews.

Other frequently treated productions were S. J. Arnold's Devil's Bridge, seven times, Thomas Otway's Venice Preserved, six times, and Isaac Bickerstaffe's Maid of the Mill, five times. Several were covered four times; Bickerstaffe's Lionel and Clarissa, Dibdin's Cabinet, Edward Moore's Gamester, Sheridan's School for Scandal, and Southerne's Isabella. Only three plays by American playwrights received more than two discussions each, Dunlap's version of Kotzebue's Pizarro, Payne's Brutus, and Stone's Metamora.

Most of the plays were produced at the Park Theater in New York City. The primary reason, of course, was that the Park monopolized public theatrical entertainment in New York City well into the third decade of the nineteenth century. Only in the later years of the period under study did an occasional review appear which indicated that the play was produced at the Bowery or the Chatham theaters.

The reviews varied in length, as noted, but the format remained much the same throughout the period. The play was almost invariably discussed as a production and rarely as a published work or as closet drama. Of the 284 reviews, a bare twenty did not include comments on performers or production. That they were concerned with the produced drama and were addressed to the theater audience was further emphasized by the lack of plot outlines; in all only twenty-one plot sketches and outlines were included.

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In the early years of the period the reviews ordinarily began with a few general comments on the play, giving author, abbreviated title, type of drama and occasionally making qualitative statements about the play or mentioning the nature of comedy or tragedy generally. Frequently the writer mentioned, in the case of an import, its success on the London stage. The major portion was devoted to a performer by performer analysis of the acting and to an assessment of the production. Occasionally a sentence of general dramatic criticism would appear in this section. The review would frequently close with a general statement about the play or with an announcement of a coming performance. Often comments on the audience were interspersed in the review.

Later the reviews tended to become more compact and much less formally organized. During the last decade of the period more and more of them were devoted entirely to the performance of a single actor. Edmund Kean, Edwin Forrest, James Hackett and others received this sort of criticism after 1821.

At no time during the period was any review given wholly to general criticism of drama or to evaluation of a play in relation to past and present theoretical notions of drama. They were supposedly practical assessments aimed at an audience apparently already familiar with the plays, and written with the intention of encouraging public attendance at further productions. That this approach did not degenerate into pure puffery is a commentary on the taste of the editors and their desire to adhere to the position taken in the newspaper's prospectus. Throughout the entire period

the newspaper also published near daily paid advertisements and brief notices giving such information as cast, time and special attractions. Nearly every performance was noted.

Only a half-dozen of the reviews may be attributed to a specific author. The six signed "Arouet" have been claimed by William Coleman in the issue of the newspaper dated February 3, 1803. William Cullen Bryant surely wrote some of the material that appeared subsequent to his employment as an editor in 1826. But to attempt positive attribution in any case is beyond the scope of this study. Without doubt the friends and companions of William Coleman contributed to the columns of his newspaper under various signatures. The collaboration of John Wells, Peter Irving, Charles Adams and others in the writing of critiques may have continued informally after the 1790's.

The signature most often found was "Thespis." It was appended to the first review published. At that time it was preceded by a capital "T." It was used for the last time, with no prefacing letter, on a review dated October 26, 1826. In the interim it was prefaced by the letters P, V, S, H, E, and O, but most frequently it stood alone. In all, fifty reviews were signed "Thespis." The second most common signatures were the previously mentioned "Arouet" and, appearing the same number of times, "Zoilus" which was used only during the year 1807. "An Impartial Spectator" was a signatory in 1817 and 1818, and the letter "Q" was found in 1828, each for five times.

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Three signatures were used four times each, all at varied intervals, "Theatricus" in 1807, 1809 and 1812; "Dramaticus" in 1809, 1813 and 1817; and "Crito" in 1820 and 1826.

The remainder of the signatures appeared with no apparent system and only once or twice. Twenty names were used and the remainder, ten in all, were initials. All the signatures used are included with the titles of the plays in the list of reviews appended to this study. A total of 126 of the reviews were signed in one manner or another.

In summary we have before us a series of reviews taken from a newspaper located in the city which was becoming the commercial and cultural center of the United States. Not only had New York City begun to dominate native American literature and drama, but she was beginning to exercise control over much that was imported as well. In the midst of this melieu few periodical publications were able to remain in continuous existence.

In addition to its position as the chief newspaper in the fastest growing city in the nation, the Evening Post appeared to have other claims to wide influence. First of all, it was throughout the period one of a half-dozen journals in the nation with men of brains and principle at their heads. Secondly, it depended for its support upon the very class that was most interested in matters of culture and entertainment in America, the only group at this time with the means, the leisure and the inclination to support literature and the arts--the commercial-merchant class. It appears from this that the Evening Post may be seen as one of the few periodicals in

the United States in a position to influence and to reflect the tastes of the patrons and the producers of literature and art in early nineteenth century America.

CHAPTER III

OF CRITICISM

Since the present paper is a study of one segment of theatrical criticism in early America, it perhaps would be well to begin with the critics' views of themselves and their assessment of their task. It must be emphasized that the reviews examined were the work of several critics and that the only iniformity imposed upon these critics was that of editorial policy and a body of ideas which appear now to have been undergoing change. Therefore, many contradictions and inconsistencies apparent in the reviews may be considered the expressions of individuals and not necessarily the result of changing notions of the theater or the drama. Occasionally excerpts from London newspapers and English magazines appeared and were acknowledged. More frequently ideas and even statements were borrowed outright without acknowledgment. There was also a body of knowledge common to critics on both sides of the Atlantic on which to draw.

Three matters related to criticism were discussed in the Evening Post often enough to make their appearance in its columns significant. First of all, the editor and the critics were concerned with justifying the appearance of reviews in the paper. Behind this attempt lay a longstanding concern with the "respectability" of the

theater and, at the same time, a concern with the distinction between the play as read and the play as produced. Secondly, the critics were much concerned with their responsibilities to the public, the performer, the theater, the play and the playwright. Finally, the Evening Post critics became embroiled occasionally in arguments over criticism in general with actors and with other critics.

The prospectus of the Evening Post established some general principles by which the critics operated.

> The design of this paper, is to diffuse among the people correct information on all interesting subjects; to inculcate just principles in religion, morality and politics; and to cultivate a taste for sound literature (November 16, 1801).

The prospectus also indicated an essential conservatism which the paper attempted to maintain in the publication of criticism and political material:

> . . . it would be inconsistent with the rules which we have prescribed to ourselves, not to declare explicitly that we never will give currency to any thing scurrilous, indecent, immoral, or profane, or which may contravene the essential principles of social order (November 16, 1801).

In the first review to be published, two days after the initial issue of the paper appeared, the editor made it clear that regularity would not be one of the features of theatrical criticism in his newspaper and claimed that "inclination" and "circumstance" would dictate its appearance. He subsequently published thirty-six reviews in the course of the next fourteen months. In 1805 the editor reiterated his position on the publication of reviews:

> It is not our intention to give a regular, much less a laboured series of theatrical criticisms during the present season. Other avocations have too strong a claim on our time to permit it: but we shall occasionally express an opinion "of plays and players" both as an amusement to ourselves and to a particular class of our readers (November 29, 1805).

The bursts of industry of 1802 and 1826 notwithstanding, the editor was true to his word and the theatrical department remained random and desultory. The editor's attitude remained apologetic through much of the period, and in 1820 he published an admission which may be seen as epitomizing his attitude:

> We hope we shall stand excused this evening for having permitted our attention to be engrossed by the theatrical department of our paper, as it is a sort of truantry, we admit, from our more grave and regular pursuits; but let it be remembered that it is not often that we thus trespass upon the good nature of those readers, who, we are perfectly aware, take but little or indeed no interest in whatever relates to that subject (November 30, 1820).

Again, three years later, the editor remarked parenthetically in a brief review, "I seldom take much interest in this department now-a-days" (December 15, 1823). We shall see later that neither the editor nor his reviewers were firmly convinced of this position.

That the reviews were written by several hands was amply witnessed by remarks in the newspaper which also went far toward explaining why some of the reviews had little to do at times with statements obviously made by the editor. Early in the paper's history, the editor admitted to the aid of "several literary friends" who "have engaged to assist him in what they conceive to be a useful and laudable undertaking" (February 3, 1803). Later, a woman signing

herself Anglo-Americus claimed that "freedom and liberality which ought to be the leading features of every public print, and which so eminently distinguishes the Evening Post" (September 23, 1809) in order to publish her reviews. In 1828 the editor revealed "a friend, whose discrimination and taste we think may be relied on, has kindly promised to supply us with a series of dramatic criticism" (February 11, 1828), and ten months later an obituary line commemorated Mr. Isaac Harby, who occasionally "honored our columns with the proofs of his learning and genius" (December 15, 1828). One of the last reviews published during the period contained an apology "for not having inserted . . . [a] communication, which has been unavoidably delayed from time to time, until now it is too late to publish it" (October 5, 1830), a not uncommon comment in the paper.

Thus the editorial attitude toward criticism, itself frequently contradicted by reviewer opinion, varied widely, ranging from the comment,

> as the town seems amply provided with stage criticisms through the medium of four different papers, we shall decline for the present to bring any more of our's [sic] into the market (December 13, 1803),

to a communication prefaced by some apologetics which sound much like those of sixteen years earlier,

> If I find they are well received . . . I shall probably send you more . . . but I mean not to promise a regular correspondence, nor intend any thing more than you shall hear from me as the whim or the occasion may dictate (December 9, 1917),

and culminating at one time, neither logical nor chronological, in the statement, answering an irate reviewer, "Our columns will never be closed against any writer of fairness and decorum, on any subject interesting to any part of the public" (December 7, 1820).

The content of the reviews provided a modicum of controversy, and a little time was spent discussing whether the "representation" or the "play" was fit matter for criticism. Initially, the editor claimed he was forced to review the stage presentation because the play "has so often been the subject of criticism" (November 18, 1801). Within a month, however, the reviewers began to treat the play rather than the presentation exclusively, claiming that "an analysis of it may not prove uninteresting to those for whose amusement these numbers are principally written" (December 17, 1801).

Nevertheless, the reviewers seemed much to prefer criticizing the stage presentation of a play. The large number of reviews devoted exclusively to acting and the preponderance in the other reviews of comments on the actual performance indicated the reviewers felt it necessary to see the play. A most clear-cut definition of the critics' position on the reasons for production may be found later in the period.

> Almost every play requires the test of an exhibition on the boards, in order to determine whether it is fitted for representation; and it is a point that cannot well be settled in the closet (February 20, 1819).

But the purpose of representation was not merely to determine whether the play was dramatically sound, for, as a reviewer pointed out the following year,

> A dramatic production may have much intrinsic merit, and please in the closet, which, yet, when it is put to the test of representation, will be found very deficient; and so vice versa. The great art consists in blending the two species of excellence (May 16, 1820).

Thus, the reviewers who expressed themselves on this point apparently felt that the good play was one that served as well in the closet as on the stage. In fact, however, the statement was often made that the "fundamental imperfections of the piece vanish in representation" (May 21, 1802), although doubtless the reviewers would also have agreed that it would have been better had many a representation never been made.

In any case, the dominant opinion seemed to be that the critic should view the stage production before attempting to pass judgment on it. At one point the Evening Post reviewers, engaged in a verbal war with the critics of the town, remarked on the speed with which some of them published, and suggested that they must have written before they saw the play. The review went on,

> The advantages of such a rare method of criticism, are numerous, inasmuch as it saves the trouble of exercising the judgment; an unwieldy quality, which like a heavy burthen retards the rapid race of juvenile genius, and checks the rampant frolicks of hair-brained imagination (December 13, 1810).

Levity notwithstanding, the general context of the reviews supported the statement--the critic should base his criticism on the acted play.

In his role as playgoer and commentator, the critic felt certain obligations and duties. In a passage commenting on the

competition that existed among the performers of the New York Company, several principles were summed up that would recur later in the Evening Post. The rivalry,

> must never lead us aside from fair and impartial criticism . . . it will be our aim so to conduct our remarks, as to render them amusing, we hope instructive, to the reader, amendatory to the actor, and above all, satisfactory to our own minds, unconscious of harboring either improper partialities or prejudices (November 26, 1802).

In addition, the writer felt he had a responsibility to the public beyond amusement, to the performer beyond correction, and to the theater as well.

The admonitions to the actor began early in the period under study. Almost immediately one reviewer admitted to being "thus particular in our censures, from a desire of seeing errors rectified which admit of correction" (December 21, 1801), and shortly thereafter another discovered,

> That regard, however, for truth and impartiality which we trust we shall never forget, and that respect for our own judgment which will not permit us to surrender it to a blind admiration, compels us to take notice of a few [ble]mishes in the performance of this evening, and to submit them to Mr. Wilson, for his correction (February 1, 1802).

This attitude of critical rectitude continued with many lapses throughout the period from 1801 to 1830. After commenting on the weaknesses of Mrs. Merry in a review published on April 30, 1802, the writer remarked, "thus far our duty as impartial critics had compelled us to express our judgment," but he was pleased to "obviate" his censure by informing the public that Mrs. Merry was sick (April 30, 1802).

The author of a review published November 26, 1802, observed that stage criticism was difficult because it was hard to be strictly just and neither injure the feelings of the individual nor unduly praise him. An interesting contrast was provided more than two years later when a long series of unbroken praises of Thomas Abthorpe Cooper was interrupted by a condemnation, and in the same review high praise was given to John E. Harwood, who had been denigrated frequently to this time (December 12, 1804). It is clear that the reviewers did not restrict themselves to praising certain actors, but gave varied opinions based on the role, the actor's physical condition and other factors. Later a critic addressed Cooper with the following passage,

> Mr. Cooper well knows that we have not been backward or niggardly in our praises of him, and we sincerely assure him, that we still are and whenever we can do so consistent with critical integrity, we shall ever be as ready to applaud and extol him, as we have heretofore been (March 11, 1806).

The general policy of the Evening Post against indiscriminate praise or condemnation of actors and actresses was summed up first in a review of John Bull.

> As it is not our method to deal in indiscriminate applause or censure, which defeats the object of criticism, we shall briefly notice a few of such particulars as may be entitled to one or deserve the other (November 29, 1803).

In another remark, a critic found,

> My experience has long since taught me that as much injuries [sic] is to be apprehended from extravagant praise as from unfounded censure . . . prudence should teach not to look for a blind approbation (March 6, 1809).

Again, in a review of The Will the critic remarked about a new actress,

> Mrs. Jones made her debut under a disadvantage of no small magnitude; her appearance having been preceded by several puffing, and we feel constrained to say, extravagant paragraphs in some of our papers. We cannot but think this very impolitic as it respects the interest of managers and unfriendly in its consequences to the subject of it. Whatever may be the real merits of an actor or actress, they must inevitably be known and they will eventually be duly appreciated by the audience; all endeavors therefore to forestall public opinion are as vain as they are injudicious and impertinent (November 29, 1805).

The encouragement of the performer then, without descending to indiscriminate praise, appeared to be one of the responsibilities assumed.

> We have seen with great pleasure the liberal encouragement which has lately been given to genius in the persons of Mr. Ogilvie and Master Payne; let us hope that no less will be shewn to female merit under the arduous and laudable endeavour to please and gratify an enlightened and beneficent people, on whose indulgence she has peculiar claims as a stranger and female (March 31, 1809).

In the middle decade of the period under study, a charge was leveled at the vague and generalizing critic, which maintained that to be helpful the reviewer owed it to the performer to be specific. After repeating a phrase from such criticism referring to an actor's "warmth and energy," the writer continued in this sarcastic vein,

> This is the true cant of canting criticism, and serves to give the poor soul who has never seen Mr. R. an admirable picture of his acting! . . . --when, where and how, is of no consequence . . . What are his intrinsick merits, what his faults, where he fails, and where he succeeds, the reader has nothing to do with.

He then went on to point out that criticism of this sort said things that meant just the opposite of what were true.

> We shall see anon that Mr. R. though he gave great satisfaction to the audience, was altogether undeserving of it, and ought to heve been fairly hissed off the stage (December 13, 1810).

The performer, then, was expected to look upon the critic as extending aid. The writer of a review of Cooper's performance as Othello made reference to some earlier remarks critical of Cooper and pointed out, "If I gave false statements, I am open to contradiction: -- if true, Mr. Cooper and his friends should thank me for a criticism founded in fact and in justice" (November 28, 1820).

Of equal importance to the responsible critic was the public, with whom he also had a mixed relationship, to serve, to amuse, to instruct and to reflect. Early in the period an article on The Poor Gentleman of George Colman the Younger did not include particular sketches of the different characters in the play because to do so "would only be anticipating and consequently diminishing the pleasure of those who have not yet seen it" (January 11, 1802). In the same review, another remark was made that was to become commonplace later when the reviewer declined to be critical of the performers and the play on opening night because a first night should always be exempt from criticism. This disinclination to pan early performances received even more specific treatment two days later when The Poor Gentleman was not critisized because it was a favorite

with the audience and because the manager deserved encouragement. The critic did not wish to "assail public taste, and thereby injure where we wish to serve" (February 11, 1802).

Nonetheless, the same criteria as lay behind the refusal to praise or blame the performers indiscriminately lay in part behind the critic's attitude toward the public. If the public deserved consideration for a play it had not seen, the reviewer was obliged to be reliable when he did review.

> In one word, we despise the insinuation . . . and assure the author . . . that if he expects from us a blind and indiscriminate partiality for any person, or any performer, or any performance in the theatre, he mistakes our character. We will never do ourselves nor the public the injustice to make sacrifice of truth to compliment, nor of fair and impartial criticism to personal friendship (December 13, 1803).

In addition, criticism should reflect the feelings of the public. In a review written in the first full year of publication, a reviewer found that "the critic may felicitate himself on his success, if in the majority of instances he is right in the opinions of the majority of his readers." In the same review the writer found it not a little gratifying that the audience was "according with our own taste" (November 26, 1802).

Twenty years later the critic was still partially the sounding board of the public, when, in a review of The Winter's Tale, it was pointed out, "we only echo public report when we say, that the statue scene is one of the most striking in histrionic effect; . . ." (May 5, 1820). It may not be that at any time the reviewers wrote

entirely to suit public taste, but this sensitivity to the theater-going public not only reflected the tenuous state of the theater, but was also a variation of a political-philosophical position we have seen demonstrated earlier.

Of more long range significance it would appear, was the behavior of the critic in behalf of the theater itself. Repeated theatrical failures made the position of the theater in any American city an uncertain affair and although New York City supported a theater constantly throughout this period, as has been shown, its existence most of the time was marginal. Hence, in the early years of the period the Evening Post's position was one of careful criticism so as not to disturb the financial equilibrium of the theater. In an almost plaintive review of Thomas Southerne's Isabella; or, The Fatal Marriage in 1807, the point was delicately made that,

> nothing, assuredly, so much contributes to the refinement of taste, nothing renders us so impatient of dullness and mediocrity, and nothing therefore so effectually assists the increase of the pleasures to be derived from the arts as the contemplation of good models. He that does well is a severe critic on him that does amiss, and to applaud what is good, is more useful than to condemn what is bad. Alas! that the Stage of New-York more frequently afforded it's [sic] critics an opportunity of shining in this better occupation (February 23, 1807).

In later years, however, the critics and reviewers were less cautious in their comments. In 1809 the Evening Post still found it necessary to apologize occasionally for criticism as, for example, "friendship alone prompts this trifling criticism, as we most sincerely wish well to the interests of the Theatre in every department"

(February 28, 1809). At the end of the same year an article was published which seemed to be aimed specifically at increasing attendance at the theater (November 28, 1809). In 1818 a reviewer found it necessary still to promote the interests of the theater when he pointed out,

> Mr. Bartley is under the influence of none of these vicious habits; [mouthing, dragging, theatrical mode of speaking; that ti-tum-ti mode of sing song utterance] and by bestowing our applause and patronage upon such an actor, we promote the interests of the Theatre itself (December 9, 1818).

In yet later years it was necessary to come to the aid of specific genres and styles, but the theater seemed to be relatively well established. In 1825 an article announced the coming of Italian opera and then spent time explaining recitative, air, aria, cantabile, etc., clearly expecting that preparation would ease the acceptance of opera in America (November 17, 1825). The trend in American theater was clearly shown in an 1828 review when the writer described the night's entertainment which ranged from a singer to a contortionist, and inquired, "should not the great success of Monday evening show the managers the sort of entertainment that must always please?" (November 12, 1828).

It would appear that the time was ripe for a more virulent criticism and in 1829 a poem of fifty-eight lines in heroic couplets was published which condemned the fallen state of the theater. Delivered to the Phi Beta Kappa Society, it was written by Charles Sprague, Esq. It elicited the following remark from the Evening

Post, "it is in a vein of severe satire; but its censures on the present prostituted state of the stage are not more pungent than true" (September 10, 1829).

If there were at times cogent reasons to be blind to the faults of the theater, there were frequently also strong reasons to ignore the faults of the play and the author. These strictures, however, seemed not to be as binding as those imposed by the performers, the public, and the theater. Some were, of course, the same reasons, as the need for the playwright to succeed financially, but the critic seemed generally better able to maintain his detachment the few times he dealt with a play or an author specifically. In 1802 a reviewer of Colley Cibber's Love Makes a Man observed that because the play imparted "pleasing, we might say delightful sensations" the critic felt disposed to throw away his scourge and give a wreath to the author. Immediately, however, he thundered, "our duty as dramatic censors forbids us to indulge any partiality at the expense of truth" (May 21, 1802).

The only time the reviewers found reason to relax their vigilance was in the case of productions which were not considered quite legitimate.

> The prevailing character of the New Play, is rather that of broad farce, than of legitimate Comedy; and for this reason [we] have deemed it exempt, in many respects, from the jurisdiction of rigid criticism (January 24, 1803).

Finally, in the last decade of the period, contrary to the trend of increasing severity in the treatment of the theater, one writer admitted to another reason, or couple of reasons, for relaxing the rules. After conceding that he went to the theater with a predisposition to lend a favorable ear and to look with an indulgent eye on everything that should appear in the course of the evening, he explained that for an author so young as this one was supposed to be, and a native too, he hoped, citing Prior, to be blind to faults, kind to virtue (March 7, 1822).

Puffing, that failing to which the Evening Post critics referred as the "mercenary motive," did not appear to present a problem until the last ten years of the period. In 1806 a playwright was taken to task for writing his own review, but it later transpired that the incident was in part a mistake and the playwright apologized publicly (February 12 and 13, 1806). One year later another reviewer made reference to the same problem, this time in a jocular fashion, for Mr. Huggins was the local wigmaker. While reviewing Nicholas Rowe's frequently produced The Fair Penitent, the critic remarked that Mr. John Tyler made a bad choice of wig and then defended his statement.

> There are profound critics, we know, who will impute this remark to the suggestion of Mr. Huggins. We frankly confess, that Mr. Huggins is often of great assistance to our heads: and, having said this, we shall venture to defend our criticism, be the suggestion whose it may. The truth is, that we have eyes as well as ears, and that we find our heart as accessible by the avenue of the one organ as by that of the other (February 20, 1807).

The coming problem appeared specifically for the first time in 1820, when the editor made some remarks pertaining to a discussion sent him of the performance of Cooper in the role of Virginius. The review was derogatory of Cooper, and the editor inquired what the motives of such an article might be, emphasizing that,

> we should revolt, should we discover an interested design to write down one in order to write up another. Such projects are permitted I know, in London and Liverpool, but we shall always set our faces against any attempt to introduce such a mercenary trafic [sic] here (November 18, 1820).

Ten days later, the author of the Cooper review, defending his position in a review of Cooper's Othello, came to the point,

> Mercenary motive I have none: The combined wealth of the actors and managers throughout the United States could not purchase from me a sentence of unmerited praise, nor induce me to expunge of merited censure.

He went on to add that his critics should wait until he got around to Edmund Kean if they thought he was going to "write up Mr. Kean" (November 28, 1820).

By the end of the decade the situation had apparently worsened to the point where it demanded specific attention, as did the problem of the decline of the theater. A passage from a review of a concert by Signor Rosich summed up well what the responsibilities of the critic were at that time. The writer, now possibly William Cullen Bryant, had this to say,

> Impartial criticism has so generally given place to indiscriminate praise, that it will no doubt appear harsh to adopt suddenly a more healthy and invigorating regimen. We are sorry for it; but it only shows the more strongly, the necessity of the change; it is certain that the present mode of puffing, much of it actually paid for, cannot but have a bad effect, not only on the individuals themselves but on the public at large. The former finding themselves the subject of constant praise and fulsome eulogy, while no notice is taken of their deficiencies and faults, consider that they have arrived at ultimate perfection, and that improvement need not be attempted; while the latter are either deceived as to the real merits of a performance, or else have been so already too frequently to pay the slightest attention to these matter-of-course notices. It is time these things should be corrected; it is time that the public, provided they can trust to the taste and judgment of a critic, should feel assured that they will not be misled by any motives of partiality to the performer other than those growing out of his real merits (February 11, 1828).

Two months later a reviewer took a satirical tack and published an article taken from a London paper in which he substituted Cooper's name for Kean's and managed to condemn Cooper by praising him in the highest terms. The critic declared that such an article was just as much to the point as the greater share of the newspaper criticism of the time in New York City. He confessed that he was presently searching for an article sufficiently full of praise to suit the prevailing taste and that

> indiscriminate praise has become the fashion; to condemn any part of an actor's performance of any character is pronounced a crime; and we are accused of envy, hatred, and malice, and all uncharitableness, because we have had the honesty to say we did not like, what we did not, and could not like. The integrity of our course has been totally overlooked, and the care which we have taken when we did condemn, to give what we thought a good and sufficient reason for our opinion, has availed us nothing. This being the case, we shall change our plan, and hereafter be careful to find fault with nothing, and rather than not praise enough, praise all (April 23, 1828).

The journalistic feud had been imported into America with the newspaper. However, even with such an apparent compulsion to remain impartial in an age of virulent journalism, it was surprising that the Evening Post played as small a part in journalistic controversy as it did. During the thirty years of the period under study, the Evening Post was party to fewer than a half dozen literary controversies, and only one of these was a direct confrontation between critics. The remainder were general attacks on other critics, other newspapers, or the theatrical company.

The reason for this apparent detachment was expressed within six weeks of first publication. At the time the Evening Post was publishing criticism very regularly, and a letter to the editor, signed Laelius, was published, which took issue with a review of Othello claiming that Lewis Hallam, Jr. played Iago well and refuting point by point the Evening Post review. Two days later the editor replied to Laelius but with a statement appended asserting that the Evening Post would not be drawn into controversy and was not bound to answer any person. The only reason for noticing the matter at all was, "to shew that we are not afraid to maintain the opinions we have expressed, and to declare that, in future, we shall take no notice of similar attacks (December 26, 1801). The editor further specified that "we are merely desirous of conveying our opinion" and that he cared little about the technicalities of language when he wrote his reviews. He went on to state that if the critics of the newspaper wished to attack his use of words, he hoped the present article would furnish them with "ample employment."

Eight years later, another Evening Post reviewer, Anglo-Americus, refused to get involved in an argument with another newspaper, the Public Advertiser. The reviewer quit the field and regretted what she called her opponent's misconception of her "admonition" which, far from "treading on a scion of native growth" tended to cultivate and improve it (March 2, 1809).

The first major controversy of a literary nature in which the Evening Post became embroiled was with the New York Company and appeared to be at least partially in a spirit of fun. In January 1803 the paper printed a rumor that the "Dramatic Corps" was going to produce a satirical afterpiece which supposed "to put a stop to that theatrical criticism which has, for more than two seasons, held them in a sort of mental thraldom, and both infringes their rights and interferes with their quiet." The reviewer held this to be a laudable undertaking and called for encouragement (January 18, 1803).

By the end of the month, The Wheel of Truth had been produced and the Evening Post published the longest review in its history. The review covered several columns and ran to more than 3,500 words. It was largely a summary of the play which had satirized doctors, lawyers, gamesters, userers, and lovers, but dwelt especially on critics, who went through the wheel of truth and came out in their true state, as geese. The critic attributed the piece at this time to performers who were making a stand

> against what they consider an encroachment on one of their most valuable privileges. They know that now at Boston, as formerly was the case at Charleston, criticisms are constantly written by a great actor, on his own performances; of whom it is reported that though he may have been engaged to ever so late an hour at the Theatre, yet that he never goes to bed till ample justice has been done to his various merits and a suitable and conspicuous place secured for him in the next days [sic] gazette.

The article continued to point out that the actor who wrote his own criticism held

> an enviable superiority . . . over those whose demerits are subjected to the severe and hateful eye of a strict and impartial discussion; It is believed that in our city, this happy finesse has not hitherto been often practised; and while the present race of critics maintain their ground . . . there would hardly be room for the others or much prospect of success (January 31, 1803).

The writer then proceeded to characterize the play as a mixture of farce, opera and pantomime. Consequently, he felt himself precluded in "justice and candor" from bringing it to the test of severe criticism or charging anything against it but "gross inconsistency or palpable absurdity." For the most part, he proceeded in mock-seriousness through a formal criticism of the play, in the critical manner of the time. After justifying comments on the actors being too tall or too short, too fat or too thin, on the basis of propriety, the critic turned to the play itself to point out how it might have been improved.

> We cannot now but observe, that if the author had the least pretensions to shrewdness, or any turn to satire, here was a fair an opportunity as he could desire, to avail himself of his abilities. He had brought the stage Critic into a situation where he had him completely in his power, and it was only to have put into his mouth a few palpably groundless censures, to have made him appear

> both ridiculous & unjust . . . had the author taken advantage of the opportunity, and pushed his critic into remarks so outrageously injurious to truth as these . . . he would indeed have exposed him to contempt for his want of judgment, indignation for his ill-nature, and finally have overwhelmed him with shame at finding his presumption thus exposed. Instead of this, the author, by his extreme feebleness, has almost entirely lost the occasion of enforcing the great moral of his Piece (January 31, 1803).

In conclusion, the reviewer admitted to a certain bias, which perhaps accounted for the good-natured tone of the whole matter.

> As friend to the company, we cannot but suggest to them, that the next time they undertake to wage war in the character of authors, we hope they will be able to produce something that will stand the test of a faithful analysis better than The Wheel of Truth (January 31, 1803).

Another controversy occurred in 1810 when the arrival of George Frederick Cooke, whose American appearance was so astounding that rumor had it he was kidnapped while drunk, called forth from the Evening Post an 1800 word attack on criticis one day, plus a 700 word supplement the next. This time the atmosphere was not friendly, and by the time the article was finished it had demonstrated why some of the Evening Post news items would be unpublishable in today's newspapers. The assault began with a reference to Lucian which told how that writer related that when a great actor came to town the city was filled with

> spectres, making tragical exclamations and crack brained critics exercising their laborious brains, in the detection of faults that had no existence, or the display of beauties which every body had observed before (December 13, 1810).

In a marvelous mixed metaphor the critic then turned to the situation in New York City and lashed out at the journalistic critics of the city:

> In the midst of this milky way, [of crack brained critics] this northern light of genius and erudition, the writers of the Columbian and the Public Advertiser, twinkle with the most conspicuous lustre, and deserve particular attention. It was to be expected that these papers, which like public conduits, are the receptacles of the filth of our city, would, ever since the last sitting of the Council of Appointments, abound with these and similar displays of desolate, unpatronized, and unemployed genius (December 13, 1810).

Turning from the newspapers generally, the author assessed the criticism of the Columbian specifically as disjointed worrying of common sense and in castigating the critic, defined him.

> It will perhaps be urged, that, in order to make a tolerable critick, it is necessary that his judgment should be matured by experience and thought; his taste polished by habitual acquaintance with the purest models, and his discrimination polished, by a long course of exercise of the two former qualities. --This indeed is "proper stuff"--has not the example of latter ages proved that a man may be a good substantial critick, without possessing a single one of these requisites? . . . To the composition of a theatrical critick, nothing more is necessary than a familiar acquaintance with the monthly Mirror cant of criticism; a handfull or two of sprigs of rhetorical flourishes of the growth of July, a reasonable portion of impudence; and as much genuine unadulterated namby pamby nonsense, as well season it to the taste of the town (December 13, 1810).

In concluding the article, the writer paid a "compliment" to "Master Thespis and Co." in the style of the criticism that he was attacking, and which at times he was prone to use himself. The phrases came from the familiar tag ends to critical articles which proclaimed that with attention and industry in a few years the critic may write

"so as to be understood" and attain "no contemptible rank" in the profession of theatrical critics. A familiar plea, one that has already been cited above, closed the second part of the review.

> In closing . . . we beg leave to say, that the well known impartiality of our pen must induce our liberal readers to justify the truth of our well meant reproofs to unfeeling censure, and our attempts to rescue merit from opprobrium and contumely (December 14, 1810).

Although the Evening Post usually reserved its strongest language for the critical staff of other newspapers, the interpolation of an occasional comment by the editor in his own columns was not unusual. In an 1817 review of Isabella; or, the Fatal Marriage he took issue with the claim that the play was superior to modern drama. In a footnote, he contended that The Gamester, "a modern play by Moore, equals in pathos and incident almost any production of the older bards, and in point of moral effect excels them all, put together" (October 14, 1817). About a year later he again disagreed with his own reviewer, this time concerning a reading of Macbeth. In this case he disagreed with both the actor, James W. Wallack, and the "learned critic" (September 8, 1818).

The most prolonged battle between writer and editor took place in 1820 and began with a long review of Cooper playing Virginius. The review was signed Crito, and for a month an exchange took place in which an unusual number of typographical errors appeared, almost entirely in Crito's portion of the material. When the series ended, Crito claimed that the errors had caused some of the difficulty,

and the editor replied that hurry and carelessness in preparing the manuscripts had caused most of the errors.

Whatever the explanation, the main contention was that the criticisms were not impartial as befitted a good critic.

> We can say nothing of its fairness and justice, not having been present at the representation to which the author alludes. We should hope it is written with that impartiality becoming a candid critic, but to us it seems unaccountably strange, that the writer should only find cause for censure, and nothing to commend, throughout the whole performance of an actor who has so long, and I will add, so justly, been the admired favorite of an American audience (November 18, 1820).

A discussion by Crito of Edmund Kean's performance as Richard III was admitted reluctantly by the editor, who at that time referred to the critic as "a very Ishmael of the theatre; ready to raise his hand against everyone." He continued by admitting that he did not understand Crito and made a comparison between the critic and one who appears in Tristram Shandy. Finally, he regretted that through lack of time he was unable to reply to Crito's comments because he could not make those extracts to "bear out my observations" and "must confine myself to that sort of general criticism which ought to be rarely adopted" (December 4, 1820).

The last controversy in which the Evening Post was involved during the period under study, was one between newspapers. Again the subject was Edmund Kean, whose American sojourn was filled with violence. The actor was mobbed in Boston and had been attacked roundly in many newspapers. Coupled with the demand for critical impartiality just cited, the Evening Post's stand in this controversy provided a

fitting climax to the demand for responsible criticism in America. When discussing an attack on Kean published by the Commercial Advertiser, the critic restated the position of the newspaper without descending to the vituperative language of the previous exchange between newspapers.

> It must at all times be a matter of regret to those who regard the respectability as well as the welfare of their country, to see the press, which should be the organ of refinement, of good feeling, and of generous and noble sentiment, descending from its exalted station to scurrility and abuse, and becoming the means of gratifying private pique, malignity, or revenge. As long as it confines itself to the noble object for which it was designed, the advancement of civilization and refinement, it is a public blessing . . . The press is the standard of public taste, and no community can consider itself wronged in being considered destitute of taste where such articles are endured (December 13, 1826).

CHAPTER IV

OF PLAYS

A. THE THEORY OF DRAMA

The Evening Post critics had relatively little to say formally about dramatic theory, and that which they did say was clearly derivative. It would be nearly impossible to trace the sources of their critical theory specifically, but it seems safe to assume that much of their knowledge of current critical tendencies came directly from London, either by word of mouth or in English newspapers and magazines. In addition, Hugh Blair's Lectures on Rhetoric and Lord Kames's Elements of Criticism very likely provided some of their critical foundation. Furthermore, Samuel Johnson and Professor William Richardson, author of a popular collection of essays on Shakespeare, were sources of Shakespeare criticism.

Here, as in the preceding chapter, the critical commentary may be discussed under three general headings. First of all, the theory of drama was an occasional topic for the Evening Post reviewers, who addressed the question of whether the play was to entertain or to educate and spoke of the sources of dramatic inspiration--"nature," the imagination, fancy and genius. They also discussed dramatic technique, paying passing attention to the "unities,"

propriety and decorum, rewards and punishments, plot, situation, incident, characterization and language. Finally, they occasionally made general comments on types of drama from tragedy to farce.

The entertainment value of the stage was emphasized about equally with its instructional value. Early in the critical history of the paper, the younger Colman's The Poor Gentleman was described as a play which, "though it never fails to excite laughter and send the spectator home in good humor" was "destitute of the excellence . . . ascribed to it" (February 11, 1802). Three months later a reviewer stressed the distinction between entertainment and instruction in Colley Cibber's Love Makes a Man.

> It is by no means a play which the moralist or philosopher would recommend for the closet. But to those, who are content to be pleased with mirth, and can enjoy an honest laugh, it will afford abundant gratification (May 21, 1802).

But the comments on humor and laughter were underlaid with a constant feeling that neither was quite decent in a theater. Even, or perhaps especially, toward the end of the period laughter seemed to be considered improper, as was made clear when the audience's reaction to A Midsummer Night's Dream was described.

> The comic parts of the piece which form a large proportion of it went off quite well and the audience were exceedingly delighted. Those who were inclined to laugh, indulged themselves without scruple because the wit was Shakespeare's; those who were not, sometimes found themselves compelled to it, and we saw many a grave face wrinkling into laughter in spite of itself (November 10, 1826).

Placing Shakespeare beyond criticism and in a position of authority was commonplace then as it had been for some time.

Tears were more socially and ethically acceptable, judging by the number of times a play received favorable comment on its ability to produce them. From early to late in the period the "sensibility" derived from drama was favorably viewed. The term first appeared in a review of Joseph Richardson's comedy The Fugitive in which "the performances of the beautiful little 'Child of Nature,' must excite a lively sensibility in every hearer" (May 27, 1803). Shakespeare was often complimented for his tear-producing tendencies. A review of Hamlet published early in the period indicated that Mrs. Jones seemed to feel that Ophelia was unimportant until her mad scene, when she chose to give her all and, "in this, she indeed made an appeal to the heart, which is seldom equalled in a theater, and the effect was felt throughout the house" (January 4, 1806). Ten days later the same power was attributed to Othello because, "the death of Desdemona painfully interests the heart, and while we pity her fate, we lament the violence of her misguided, distracted husband" (January 15, 1806).

That the emotional outburst was not strictly the feminine prerogative was apparent when King Lear, one of the most popular Shakespeare productions in America, was discussed. The play was produced

> with an effect that we never before witnessed. Strong emotions even to tears, were excited in all parts of the house; nor were they confined to the female part of the audience. It could not be otherwise . . . who could behold such a sight unmoved? (December 15, 1820).

There were numerous other plays which received the "tribute" of tears. In 1812 Mrs. Elizabeth Inchbald's The Child of Nature was produced and the review welcomed Mrs. Young who appeared in New York for the first time. It continued with the assertion that, "if she had any doubts about her success, they must have been wholly dissipated before the close, by the involuntary tribute of many tears" (April 22, 1812). Five years later a performance of T. Dibdin's operetta The Cabinet was prepared in which Philipps sang a ballad which "was given with a sweetness and pathos that drew thrice repeated plaudits, and encores from all parts of the house, with the acknowledgements of overflowing eyes on every side" (November 19, 1917). Two other plays which received the mark of approval were The Gamester of Edward Moore, for which hardly an eye denied the "tribute of a tear," and George Barnwell which, though not often reviewed, was one of the most popular plays of the period. Toward the end of the period a review explained some of its merit, which will be discussed later, and much of its attraction.

> No one can see this play without tears, nor come away from its representation without the best impressions. We earnestly desire every parent and master to give those under his charge an opportunity of seeing it (December 26, 1825).

The only American-authored play which inspired the reviewer was John Howard Payne's Richelieu, A Domestic Tragedy, which, although it was found wanting in some respects, was credited as being of "deep and somewhat painful interest." Its effect was traced to the incident by which a virtuous and happy family was made wretched and the unfortunate victim died "of a broken heart" (November 17, 1826).

That the play-goer sought escape was attested by frequent comments in the theatrical columns. In 1809 one writer maintained that retracing early happiness in "infant sports and studies" had ever been the delightful relaxation of "ingenious and virtuous men." Consequently, "to indulge," he went to a production of The Forty Thieves, a concoction to which, as Ireland points out, Sheridan, Ward (his brother-in-law), Kelly and Colman had all contributed, and "was amply repaid . . . in a magnificent dramatic spectacle . . . built on . . . my favorite tale" (March 27, 1809). The same point was made in 1817 when a commentator observed that The Broken Sword, a melodrama by William Dimond, "affords an hour of harmless amusement and relieves the weary mind from the fatigue caused by the business of the day" (April 30, 1817).

That this sort of gratification later became a major part of the theatrical world of New York City and a thorn in the side of the legitimate critic already has been implied. Within seven years The Woodman's Hut, S. J. Arnold's great melodrama, which presented almost too much "effect," was described as

> a piece possessing powerful interest, and concluding with the most striking effect, perhaps, ever attempted in this country . . . The burning of a forest combining somewhat of terror with novelty, served in part to frustrate the gratification it should have produced . . . it had served to destroy the highest gratification ever offered in the way of scenic excellence (October 30, 1816).

The extent to which the spectacle replaced other forms of theatrical entertainment will be discussed later. For the moment, an excellent single example of this development was a presentation of Henry IV, Part II, in which the play itself was curtailed, with the critic's approval, in order to present the spectacle of the coronation. The Evening Post praised it as

> the most magnificent spectacle that our theatre or any other theatre in this country ever exhibited. It was beyond all description, & can only to be realized by its striking impressions on the senses of sight and of hearing (February 5, 1822).

Most of the reviewers, however, appeared to maintain their balance against the thrust of the extravaganzas and their comments indicated they were conscious of the weaknesses in such entertainment. In the middle of the period, assessments of the so-called "English operas" revealed their awareness. After seeing The Devil's Bridge, another of Arnold's plays, one explained, "We saw it, with great pleasure, throughout, although we even carried our common sense into the house along with us, and were only called to lay it aside, occasionally" (November 4, 1817). A fortnight later a critic, perhaps the same one, observed that, "The Cabinet is a piece of little interest, in any way whatever, excepting the songs, upon which, and

the manner of executing them, the whole depends for its attractions" (November 19, 1817).

Reviews of Bickerstaffe's Lionel and Clarissa, separated by two years, revealed a comparable sensitivity. Although their judgment may err in this instance, it was apparent that the critics sensed where the worth of the play lay. In 1819 it was called, "the best opera, without exception, in the English language . . . it, at once, gratifies the ear, and addresses itself to the intellect; warms the heart to virtue and improves the taste" (April 27, 1819). In 1821 the same observation appeared in slightly different terms: "cut out all the songs, and it would become, with a very little modification, an excellent sentimental comedy; affording a rational entertainment to a refined audience" (October 25, 1821).

That this necessary distinction neither dulled the general sensitivity of the reviewers to the merit of serious opera nor resulted in a general condemnation of the same, was shown in 1826, the year following the introduction of "Italian opera," when a reviewer commented that in the chamber scene where Othello kills Desdemona,

> Their impassioned acting, the accompaniment of the orchestra, and the concert of the elements abroad, apparently conscious of the event, combined to produce in the audience sensations of sublimity and terror, beyond which no imagination can reach (February 9, 1826).

At the very end of the period under study, a defense of Thomas Morton's Secrets Worth Knowing also made the point,

> It is an excellent play, and contains the good moral, that villainy will be discovered and punished, and that virtue and innocence will triumph. How far superior is such a sterling comedy to those trifling pieces, consisting merely of splendid scenery, got up only to please the eye, without addressing anything to the heart? (March 10, 1829).

Finally, an historical awareness of the value and respectability of the theater as entertainment was summed up in two comments, one on an American play by Frances Wright in 1819 and the other on King Lear, two years later. In speaking of Altorf the critic said,

> we venture to promise them, the highest and purest gratification. For the most refined enjoyment of cultivated literary taste is that which we receive from a good dramatic performance, well represented (February 22, 1819).

The second comment maintained, "it is not to be denied that dramatic poetry has at all times among civilized nations been considered an elegant, rational, and useful entertainment" (December 16, 1820).

In contrast to the time spent defending the stage's entertainment value, theatrical didacticism required little apology. It was the object of an oblique reference in an early review which also pointed up the nationalistic fervor endemic in the western world at this time. Just as certain sins were Italian to the French, English to the Italian and French to the English, so this reviewer found the blasphemy of the stage to be something which French and German manners were reconciled to, but "our's [sic] are not and it is not desirable they ever should be" (December 9, 1801). But profanity was only a minor part of the problem facing the man concerned with the moral and instructional value of the stage. After a second reference a year later,

> There was too great a profusion of swearing--this should never exceed what is written in the book, and, for the most part, the omission even of that, would be highly proper. The performers in general are too fond of interlarding their speeches with oaths: profanity, as well as indecorum, should be rigidly banished from the stage (December 2, 1802),

the topic was never again mentioned directly during the period.

Commentary on the moral and instructional value of the stage was striking by its absence in the first six months of the period. While the critics found that such pieces as Frederick Reynolds' comedy Folly As It Flies had a "commendable" moral in 1802 (February 22, 1802) they made no reference to immorality in any of Dunlap's Kotzebue and Schiller translations which appeared early in the period. The review of the plot of Schiller's Fiesco passed over its licentiousness without comment and ignored the seduction of Bertha (March 30, 1802). Likewise no moral strictures appeared in a review of The Robbers (April 14, 1802) which was roundly condemned elsewhere. When comments began to appear they were relatively innocuous.

However, in reviewing Romeo and Juliet the critic claimed it was exceptionable in parts not because of immorality, but because of the lack of it.

> No occasional excellence, however, can ever atone for the want of a far more impassioned manner with such a Juliet . . . . The author has gone perhaps as far as the manners of that age, and certainly further than the manners of this would warrant, in the language he puts into the lips of Juliet: to reconcile us as much as possible to her conduct, we should find a fervidness in Romeo's love--this alone can furnish her with an apology in our eyes (April 20, 1802).

Four days later, a review of Rowe's The Fair Penitent contained the first clear criticism of a play's morality. It pointed out that this tragedy was written a century ago,

> when such glowing and voluptuous descriptions may have suited the licentious manners of the age, but they are not adapted to the taste of the present day, and are certainly offensive to a New-York audience (April 24, 1802).

The following week the Evening Post included for the first time a discussion of the instructional nature of the theater and the drama. After pointing out that The School for Scandal unmasked the sentimental hypocrite with justice and lashed the retailers of calumny with severity, the reviewer went to the heart of the matter,

> but the moral is not, in all its parts, equally unexceptionable. The profligate Charles instead of punishment meets with reward. His profusion wears the garb of generosity. His other vices are softened into virtues--and his whole character is drawn in such seductive colours, as rather invite imitation than guard the youthful mind against similar excesses (April 30, 1802).

When the same play was covered again in the fall the idea behind the instructional value of the drama was elaborated a little further. Pointing out that plays had been "polite amusements" of ancient and modern times and that their proper cultivation was favorable not less to taste than to virtue, the article indicated that only from the abuse of drama have evils resulted which have drawn, "the frown of philosophy, the censure of the moralist, and the anathema of the pulpit." However, all methods of conveying instruction were open to abuse, therefore,

> It is not, then, discreet to pass general condemnation because we find partial imperfection. Viewing the stage as both a school of moral instruction and refined entertainment, we shall, without hesitation, condemn that wit as contemptible, and that amusement as despicable, which is built upon a violation of principle and decorum (November 26, 1802).

The School for Scandal presented something of a problem to this critic, who finally concluded that it contained much wit and but very little moral which was prevented from coming through clearly by poor casting.

The morality of the comedy of manners, though pertinent, confused the American reviewer, as it had the English during the previous century. In a quasi-serious passage the Evening Post applied directly a very popular character from Charles Macklin's The Man of the World.

> The character of Sir Pertinax Macsycophant . . . is certainly one of the strongest ever drawn in comedy. It presents a correct and high-coloured portrait of the tool of party at full length; a miserable avaricious wretch, laden with the meaness of sycophancy, and the low vices of an unprincipled ambition . . . it is not to be supposed that the play has been selected with any view to the present state of things; and the most violent democrat in the city therefore, must not take it into his head to be offended at it (May 19, 1803).

Even, or rather perhaps especially, the plays of Shakespeare were given moral application. Macbeth was proposed as an "excellent moral lecture for a serious Saturday evening" and it was purported to be the finest of its kind.

> We consider Macbeth as decidedly the finest production of the stage. Its just and elevated sentiments, sublime poetry, nervous and well supported dialogue, all conducive to the main design of the plot, and combining to enforce the most useful moral, ought to ensure it, in our judgment, the preference over any play the stage can boast of (December 15, 1804).

The reviewer cited William Richardson's Essays on Some of Shakespeare's Characters in support of his contention.

In the following year, while reviewing Beaumont and Fletcher's Rule a Wife and Have a Wife, a more general plea for the effect of the theater appeared and echoed the English critic of the mid-18th century.

> Whatever may be thought by some . . . a well conducted Theatre would go far, very far, towards checking and rooting out that spirit of libertinism, that rage for extravagance, and that propensity to gaming, which, it cannot be denied, too much prevail among the higher circles in this community, and less or more had pervaded the middling class of people. Make the Theatre the place of fashionable resort, and you substitute at least an innocent, sometimes an instructing, and always (comparatively speaking) an unexpensive amusement, in place of the false pleasures we have enumerated. And would it not be a reproach to this city, to lose the present opportunity to establish here the best company in the United States? (February 22, 1805).

The instructional value of the theater was here nearly obscured by several other beneficial qualities.

Nicholas Rowe's The Fair Penitent drew attention again that year, and the discussion this time was lengthier, much more positive and less tolerant.

> We will not say it is possible to curtail the Fair Penitent of its most exceptionable passages and still leave it a fine play; but this we will say, that if it cannot be very materially curtailed it is utterly unfit

> for representation before any public audience. Its descriptions are highly objectionable, and particularly Lothario's in the first scene is so insufferably licentious, and the pointed and emphatic manner in which the actor chose to deliver it last evening, so very broad, as to make it highly offensive to every lady present. We repeat it, if many passages cannot be curtailed, and Lothario's description entirely discarded from the piece, decent manners should never permit its repetition on our boards (June 25, 1805).

In the remaining years of the period, three tragedies elicited praise for their didactic value. In March of 1806 a reviewer estimated that The Gamester was one of the finest tragedies in English and supported his judgment by saying,

> Let him who has taken it into his head that the theatre leads to vice or dissipation, attend a representation of this play, with the two principal characters as delineated last evening by Mr. Cooper and Mrs. Johnson, and if he is not entirely absorbed in prejudice, he will confess that morality was never more successfully inculcated from the closet or the pulpit (March 15, 1806).

Twelve years later, almost the same points about the same play were made in somewhat different words:

> Of this play, I have no hesitation to say, it is the most unexceptionably moral, and the best calculated to produce salutary and lasting effects upon the inexperienced mind of youth, of any one upon the dramatic list. Indeed, I do not know a literary production of any sort in the English language that might be expected to do more good . . . being vastly superior to that popular play [George Barnwell] in every particular (September 28, 1818).

The tragedy of Hamlet received somewhat broader praise in 1813, when the stage was described as an inculcator of much more than morals. The theater was given potential educative powers in the smallest as well as the greatest areas of human experience. In this case,

> the stage will always have a greater or less influence upon the public taste. The impression that is made by the representation of a tragedy is powerful and may be the means of stimulating to meritorious deeds . . . The Athenians were brave: so are Americans. The Athenians . . . were patrons of the arts, and rewarders of merit: May Americans deserve the same reputation (December 21, 1812).

The last of the tragedies, George Barnwell, or, The London Merchant, was not reviewed until 1825. The delay was apparently the result of its popularity, for by then its presentation was already referred to as an excellent and established custom of the theater on the evening of Christmas day. The annual production of Lillo's play was ostensibly for the benefit of the youth of the community. The reviewer found the story simple, natural, affecting, instructive and

> admirably adapted to engage the youthful mind. We know of no play in our own or in any language which can be compared with George Barnwell, for its moral tendency or its power of producing the desired effect . . . On this occasion the theatre is a school where the best of lessons may be learned, and most effectually; and no one is too young to go to it, who is old enough to understand the mournful story, and its awful moral (December 26, 1825).

Occasionally the Evening Post did not argue in favor of the didactic effect of the theater. Some critics found that without proper attention the theater could easily be abused and corrupt rather than correct. One unusual complaint was voiced in 1807 when it was suggested that Thomas Morton's vigorous and longlived comedy The School of Reform had a strong negative effect.

> the authors notions of piety and morality, are throughout of the most vulgar description. We have much parade of moral and religious sentiments, as if this could afford us any assurance of honesty in those who display it! . . . Whoever teaches us to make the exterior of piety and morality a test of the purity and integrity of the heart does an injury to society (February 19, 1807).

A second warning about the possibility of the wrong kind of emulation came ten years later and was perhaps more properly described as an example of the effect of an actor rather than a play. In discussing Lionel and Clarissa the reviewer pointed out,

> Mr. Simpson, gave us the extravagant character of the empty headed fop, in the style, I presume, the author himself intended . . . From certain symptoms, however, that have begun to shew themselves in Broadway and sometimes at the theatre, it is not easy to say how long it will be before we shall see it among us in full maturity (March 17, 1818).

With the "Italian Opera" in 1825, the critics saw the arrival of an educational influence of lesser importance than moral instruction. A review of Rossini's Il Barbiere de Siviglia, the first long opera ever sung in New York in Italian or any other foreign language, contained the observation that in addition to entertainment

> To youth of either sex, who are in the course of taking musical lessons, we venture to say, and in this opinion we find ourselves seconded by an accomplished amateur, with whom we lately conversed, that an evening at the opera is of more real value in forming a just taste and exalting it than the best daily lesson that is given by the best master in the city (December 6, 1825).

That the emphasis on the instructional value of the stage had not diminished by the end of the period was indicated by an editor's apologies for lacking theatrical matters in his newspaper.

> It is not often that we devote any considerable space in our columns to a notice of theatricals, and perhaps not as much as the important influence which dramatic entertainments exercise on the community, for good or evil, according to the mode in which the stage is conducted, would seem to require from the conductor of a press (November 27, 1829).

While the entertainment and instructional functions of the drama were frequently mentioned, the sources of dramatic literature did not concern the Evening Post reviewers. By and large, no proper study of the art was made, and the entire problem of literary inspiration seemed beyond them save as it hinged on nationalism. Early in the period a reviewer discussing Dunlap's translation of Kotzebue observed that the routes pursued by Schiller and Kotzebue were very different. Although they alike "hold the mirror up to nature," Kotzebue "in general journeys on level ground" as he exhibited the objects of everyday life, while Schiller traversed the wilds of nature, "in the moment of enthusiasm he ... depicts ... the elevated objects by which his fancy has become enraptured" (March 30, 1802).

Although little was said of nature in the course of thirty years, it was clear that the ambiguities of the term had not been resolved. Two poems appeared in reviews in 1809 which, while not good poetry, illustrated the conventional opinions. The first was the work of John Howard Payne.

> ---See tortured vice with anguish drop a tear,
> See in his eye the trembling beam of fear;
> While the bright Mirror held to natures face,
> Reflects her image with each native grace.
> (March 7, 1809)

The second was the review of William Dimond's The Foundling of the Forest, a melodramatic spectacular that returned often to the New York stage. The poet was Anglo-Americus who turned to nature and contrasted it to art in a conventional manner, in this case the art of acting, specifically that of Mrs. Mason.

> In vain shall art from nature help implore,
> When nature on herself exhausts its store.
> [The poem then cites the woes and emotions of the play]
> Tis these from nature' self, can only flow,
> (And can these be but "mockery of woe?")
> Felt by herself diffus'd to all around,
> Well may her efforts with applause be crown'd!
> So nearly to perfection she attains,
> May nature still present what art but feigns;
> May smiling fortune all her hours employ,
> Her woes be transient--permanent her joy.
> (December 6, 1809)

The drama was referred to as a "mirror" only twice more in the remainder of the period. A review of The Winter's Tale maintained that in the hands of good actors, a good play became what it "vaunts to be, the school of eloquence and the mirror of nature" (May 5, 1820). The second reference was an oblique one at best in which the critic of the perennially popular Venice Preserved said, "this play is no unfaithful mirror of its ill starred author" (December 13, 1826).

The most high flown passage on the creative act came in an 1817 critique of Thomas Southerne's Isabella; or, the Fatal Marriage. The claims here presented brought from the editor a retort, previously cited, in defense of the moderns. In a later passage the reviewer waxed eloquent on behalf of the old poets.

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> They . . . were a giant race wrestling with nature, and subjecting her to their empire; invention had then full scope; fancy untrammelled and unawed by the mildew blight of critical refinement soared in the regions of fiction, where every thing springs up in wild and wanton luxuriance; culling the sweets of nature and transfusing into their sublime conceptions freshness and fragrance which will ever render them the delight and admiration of the intellectual world (October 14, 1817).

In 1820, in the course of a lengthy discussion of Cooper's acting in the role of Virginius, a statement appeared which came as near theoretical as any in the period.

> . . . no man of taste and experience will be brought to mistake the theatre for a school of oratory, instead of a stage on which scenes of real life are exhibited, characters reflected "as in a glass," and the legitimate object of which is
>
> "To catch the manners living as they rise,"
>
> by powers of art the shadows, images and echoes of these realities to which they owe their transitory existence (November 18, 1820).

The longest explication of dramatic theory was published in 1829, part of a review of Douglas W. Jerrold's Ambrose Gwinett. Although the article was short, the discussion was comparatively long and contained a rationale for the selection of material that embraced much beyond mere subject matter. This, too, was in the time of burgeoning nationalism.

> Dramatic writers have seldom availed themselves of those events which often agitate and control the destinies of suburban life; and which are often clothed in forcible and energetic language, and display themselves in bursts of tremendous passion, and the most violent action. It is often here that nature puts forth her unshorn strength, and gives free scope to those excitements, which shake the soul to its very centre, and give to the "human face divine" the most ferocious and demoniac expression. Here the passions are deep and strong, and the tongue gives a ready utterance to their terrible suggestions; while the

> uplifted arm answers, with violence, the challenge of a frown. Love, hate, jealousy, appear in all their beauty or deformity, stripped of that veil, which polished life so seduously throws over its secret purposes, hiding beneath a calm exterior the emotions of the heart. Thus, low life--not distinctly the base people--presents a picture, rich in manly traits and feature, full of deep and ardent colouring, bright and overshadowed by turns, from which many a subject might be drawn full of breathing interest and beauty (July 21, 1829).

If little was said about dramatic theory, even less mention was made of those elusive 18th century obsessions, imagination, fancy and genius. The reviewer of Kotzebue and Schiller had attributed fancy to the latter and he afterward said that Shiller also stood unrivalled "in richness of imagination, boldness of fancy, and sublimity of conception" (March 30, 1802). Colman the Younger was credited for having brought The Forty Thieves out at Drury Lane, "extending the subject and embellishing it with all the beautiful imagination of splendid and fanciful genius" (March 31, 1809). In the review of Isabella previously cited the critic also said,

> the old poets drew from the capacious resources of their own minds--disdaining imitations--themselves inimitable --their productions were always masculine, though unequal; yet their very carelessness shewed the lofty reach of original genius (October 14, 1817).

Clearly, the reviewers of the Evening Post were not at home in the rarified atmosphere of the theory of drama.

B. THE TECHNIQUE OF DRAMATIC LITERATURE

If the Evening Post critics were little concerned with theoretical problems related to the creative side of drama, they were only slightly more interested in theoretical and practical matters related to its literary expression. The "rules" were hardly mentioned, which was in keeping with the shift from emphasis on structure to emphasis on characterization that took place in English dramatic criticism during the second half of the 18th century.

When first mentioned in December 1801 the "rules" appeared to be considered a French contribution. In discussing Dunlap's translation of The Abbe de L'Epee the reviewer indicated that an anonymous translator in London, inconvenienced by the French theatrical rule of never shifting the scene during the act, introduced changes similar to Dunlap's but without as much judgment and effect (December 14, 1801). Twenty years later the French still were considered to have notions about drama different from the English.

> A few ingenious critics, and some literary persons from the continent of Europe, who have formed their judgments after the models of the French stage, it is true, still dissent from the general tenor of opinion: forgetful, perhaps, that the French and English drama, both acted and written, are very dissimilar in construction and character (March 24, 1821).

For these critics the authority for any deviation from the rules was, of course, great genius and Shakespeare in particular. While commenting shortly after on the inconsistency of Dunlap's translation of Abaellino; or, the Great Bandit, a wild Gothic concoction, the reviewer pointed out that the main conflict was

> that the close is irreconcileable with the opening . . . Its beauties, however, must be allowed to atone for its irregularities. Let it be remembered, that men of the best taste are willing to pass over the irregularities of Shakespeare, for the sake of his unrivalled excellencies, and though we would not make a comparison between the two authors, we entreat a little share of that charity for one, which is so liberally bestowed on the other (December 17, 1801).

The matter of dramatic probability and the rules was mentioned only twice in connection with dramatic structure, although the former received greater attention in relation to characterization and representation. The first mention came in 1807 in a review of The Fair Penitent which the critic found,

> is a play of the highest character. The dramatis personae are few; the scenes seldom changed; the language elevated; the sentiments unquestionable; the catastrophe and the moral impressive. One obvious defect deserves to be corrected . . . The whole story is told, the whole lesson conveyed, and the whole interest exhausted, at the moment Calista dies; and yet Sciolto is kept alive, to make a most tedious speech, and while the humanity of every spectator prompts him to run for a Surgeon (February 20, 1807).

Later, while discussing the short-lived American play Altorf, the elements of dramatic construction were summarized, closing on rules and probability.

> The plot is neither dark nor intricate, nor is there any difficulty in following its details; the language is clear and elegant, the characters natural and interesting, the morality pure, the probabilities and the rules of the drama all observed (February 22, 1819).

Another reference to this matter appeared ten years later in a review of Ambrose Gwinett which had already been praised for its "untrammelled" subject:

> The supposed intervention of eighteen years between the second and third acts, is a violence upon dramatic probability, hardly required for the sake of historic truth, & but very faintly adhered to, in the change of feature and costume in the dramatis personae, Ambrose should disguise himself sufficiently to permit the audience to imagine, by effort of possibility, that it may not be the same person, a mask would effect this and the "unities" be preserved (July 21, 1829).

Propriety and decorum, although receiving considerable attention in connection with acting, were referred to only once in relation to dramatic structure. While analyzing Dunlap's Pizarro in Peru; or, The Death of Rolla, the reviewer observed that,

> Rolla is equally great in his conduct toward Pizarro; but there is a want of poetic propriety in the tameness with which he sees the destruction of Elvira; and the death of Elvira, without the punishment of Pizarro, whose name is given to the play, but who is silently dismissed, as an insignificant personage, is an error in the construction of the plot (February 27, 1807).

Poetic justice, which lay at the heart of the above comment, was also seldom mentioned, although it had already been made a matter of discussion in a review of Thomas Holcroft's A Tale of Mystery, which introduced a genuine example of melodrame to New York City. The writer found, "poetic justice is observed in the close and he [Romaldi] is seen torn with remorse and despair, calling on the rocks to open and cover him." At the same time, the critic reiterated, "the denouement, which comes upon us rather abruptly exhibits virtue rewarded and vice punished" (March 17, 1803). The last reference to poetic justice came near the end of the period in a brief consideration of Rocchietti's Toante, a play based on Iphigenia in Tauria, in which

> Some liberties have been taken with the ancient fable to accommodate it to modern notions of poetical justice. Thoas . . . is made to insist on shedding the blood . . . and to deserve by his cruelty the fate which finally overtakes him (June 9, 1830).

The Evening Post critics were always alert to inconsistencies and errors in plot, situation and incident. In this connection it was apparent that the reviewer had studied Pizarro thoroughly since he pointed out as a flaw the fact that the characters acted as though Alonzo were dead when they knew he was only captive. He also assumed the error was Kotzebue's since it appeared in both Sheridan's and Dunlap's translations (December 9, 1801).

Also important was a smooth flowing plot. The second review of Reynolds' soon-forgotten Folly As It Flies declared that the play, especially the "serious parts," was deficient. "They principally consist of situations and expressions of manufactured distress and common place sentiment, which, instead of flowing naturally, appear hammered together by dint of hard labor" (February 22, 1802).

A few months later Love Makes a Man, which the reviewer rated far from Cibber's best, was criticized for having a plot that was deficient in the essentials of "regularity and probability" (May 21, 1802). The same criticism recurred in 1806, when another of Frederick Reynolds' plays, The Blind Bargain; or, Hear It Out, was found to be "imperfect and inconsistent," but its failure was due in part, the critic stated, to the "blunders and inaccuracies" of the performance (January 3, 1806).

More often references to plot were favorable and frequently confined to one line in a paragraph devoted to all the technical aspects of the drama. In one case the reviewer detected qualities that revealed his own incipient nationalism, or at least a conviction of national inferiority that preceded nationalism. In 1810 the sentiments and the plot of The Africans, the younger Colman's spectacular three act play, were "finely given, and displays that true nobility of soul, which is not confined to the enlightened European alone . . ." (January 10, 1810).

More interesting and perhaps more revealing were two comments made near the end of the second decade of the century. The first was part of a review of Thomas (Anacreon) Moore's trifle, M. P., or, The Blue Stocking Club, which the writer felt would be unsuccessful because it was unrelated to the American scene. However, he admitted that the play was pleasing because,

> The dialogue is neat, interesting, pointed and well kept up; the plot is natural & interesting, and the poetry excellent and abundant. There are about twenty songs, glees, duets, trios and chorusses, every one of which is worth listening to, not merely for the music but the sense; abounding in those happy allusions and graceful turns of expression for which the author has been so universally admired, and all of them are perfectly appropriate to the characters and situations (October 23, 1818).

Very shortly thereafter Altorf pleased because, having expected one thing,

> what then was our surprize in reading a work, which, for the simplicity of the plot and action, the interest of the story, the elegant boldness of the style, never sinking into familiar mediocrity--nor soaring into

> bombast, the warm and true delineation of natural passion; and above all, the purity and generosity of the principles and sentiments, may challenge competition with the best productions of the British stage. It is not indeed a work of the modern school--it reminds us of better ages (February 22, 1819).

A final comment was made in a review of John Poole's three-act farce Paul Pry in 1826. Here the reviewer declared, "the plot is very good, keeps up an interest throughout, and is entirely free from confusion . . . The plot is double, but is one of the simplest double plots we know of" (January 17, 1826).

If the plot required a certain amount of regularity, uniformity and naturalness, incident also demanded proper use. A critic was driven to remark on this need in discussing James Fennell's The Wheel of Truth, which, of course, would provide a "straw-man" since, being satirical farce, it would twist incident to fit its purpose. But as has been pointed out, the critical attitude was mock-serious and thus approached the play in a conventional manner.

> We confess we don't perceive any other cause for this than merely to introduce a parody on the line from Othello; and in general, it may be remarked, the incident is inserted to suit the line, and **not** the line for the incident (January 31, 1803).

The review of Paul Pry cited above also assessed the importance of incident in achieving comic effect.

> We can judge of it only from its representation. It abounds in wit and humor, and keeps the house in a continued laugh from one end to the other. Many of the incidents . . . are as ludicrous and ridiculous as ingenuity can make them (January 17, 1826).

But a couple of years later its lack was found to be a problem which characterization partially redeemed.

> The main fault of the piece is its want of incident. The scenes are almost entirely filled with long discourses, which weary and exhaust the attention of the spectator, without leading to any marked result which might reawaken it. The characters, however, are drawn with considerable power (December 11, 1828).

Proper and discriminating use of incident received consideration to the end of the period. The reviewer of Ambrose Gwinett wrote,

> The author has shown great tact in the use of all those little incidents which go to make a powerful whole--thus, the bleeding of Collins, and the scratch on the wrist of Ambrose, are the indirect, but primary causes, of the whole subsequent action (July 21, 1829).

By 1829 American plays were being produced more frequently and one written by Lorenzo da Ponte, who enjoyed stressing his Italian origins, was considered a native product. Almachilde was praised because

> Several of the situations are conceived with strength, and wrought up with skill and knowledge of dramatic effect. We hope that when the author next brings it out, he will choose a season more favorable . . . Its success under very inauspicious circumstances is strong evidence of its merit and its fitness for the stage (August 12, 1829).

Another American play lauded for similar reasons was Metamora by John A. Stone, which won the prize offered by Edwin Forrest. The reviewer of this tragedy found that the scenes were full of incident and bustle and showed a knowledge of stage effect. He criticized it because some of the events too clearly exceeded the bounds of probability and suggested that the piece was of too melodramatic

a character rather than tragic as it was supposed to be (December 16, 1829).

Attempts to introduce novel and original situations on the stage met with mixed reactions. While the critics often praised attempts at novelty when they appeared, they also esteemed the plays which imitated the "old school." In 1807 Morton's The School of Reform brought forth this equivocal comment.

> All the tenderness and all the dignity of the buskin are to be united with manners, both provincial and vulgar. This assuredly exists in real life; but the attempt to bring it on the boards, is bold as well as novel (February 19, 1807).

Ten years later a review of Richard Sheil's tragedy The Apostate, which remained popular through Edwin Booth's day, listed a great deal right but claimed one glaring fault.

> . . . compared with the common-place dramatic productions of the day, this is a fine performance. The author has evinced very considerable talents in the selection of his story, the construction of his plots, its development and catastrophe. It is replete with pathos, and crowded with incidents which deeply affect the heart and dazzle as they flit before the awakened fancy. The language is chaste, sometimes nervous, never cold. With these prominent beauties it contains one radical fault; want of originality (September 24, 1817).

In the same year Brother and Sister, William Dimond's opera, with music by Bishop, was cited as proof that novelty could make a piece attractive. "The novelty of the piece, with its principal characters so strongly cast, presented a strong attraction" (December 12, 1817). But it had its inherent drawback as a reviewer of the opera in 1826 noted. "Wonder is, in its nature, a temporary emotion: novelty is

its aliment. But every new thing, whether a sound or a sermon, often repeated, soon becomes old" (March 7, 1826).

Two examples of the conflict alluded to above between the "old school" and the moderns might be cited here. The first was part of the review of Isabella cited above in reference to moral effect and the editor's defense of the "modern play."

> Isabella is one of the best of the old English tragedies; it is of the school of Shakespeare, and has many of the fine and fiery touches of its master. There is indeed, in most of the old English plays, a fullness and richness of fancy, a strength and vivacity of coloring, a just and powerful delineation of character, and a natural development of passion, which completely throws in the shade the wretched productions of modern inferiority (October 14, 1817).

In 1829 a reviewer evaluted Colman and Garrick's The Clandestine Marriage, which had not yet been presented currently. He called it, "One of the best of the modern English school . . . abounds with humor, delicate sentiment and interest" (January 22, 1829).

The shift from structure to characterization referred to earlier was illustrated in two reviews which were published in 1830. At this time the infatuation with Walter Scott had reached into the theater and many of his novels were dramatized. One of the last reviews written in the period was of a dramatization of Auchindrane; or, the Ayrshire Tragedy. The plot appeared to be the important thing in this case, where "the story on which the scenes are founded is in itself a tragedy of deep interest without any poetic embellishment" (June 9, 1830). In contrast a review of William Cox's Rokeby;

or, A Tale of the Civil Wars, also based on Scott, made the point that the author had "delineated" the outline of the poem with much force but that the emphasis was equally on characterization as on plot and incident (May 18, 1830).

This example merely illustrated, however, the almost equal emphasis which was placed on characterization from the beginning. In an early review Colman's The Poor Gentleman was pronounced deficient in plot, interest, moral and dialogue. The characters, instead of being copied from nature, were fanciful sketches by an extensive imagination and lacked originality. The final judgment was, "The Dramatis Personnae, are nonentities, and evince the pen of a Plagiarist" (February 11, 1802).

Still, some of the same restrictions applied to the delineation of character as to structure. In discussing Thomas Dibdin's The School for Prejudice a reviewer indicated that "force and propriety" were necessary to the delineation of character (January 24, 1803). In 1804 Shylock ranked among the finest productions of the English stage "for strength and colouring" (December 6, 1804). Samuel J. Arnold's comedy Man and Wife; or, More Secrets Than One held some distinction in 1809 because the characters were "well delineated and happily contrasted" (May 4, 1809). The Winter's Tale received rather more extended treatment eleven years later because it

> ensures the highest displays of sentiment and character. Though others of his productions may be more popularly read and more frequently represented, yet we have the united testimonies of Warburton and Johnson, that in point of fine writing it may be ranked among Shakespeare's

> best efforts, and that this play is written in the very spirit of its author . . . The comic and sentimental characters of this play are known to be strikingly contrasted (May 5, 1820).

Later in the period John Howard Payne's Richelieu; A Domestic Tragedy was cited as an example of a work containing characters who were "well distinguished and contrasted" (November 17, 1826). The importance of characterization had been recognized as early as 1802, however, as the review of Love Makes a Man showed.

> The characters, though eccentric, are so admirably drawn, so well sustained, so highly coloured, and so replete with humour and vivacity; while an unabated interest is preserved, and expectation kept so constantly alive, that the fundamental imperfections of the piece, vanish in representation, and are forgotten (May 21, 1802).

Further indications of the shift in emphasis from structure to characterization may be seen in the amount of character analysis published by the Evening Post. By far the greatest part of the Shakespeare criticism published during the period was devoted to analyses of characters rather than plot, incident and situation. In fact, it occupied a prominent position in the reviews generally and accounted for some of the best writing. In the newspaper's first six months the character of Juliet was appraised.

> . . . the author has pourtrayed the character of Juliet in all its loveliness; the progressive expressions of fear, hope, confidence, and joy . . . the workings of imagination, from alarm to momentary phrenzy . . . the unsettled and wild state of mind in which she awakes from the trance (April 20, 1802).

As the star system grew, characters came to dominate the drama until many plays were referred to most often by the name of a character rather than a title. Such was the case with Penruddock in Richard Cumberland's The Wheel of Fortune. When he was discussed in 1804 the critic described the character in these terms:

> The leading features of this strong character are--a long settled habit of melancholy, despondency and despair, not resulting from conscious guilt, but caused by the atrocious perfidy of a friend in depriving him, by base means, twenty years before, of the affections of a beloved object and winning them himself. He is indeed a misanthrope--not from the want, but the excess of feeling (November 29, 1804).

Moral stature was stressed in the analysis of Rolla, who came to dominate Pizarro as Penruddock did The Wheel of Fortune. Here applause was encouraged even though the morally offensive was c ondemned.

> Rolla is a fine poetic creation. His character, is admirably drawn, and the incidents, in which it is developed, are most happily conceived. The undeviating rectitude of his principles, and the warmth of his feelings, equally demand applause. There is something not very consistent with delicate sensibility, in a man's bequeathing his wife, especially upon the mere possibility of his death; for as to the doctrine of forebodings, we are ashamed to hear of it, even upon the stage (February 27, 1807).

Another character who bore heavy moral emphasis was Zanga in Edward Young's tragedy The Revenge. Zanga

> has some traits in common with the Iago of Shakespeare --Revenge is the object of both--But the revenge of Zanga is of a species entirely distinct from that of Iago--In the one it proceeds from a mind violent and imperious, yet susceptible and generous--In the other it is a mixture of the basest passions which can sully the lustre or degrade the dignity of the human character (June 6, 1808).

The ability to save a play was observed in Florinda of Sheil's The Apostate. After finding that the play was lacking structurally as well as in some characterizations the reviewer admitted,

> yet with all its faults, talents of a high order are displayed in its delineation. The character of Florinda is drawn with uncommon felicity; timid, delicate, yet resolute, she unites all the attributes of feminine loveliness. She is placed in a variety of situations, which to the soul of sensibility, exalted by love, oppressed by affliction, and sustained by virtue, are the most trying that fancy can picture (September 24, 1817).

That the audience must be pleased pretty specifically was emphasized about a year later in a review of Arthur Murphy's fine tragedy, The Grecian Daughter, where the writer maintained that Euphrasia excited "admiration" rather than "sympathy" and, consequently, "has never been a favorite here" (November 21, 1818).

From the Shakespeare canon the reviewers discussed Coriolanus, Othello and, in similar terms, the mob in Julius Caesar, which a critic felt that Shakespeare had caught well, adding, "Shakespeare understood something of these things" (November 17, 1828). Romeo and Hamlet were judged the most alike of Shakespeare's creations, with the explanation, "Romeo is a creature of passion--but it is rather the passion of sentiment than of feeling; and withal, he has a tinge of philosophy about him" (February 20, 1828). In 1828 Iago was identified as one of the most misunderstood of Shakespeare's creations.

> The character of Iago, has, . . . been almost universally mistaken, both by players and critics. Actors in general have been struck only with the wickedness of the character . . . This is an unnatural conception; and Shakespeare, who was quite as good a philosopher as he was a poet, never intended to exhibit such a picture . . . now it appears to us that the motives of Iago's conduct are so plainly described . . . as to render it almost impossible to mistake them. They are, jealousy and disappointed ambition . . . We cannot help looking upon as affording redeeming points in the character of Iago.--as tending completely to do away the imputation of gratuitous villainy, which has been so generally affixed to it (April 15, 1828).

In the same year, another review dealt much less sympathetically with Shylock.

> The character of Shylock is one which Shakespeare (by wresting, with the boldest license of the poet, the facts on which the drama is founded, so as to meet his purpose) has adapted to the rude taste and stern prejudices of the age for which it was written.--His aim was to array the indignation and abhorrence of his readers, in a general crusade of feeling, against the wealthy Jew of Venice (June 7, 1828).

As was clear in the analysis of Iago, there was a problem inherent in working with characters, that of confusing the author's intent with that of the performer. This difficulty was mentioned in a treatment of Octavian in George Colman the Younger's play The Mountaineers. This role also became more important than the play. Here the reviewer warned of blaming the performer when the fault may be the dramatist's and cautioned that it was necessary to proceed cautiously in such matters (December 15, 1828).

Generally speaking language also became inextricably interwoven with stage matters. Only a few comments were directed specifically

to dialogue or language from the playwright's standpoint. For example, one of the early comments pertained to the advantage of prose over poetry and illustrated the uneven sensitivity of the reviewers. It was related in part to acting method and asserted that Mrs. Anne Merry lapsed into a "measured mode of recitation" which the critic had already reprehended. The critic admitted that it was difficult to avoid in the passages "embarrassed by the jingle of rhyme" (May 3, 1802). The topic was never referred to again in quite this manner. Later, a more sympathetic reviewer observed that in Lionel and Clarissa,

> The passion and meaning of the poetry, which is perfect as a part of the scene and character, is nearly lost by the great extension of the vowel sounds which the singer is compelled to use, . . . and thus the accent and emphasis are too frequently at variance with the words (March 17, 1818).

It was clear, however, that certain language qualities were desirable. Love Makes a Man was praised for having language "neither polished into elegance, nor sparkling with wit," but "natural, sprightly and exhilirating" (May 21, 1802). The Marriage Promise, John T. Allingham's soon-forgotten attempt at a main piece, possessed "lively, easy dialogue" which the critic felt would render it a source of much "light amusement" (January 14, 1804). In 1809 a brief review of Man and Wife contained a succinct passage on language.

> The dialogue, is stated to be, highly commendable for its purity, both of meaning and stile. It does not sparkle with bon mots; it is not grossly familiar; it is easy and elegant, frequently energetic and enriched with just and pleasing imagery. Nor is it devoid of wit, though it is completely free from the affectation of it (May 4, 1809).

An American play received high praise also, when the reviewer wrote that among other things the language of David Paul Brown's Sertorius; or, The Roman Patriot was smooth and easy, neither perplexed by harsh inversion, nor rendered difficult by any strained expression or affectation of dignity (May 19, 1830).

Some of the apparent faults into which authors might fall were listed in a review of De Montfort, Joanna Baillie's solemn and literary tragedy, which the critic declared was equally as faulty as it was beautiful and asserted that, "The language which is in general energetic and impressive, seems occasionally harsh, and bombastical--its elevation degenerates into stiffness, and its simplicity into quaintness and vulgarity" (November 11, 1809). Twenty years later Kenney's Masaniello; or, The Dumb Girl of Portici, a novelty piece remembered, if at all, through Auber's opera, was criticized for much the same reason, that "the language in which they [the hero's sentiments] were expressed is often inflated and bombastic" (November 11, 1829).

In 1828 and 1829 an author's source of felicity in language appeared to be antiquity and the Elizabethans, particularly Shakespeare. A review of Julius Caesar stated that the oration to the citizens was full of "timidity, tenderness, entreaty, and finally of confident success . . . wrought into it by the bard of nature" (November 17, 1828). The reviewer of da Ponte's Almachilde held that, "the play is well written in point of dramatic diction, and shows a careful study of the

dramatists of the Elizabethan age" (August 12, 1829). The final comment on language cautiously praised Banim's long-admired and popular Damon and Pythias.

> the language of the principal characters, though not replete with all those little touches of nature which Shakespeare would have imparted to it, is, nevertheless, manly, energetic, and in some instances irresistably moving (October 20, 1829).

Another common topic in the theatrical department was the alteration and editing of plays. Originally the comments were directed at translations and an early article took the position that, done well it was permissible. A review of Dunlap indicated that he varied considerably from the original but it was necessary because different manners and customs required changed situations and incidents. With the proper judgment and discretion this liberty was commendable and reflected credit on the translator. As outlined, Dunlap's method and aim was to add scenes; sometimes to make action out of what was narration in French, sometimes to give stronger coloring to characters and sometimes to heighten the impressive effect of the story (December 14, 1801).

Later the critics did not speak quite as confidently about the modification of English plays. Speaking of a version of Richard III altered by Garrick and Cibber, one individual stated,

> We shall not undertake to pronounce decisively on the propriety of this license, but we doubt whether that part of the soliloquy in the tent scene, which is brought from Henry 5th, is altogether judicious. Does it not bespeak the tranquil hero, rather than the

> restless and disturbed spirit of Richard? It is in other respects greatly improved (February 26, 1802).

About a month later a third comment brought in the entire range of the problem when a reviewer, speaking of the fact that Schiller's plays demanded pruning, held that alteration, "while it lops away the excresencies, lessens also the interest of their plots and diminishes their beauties" (March 30, 1802).

The moral argument lay behind many of the remarks on alteration as in a critique of Venice Preserved.

> This tragedy, stripped as it now is of the low and contemptible scenes of buffoonery, and of the many vulgar and even obscene expressions and passages which disgrace its original form, continues to be a favorite with the public (April 26, 1802).

In one review, Southerne's Isabella was not considered sufficiently curtailed of its low comedy but in another, the manager was praised for "softening the language and curtailing" another of Thomas Otway's tragedies, The Orphan, "of its most licentious lines and passages" (May 10, 1802).

The rationale of alteration was enunciated best in a statement about Macbeth published in 1804. In it the writer demanded that Shakespeare remain sacrosanct save in one respect.

> We cannot conclude . . . without entering our protest against any alteration in the text of Shakespeare; unless it be for the sake of decency, which the refined manners of the age may sometimes demand, and which is not only justifiable but indispensible. This excuse, however, would not serve in any of the instances to which we allude; and we have more than a dozen now in our recollection, sometimes weakening, sometimes altering the sense, and sometimes trespassing upon the metre (December 15, 1804).

However, changes continued to be made and it was apparent that the critics had to contend with modifications of two kinds. One was the basic alteration made for creative or moral reasons as illustrated in John Howard Payne's longest-lived and perhaps best tragedy, Brutus; or The Fall of Tarquin, which was one of the first American-authored plays to impress London.

> The theatrical effect is much improved by the alteration. It is not pretended by the author to be wholly original; indeed, there have been no less than seven dramas founded on the same historical facts. But it has great merit as a compilation from most of these ingeniously dove-tailed together (March 15, 1819).

This kind of alteration also appeared in Dryden's version of Amphytrion; or, The Two Sosias.

> The piece was written, or rather altered and adapted . . . about the middle of the last century . . . In its present form it has been played in London with great success and abounds in humour and ludicrous situation (January 16, 1828).

Shakespeare was almost invariably produced in an altered version and some comments on A Midsummer Night's Dream were sparing of approval to say the least. The play was "transformed by modern ingenuity into a comic opera, but not so transformed as wholly to lose the beauty and humor of the original" (November 10, 1826).

The second was the impromptu alteration performed by actors and managers for other than moral or creative reasons. A critic commented on these deviations from the author's text in 1820.

> This is highly censurable: If actors dislike particular characters, they are not compelled to enact them; but the moment they presume to change the language of a dramatist, to gratify their own fastidiousness, they ought, thenceforward, to be condemned to write their own pieces, and to be made responsible for all the nonsense they may utter (November 18, 1820).

C. TYPES OF DRAMA

Sufficient comments were made about various types of drama to be worth reproducing in this study. Although many of them were probably cribbed from English critics, the comments reflected an interest in forms of the drama. The School for Scandal, strangely enough, provided the occasion for the first definition of tragedy. The definition was based almost entirely on moral effect.

> Whilst Tragedy pourtrays the victims of unrestrained passion and of guilt, our abhorrence of vice is increased; whilst it exhibits in pleasing colours the man of steady morals and inflexible integrity, a living example is, in a manner presented to us for imitation, and whilst it represents in pity-moving accents the distresses of the unhappy, it excites an interest in their misfortunes and encourages those sympathies that spring from the best affections of the heart (November 26, 1802).

From then on none but cursory remarks about tragedy appeared until 1820, when Sheridan Knowles' long-enduring Virginius; or, The Liberation of Rome was discussed. The reviewer felt that the play was an extraordinary tragedy and described the methods it used to gain its effects.

> The tragedy of Virginius presents us with no intricacy of plot--none of that loftiness of language nor magnificence of imagery, in which the tragic muse usually bursts upon us. But this deficiency is amply compensated, by the uncommon beauty and delicacy of the few metaphors, which the author has found it necessary to interweave, by the interesting connection which his main characters bear to each other, the amiable ingredients of their several dispositions, the critical effectiveness of the situations in which they are brought before us, but, above all, by the warm colouring of nature, with which he has heightened and enriched the whole (November 18, 1820).

Less than a month later, a review again gave a short summation of tragedy, this time, as in the earlier year, based on morality.

> Tragedy as a species of moral composition possesses a powerful influence over public manners and morals; its legitimate object being to affect us with pity for the virtuous in distress, and to afford a probable representation of the state of human life; were, [sic] though the innocent suffer, their sufferings are attended with such circumstances as make virtue appear amiable, and vice detestable. The very spirit of tragic action is to leave the impression of virtuous sorrow full and strong upon the heart (December 16, 1820).

In the same month, Edmund Kean's performance in New York City called forth a passage in which it appeared the writer took issue with Samuel Johnson. After citing Johnson's statement that Shakespeare used men "who act and speak as the reader or spectator," the critic declared,

> We are not among the number of those who consider that any theatric representation can be mistaken for reality; on the contrary, we believe that the delight of tragedy proceeds from the consciousness of fiction: murders, madness and conspiracies were they thought real and substantial, would afford no pleasure: And an intimate knowledge of the business of the stage is essential to the perfection of dramatic representation (December 26, 1820).

Several problems recurred in dealing with tragedy that had appeared elsewhere. In 1821 a review clarified the difference between French and English definitions of tragedy by citing Hugh Blair and argued that because of the great variation, Talma and Kean could not be compared (March 24, 1821). The matter of probability reappeared in 1826, when it was suggested that Payne's Richelieu was one of the few tragedies in which a fatal termination was the only one that could harmonize with the rest of the piece, "the wretched woman could do nothing but die" (November 17, 1826). In 1828 a critic of Romeo and Juliet gave the following justification for a comic character appearing in tragedy.

> Peter is undoubtedly a comic character; but where a comic character is introduced into a tragedy, it is not so much to make the audience laugh, as to heighten the pathetic and the passionate emotions excited by the principal characters by the contrast (February 20, 1828).

The last comment recorded called the charm of tragedy the "private or united interest . . . without which passion is inert" (November 17, 1828).

Statements on comedy were equally as scattered and derivative as those on tragedy. The problem of defining comedy was of course a factor, but the main difficulty apparently was a lack of need to provide formal definitions. The distinction was made early between genuine humor and comic affectation, but there was no summation of comedy until 1802 and a review of The School for Scandal. At that time an "admirable" comedy was one "which for natural delineation of

character, striking comic situation and flashes of real wit, is inferior to none in the English language" (April 30, 1802). The second discussion, mentioned above, after treating tragedy provided a more detailed description of comedy in its use, effects and operation.

> comedy . . . combats those faults and follies which, tho' they may not distract a nation, or convulse an empire, yet by their constant operation, are not less destructive, eventually, of the happiness of a community . . . Ridicule may be often employed where reasoning would be expended in vain . . . . There are few on whom the lash of satire does not imprint its smart; it attacks those sensibilities which are the most vulnerable, by humbling pride and mortifying vanity (November 26, 1802).

Another play that received compliments on the quality of its humor was Thomas J. Dibdin's The School for Prejudice which was said to possess "a very considerable share of humour; is full of bustle and ludicrous incident; in its sentiments is highly praiseworthy" (January 24, 1803). In the same year a reviewer also wrote at slightly greater length a passage on Joseph Richardson's The Fugitive that contained many of the remarks said about other comedies..

> We feel no scruple in announcing that the Fugitive is a play of real, solid merit. It possesses the true sterling of the old English Comedy, and though not like the Schoolfor Scandal, abounding in plot or very striking incident, yet it creates from the beginning a strong interest, which never is suffered to be lost or to flag to the denouement (May 27, 1803).

A year later, a revival of Richard Cumberland's The Brothers was praised because, "the comedy abounds in that fine delineation of character, correctness of sentiment, and point of dialogue which distinguished the dramatic productions of the old school" (May 19, 1804).

After these few early statements almost nothing was said about comedy, save as it related to the performers.

The danger that comedy would descend into farce was ever present and was the subject of a remark which expressed concern but which really belongs to the next chapter "Of Players." "Let those actors who resort to stage tricks and mummery to extort applause, and run comedy into broad farce, only observe the chaste manner of Harwood . . . and they will soon be convinced of their error" (November 29, 1803).

The confusion that existed in the minds of the reviewers concerning the nature of farce might well be illustrated by two comments that came within a few weeks of each other. In late 1803 a review of Bonaparte in England, William Dunlap's farce of mistaken identity, declared,

> The author has made the best of his materials; he has thrown much humor and point into the dialogue, and has placed his principal character in situations ludicrous and laughable . . . it is well calculated for the purposes of broad farce, i.e. to make an audience right merry (December 20, 1803).

If this was the net result of farce, a statement about John Allingham's The Marriage Promise, accepted without question as comedy, was similar.

> This is certainly one of the most pleasing of the new comedies that have appeared for several seasons. It produces more downright hearty, long continued laughter, than any exhibition we ever witnessed in the theater (January 26, 1804).

That the confusion was real and presented somewhat of a problem was illustrated by two remarks on the younger Colman's popular and amusing The Review; or, The Wags of Windsor. The first indicated that the play was "the most spirited laughter-provoking piece of low comedy we ever yet witnessed" (June 22, 1805). In the second, one week later, the reviewer, undoubtedly the same writer, apologized by saying the play "is the best broad farce we ever witnessed: we then inconsiderately said low comedy, the idea is more correct as we have now expressed it (June 27, 1805).

A review of what was specifically called a farce late in the period showed some insight into the distinction between comedy and farce, especially when compared with what had preceded it. The farce itself, John Galt's Arrivals in New York; or An Aunt in Virginia, "is not exactly bad, nor stupid, but it holds that middle rank between bad and good, which it is said, both gods and men abhor" (May 16, 1828). But of greater interest, and more specifically,

> The incident is nothing; the dialogue wanting in wit and humour; and as for the characters, there are but two and they are caricatures. It is very true that so they should be in a farce; but then there must be something besides (May 16, 1828).

The only other type of drama that was commented upon was the melodrama, and the remark was only that it had been long popular on the French stage and was now for the first time being presented on the English boards.

However, there was again some confusion apparent as the reviewers found it difficult to distinguish at times between what they

called English opera or operatic drama and melodrama. Late in the period a reviewer revealed both this problem and a more profound one facing Americans.

> The Park Theatre, to which we owe not only the formation of an incipient taste in our citizens for operatic drama, but also an unwearied endeavour to cultivate and perpetuate it and guard it from the barbarisms incident to a precocious though new people . . . sounded its primo violino . . . in the play--for it is, strictly neither melo-drama nor opera, being to musical for the former and to clumsy for the latter--of Malvina (June 26, 1829).

Between 1815 and 1825 a number of comments appeared in the columns of the Evening Post about the form of musical play which was referred to as the English opera and operatic drama. The reviewers themselves used the term opera interchangeably, but they made distinctions between types of opera. In 1817 the review of James Cobb's The Siege of Belgrade contained the observation,

> The music of this opera is perhaps the most strictly classical, of any on the English stage. It is chief-[sic] selected by that admirable composer Storace, from an Italian opera of Martini's called La Cosa rara, and the songs of the first act are almost literal translations from the beautiful production (November 14, 1817).

Further clarification appeared in a review of Bickerstaffe's Lionel and Clarissa which declared that this comic opera was,

> An opera which if considered in reference both to the closet and the boards, is perhaps unrivalled on the English stage. It is a well-written and pleasant acting comedy, independent of the music, which is by no means the best part of it (March 17, 1818).

The nature of this type of production was strikingly illustrated by Thomas J. Dibdin's Zuma; or, The Tree of Health in which the music of "this charming opera" was considered sweet and effective, but the reviewer recalled that the play had been presented before stripped of music because of a lack of musical strength in the acting company (January 24, 1823).

In 1824 the English version of The Marriage of Figaro, announced as for the first time in America with Mozart's music, was presented and impressed the Evening Post.

> It was the best musical entertainment we have ever enjoyed. The splendid chorusses and finales, and the beautiful songs and duetts of Mozart, were performed with uncommon effect; and the audience evinced by their attention and applause that, they knew how to appreciate them (May 12, 1824).

But the most significant year for reviews of this kind of entertainment, spoken of in terms which, even when discounted for puffing, indicated the vast difference between what was now and what had been, was 1825. In that year an Italian company arrived and presented Il Barbiere di Siviglia. The reviewer was nearly overwhelmed.

> In what language shall we speak of an entertainment so novel in this country, but which has so long ranked as the most elegant and refined among the amusements of the higher classes of the old world? All have obtained a general idea of the opera from report. But report can give but a faint idea of it--Until it is seen, it will never be believed that a play can be conducted in recitative or singing and yet appear nearly as natural as the ordinary drama. We were last night surprised, delighted, enchanted; and such were the feelings of all who witnessed the performance (November 30, 1825).

A familiar obstacle to the enjoyment of opera in America reared its head at this time, but the reviewer claimed a solution in the fact that, "a translation into good English was to be had at the box office, with the original text accompanying it on the opposite page (December 6, 1825).

The result of the introduction of opera was naturally an attempt to criticize music in relation to dramatic effect. In reviewing Rossini's Otello the critic indicated the strength of the opera over the play. "In the play the effect produced by the piteous catastrophe is sufficiently painful; but in the opera; by the aid of music it is wrought up to agony" (February 9, 1826). Later, the paper published a critique of opera in general, and in this article some characteristics of the opera and music were seen to be applicable to the theater.

> Music is the language of nature: it speaks to the heart, not to the head: it may be called a kind of moral electricity; and so powerful, at one time, was its influence considered in the formation of character, that no system of education was deemed complete without music for its basis . . .

But the above notwithstanding, the problem was that opera tended to change an emphasis best left unchanged. "Is not sentiment, in them, superseded by skill, and the soul subduing sympathy of song, by the cold criticisms of fashionable admiration?" The reason for the critique was to give the "corps operatique" a different direction.

> We would have tears issue from the eyes, not "bravos" from the lips--crying, not criticizing: and when the melting mood was off, let the trump of patriotic triumph sound its spirit stirring notes. Music, like man, of whose soul it is the emanation, ought to be alternately proud or pensive, glad or gloomy, l'allegro or il penseroso. Let the opera touch the heart instead of the head, and, our word for it, there will be no lack of auditors. The love of strong emotion is almost universal and irresistable. There is scarce a being, stamped with the form of humanity, not under its influence. And which, we would ask, is the greater victory, to tickle a knot of connoisseurs, or to make a whole audience feel as one man? (March 7, 1826).

From farce through opera to tragedy, the New York Evening Post critics and reviewers ranged, seldom concentrating on any one aspect of drama sufficiently long to say much of importance. The demands of a daily newspaper are reflected in the articles, many of which were written on a previous night's production or showed other evidence of having been written hurriedly. Some clearly showed their sources, others just as surely conceal them. In any case they usually reflect ideas current in England a few years before. Stylistically, most of the reviews were wanting. Occasionally one would be well written and vivacious. When critical originality and stylistic skill combined an infrequent thoughtful article resulted.

The quality of plays reviewed was good, considering the general decline in theatrical matter that was taking place at this time. No critic need apologize for reviewing the plays of Thomas Otway, Nicholas Rowe, Richard Sheridan, Frederick Reynolds, Thomas Holcroft

and the Colmans when far worse and more ephemeral materials were being produced daily. The critics had sufficient taste to realize their theater was in apparent decline, opposed it and perhaps opposing changed it, if slightly and temporarily.

CHAPTER V

OF PLAYERS

A. THE THEORY OF ACTING

Like the theories of dramaturgy, the theories of acting that appeared in the Evening Post had their inception in England about the middle of the 18th century. To the reviewers the question whether the "declamatory" or the "natural" style of acting was better was no longer moot, and they now corrected the players who declaimed or relied on stage effect.. But the matter appeared to be settled only among the critics, and the performers continued to exhibit the "declamatory" mode, to almost universal critical protest. In addition to expressing themselves on theories of acting, "conception," and the performers integrity, the reviewers frequently discussed acting technique. They advised on make-up, costume, language, casting, stage-business, the need for study and other topics. At times they also felt called upon to comment on the songs and singing that played a large part in the drama of the time. Finally, the critics occasionally remarked on the actor's awareness of his audience.

Critical opposition to the declamatory style of acting appeared early in the period. In the fifteenth review to be published a critic addressed Mrs. John Hodgkinson, who had played Ophelia, and told her,

> With respect to the early part of the character we must remind Mrs. H. that her language in tragedy, and also in sentimental Comedy, is the language of declamation, not of nature. We earnesly [sic] recommend to her attention the style of customary conversation. It may be necessary to throw into it some additional force--but a mechanical declamatory delivery is in most cases, at utter variance with nature (February 19, 1802).

The admonition to observe the language of nature, which supposedly was conversational speech, was repeated later in the same year in a discussion of Nicholas Rowe's The Fair Penitent.

> We are also dissatisfied with the measured theatric manner in which the performers deliver themselves. . . . Their voices, even when discoursing on matters of trifling importance, constantly return on the ear with a regular cadence that is very different from the language of nature (April 24, 1802).

The breadth of the problem was illustrated by a flattering comment on Thomas Abthorpe Cooper's performance in another of Rowe's tragedies, Jane Shore.

> The judgment and discrimination of this gentleman, are eminently correct . . . and his performance is distinguished by an inartificial delivery, very different from that mechanical declamation, to which our dramatis personae, are so generally addicted (May 3, 1802).

That he was later criticized for mechanical declamation gave some indication of the style of acting in use and the critics' conception of "natural." It also indicated that the style of acting may have been undergoing change, and that what was "natural" early in the period was called declamatory later by contrast. In 1820 when Cooper's acting was again assessed, this time as Othello, the change that had taken place was obvious. The reviewer condemned the "cold declamatory style" and "showy formal enunciation" and suggested that it confused and obscured the intentions of the author. According to him the key to an effective representation of Othello lay

in keeping with the author's intentions. If the actor was doing this then he was doing well.

> But if the continual victim of harrowing thoughts . . . of suspicions . . . ought to be personated as one whose affections are suddenly stricken in health and hope . . . though the herd of Mr. Cooper's admirers laud him to the skies, men of taste and intellect (and to such alone I write) must pronounce his enactment of Othello, [deficient] in those touches which are essential to a proper effect, and greatly below the character which the immortal author conceived and coloured (November 28, 1820).

In an earlier review, which covered Cooper's acting as Virginius, the title character in Sheridan Knowles' tragedy, a brief description was given of the declamatory stance which, in addition to vocal mannerisms, caused dissent.

> Every actor who attempts to declaim . . . must fail to give . . . the effect intended by the dramatist; . . . to stand regulating the position of his arms, body and feet . . . [is] such entire and palpable a misconception of nature, and outrage of taste and common reason, to be foreign to the stage (November 18, 1820).

The article closed with a brief history of the declamatory style and the reviewer's position.

> . . . it must be obvious to every discerning mind, that opposed as I am to declamatory style, which orginally crept upon the stage during the reign of a rude and immature taste, and which the usage of centuries has, in the judgment of some, hallowed, as well as established, even the finest specimens of this school of acting, I can only consider as the glittering tinsel of error--as fraudulent substitutes imposed upon mankind for the solid and sterling beauty of truth and nature (November 28, 1820).

Two years prior to this, while speaking of Edward Moore's ever-popular tragedy The Gamester, a critic had addressed this same problem and recommended a change.

> I take this occasion to censure, in pointed terms, as I have long intended to do, a vicious habit, which prevails in the theatre, of giving a false and unnatural intonation

> to the voice. --This fault is not exclusively confined to the stage, it affects all our public readers and reciters without exception. It is only the extempore speaker that is free from it . . . It requires nothing more . . . than to attend carefully to any conversation he may happen to hold or overhear . . . two men will converse without . . . once dropping . . . into cadence . . . In serious soliloquy, it occurs in every line to the destruction of the sense. This trespass against propriety offends our ears from the mouth of almost every actor upon the stage, whether male or female, stars or stationary . . . I trust, to have pointed it out, will, in a little time, be, to banish it altogether (September 28, 1818).

The alternative to declamation required a model, which was not long in coming, to give it force.. In theory, at least, Edmund Kean provided the best example of the "just representation." Kean's style was considered by the writer of an article devoted to him to be the most true to nature and "perhaps essential to just representation." It was elaborated on by a Kean partisan, as the Evening Post always was.

> Of the justness of my opinion as to the preferable style of acting . . . there would be no disagreement, did Mr. Kean possess person and voice such as would enable him to give entire effect to the ideas of the author and his own matchless conceptions: as it is, even the partizans of cold and studied imitations of nature, who take delight in seeing an actor stalk through his part . . . are now carried away by the controlling force of sympathy, and are constrained to confess the commanding ascendancy of genius . . . . He possesses the incomparable art of striking the true key of nature, and presenting the being under the influence of the emotion which the text describes (December 26, 1820).

Ten days earlier Kean had received similar commendation which expressed that which the actor should strive for.

> But above all, the meeting between Lear and Cordelia was most affecting. In this scene the author has transfused the very essence of all the heartfelt truth of nature; and to this scene did Mr. Kean impart a reality and pathos to which no language however enthusiastic can do justice (December 16, 1820).

The essence then of good acting style was, first of all, a just conception of the character as the author intended him. Secondly, the player must present this just conception in a "natural" manner. The admonition to naturalness was repeated frequently during the course of the period. Those who failed in this respect were like Mrs. Hodgkinson in Dunlap's translation of Kotzebue's Fraternal Discord who, "In delivering sentiment . . . is apt to depart from the artless naivete of the character, and to assume a tone and emphasis which savor too strongly of the stage" (November 20, 1801). The manner implied, of course, physical and mental flexibility and, in answer to a charge that passion was at variance with grace, an early reviewer stated,

> But why? May not every attitude and motion be graceful, although impassioned? . . . The perfection of acting is to preserve character in deportment as well as language.--where a Clown is personated, every gesture and action should be uncouth; but from Othello we must ever expect that the dignity which pertains to the character should influence every movement (December 26, 1801).

Throughout the period the theory, although apparently in a state of flux, remained fairly uniform in the Evening Post. Even the character of Shenkin in Frederick Reynolds' Folly As It Flies was seen to be "a copy from nature" requiring "the utmost chasteness" in the performance where, "It should be the chief aim of the actor to exhibit him blunt, artless and affectionate" (February 22, 1802). Four years later the performance of John Hogg in the younger Colman's popular comedy John Bull; or, An Englishman's Fireside was praised as a masterly piece of acting because,

> He felt as a man, and talked like one. His pathetic scenes with his daughter had not the semblance of artifice; and the assertion of his rights in the judgment hall of Sir Simon Rochdale bespoke correct notions of that firmness of character which is ever inspired by honor, honesty, and a just resentment of injury. Nature has taught him her own language (June 24, 1806).

In 1812 Mrs. Young, playing in Mrs. Elizabeth Inchbald's The Child of Nature, was complimented for similar accomplishments, and the reviewer summed up some essentials.

> Mrs. Young possesses from nature some of the essential requisites for an actress . . . She speaks and plays as she does, not so much because she is taught that she must speak and play so, but because she perceives and feels it is right and proper, hence she is always natural, always impressive (April 22, 1812).

Finally, on the day after Christmas of 1820, the reviewer relied on Dr. Johnson to sum up some of the elements underlying this acting style. The actor under consideration is Kean and the role is one of his most highly praised, King Lear. " . . . we may with justice say of this style of acting what Dr. Johnson has said of the writing of Shakespeare; it is 'the vigorous and vivacious offspring of observation and study impregnated by genius'" (December 26, 1820).

That there were dangers inherent in the "natural" style, however, was also evidenced in 1820 when Kean himself was criticized for overdoing his manner.

> A deliberate manner of expressing sentiments which come reluctantly from the soul, forcing their way through the opposing feelings, is natural; but extreme prosing is villainous, and fails in the effect it proposes. The frequent and long pauses also were much too artificial; because they betrayed the art of the actor, which should always be kept out of sight (December 4, 1820).

The extreme difficulty of making a clear distinction between the point in each review where discussions of acting style ended and where remarks on acting technique began forces examination at this point of comments made about some of the actors and characters on the New York boards over a period of thirty years. Qualities of conception, style, judgment, effect and comprehension that the critics esteemed will be revealed in these excerpts as well as the faults they condemned.

As was pointed out in the introduction a number of famous English performers made tours of the United States at this time. In addition, the "star" system developed and American performers began to appear. By the end of the period both "stars" and natives had begun to dominate the American theater. The Evening Post noted the New York City debut of many of these performers and made extended comments on some of them. A few earned lasting renown, others were completely forgotten. Presumably a few of the latter fit the description of a respectable actor published late in the period, in a review of Thomas Morton's Speed the Plough, which deserved immortality if only for bringing into the world Mrs. Grundy, arbitress of taste and conduct.

> A respectable actor then is one who seldom gratifies, and who seldom offends us; who never disappoints us, because we never expect anything from him, and who takes care never to rouse our dormant admiration by any unlooked for stroke of excellence . . . a mere machine, who walks and speaks his part, who having a tolerable voice, face and figure, reposes entirely upon these natural advantages; who never risks a failure, because he never makes an effort; and who has not genius enough to do either well or ill (June 14, 1828).

Other performers were, without question, of outstanding talent with a clear concept of their profession.

One of the early actors to be reviewed was John Hodgkinson, who, no doubt, was a member of the New York Company when the Evening Post was founded. In the part of Rolla, in Dunlap's Pizarro, he was said to have done, "a shewy and in many parts a judicious piece of acting," but he could have done it "with less noise and more effect." He had committed the error of departing from the "elevation of the character" in one scene, and overall he was accused of playing for the house. The reviewer said, "we dislike these Clap-traps; and we abhor to be reminded by a performer in an interesting situation, that he is merely enacting a part" (December 9, 1801). In the same review, Mr. James Fennell was said to have conceived the author's intention justly, but fell short in marking the contending passions of Pizarro.

Thomas Abthorpe Cooper, a longtime colleague of theirs, had appeared in America before 1800 and was still active at the close of the 1820's. A review of Rowe's The Fair Penitent in 1802 pointed out that Cooper had done well in the role of Lothario to whom,

> the author has given the advantage of language . . . severity of sarcasms . . . bitterness of . . . contempt . . . honest indignation . . . all strongly marked . . . the gay, spirited and contemptuous manner, with which Lothario diverts himself with the ruffled passions of his antagonist, are . . . to be gathered from a knowledge of the character, and depend essentially upon the actor (April 24, 1802).

Sixteen years later he was at his peak and was frequently the subject of praise. He was preeminently successful in the role of Macbeth which a reviewer found to be a character most difficult to assume. Cooper, however, seemed to achieve a certain perfection in the role using a technique which sounded much like modern day "method" approach.

> From his first appearance to the last, he enter so entirely into the original, that in no instance can he be detected sinking from the true tone of the character. His countenance, his voice, his deportment, and his whole manner, is suited to the representation (September 25, 1818).

He was not always so highly thought of, as has been shown.

William Twaits was given a detailed critique as a performer in 1806. He was another regular in the early Evening Post reviews. He was most often referred to as a comedian but it was apparent that he had a limited versatility that enabled him to play tragic roles at times. One of his earliest appearances brought forth this appraisal.

> With Mr. Twait's powers of conception at the age of 25, with his strong and impressive features, his flexibility of muscles, particularly of the face, his clear and fine toned voice, his ease of action & pliancy of limbs, his aptitude to seize and his facility to express the most striking incidents, backed by considerable science in music and much excellence as a Burletta singer, all happily accompanied with a generous ambition to excel and a persevering industry to attain his object, what may he not promise himself? Provided he does not so far mistake the nature of his talents as to turn them out of their true course, he may without flattery aspire to the rank at least of the first comedian in the United States (July 5, 1805).

Variations on the last sentence became the stock closing to reviews that dwelt on an actor or actress.

Mr. Twaits' failing, however, was "not preserving throughout the character he should represent." He had been admonished by a critic a fortnight earlier to pay close attention to his work.

> You must be aware, sir, that the character of this staymaker-gentleman is not so easy to imitate as the generality of actors may imagine. As the original is scarcely any where to be found, it requires an admirable conception, and great powers, to express the author's meaning (June 20, 1806).

John Howard Payne, a fourth actor who earned much attention in the Evening Post's initial decade, was the first native to receive the paper's critical blessing and provided occasion for much nationalistic literary sentiment. An early review enumerated succinctly the half-dozen qualities the critics held to be essential to an adequate portrayal.

> To a full and complete conception of the various characters he has personated, he joins a delicacy and refinement of feeling and expression, which distinctly mark the varying shade of passion and sentiment. Self-possessed in every situation, his actions and gestures, free from redundancy or affectation, are perfectly natural and appropriate, and his manners extremely graceful and interesting (March 18, 1809).

Another successful and complete part was played by the noted English actress Mrs. Barnes in 1816. The role of Juliet was difficult to play the review maintained, as were nearly all Shakespeare's creations. Mrs. Barnes

> through the whole action of Juliet . . . was so precisely just, and so exactly entered into the nature of the part that we unhesitatingly ascribe to her deep study and the most distinct conception. She did and looked Juliet better than we have ever seen it played on this stage . . . . We have seen the part looked beautifully and interestingly & we have heard it cried sung and said in every time of theatrical declamation, natural and unnatural to man and beast; but passion has always slept as if soundly drugged with the Friar's narcotic (April 27, 1816).

She was also credited the following year for her performance in Thomas Southerne's Isabella; or, The Spanish Tragedy. In this play

> The character of Isabella is calculated to give full play to the very highest dramatic powers. In the performance of Mrs. Barnes, not a single trait of passion was lost or enfeebled; she uniformly rose with the scene; all her powers were summoned into action, and the lofty conceptions of the poet were depicted with

> natural warmth and discriminating judgment. Our feelings were so powerfully arrested, and our admiration so strongly awakened, that but little time was left for critical reflection (October 14, 1817).

A husband and wife team, of which there were several active during the period, received favorable comment within six months of each other. Mrs. Bartley was complimented for accomplishing something that the "celebrated" Mrs. Merry "never dared try," the mad scene in Otway's Venice Preserved which,

> at once delighted and astonished. Perhaps no incident ever devised for the stage, is attended with equal hazard in the representation as this: on the one side of the line is the ridiculous, on the other the bathos; and it requires the nicest care and the greatest efforts to prevent the audience from falling into laughter, or revolting at the poet's extravagance (December 1, 1818).

Mr. Bartley received high praise for his part in William Dimond's Adrian and Orilla; or, A Mother's Vengeance, a drama which employed all the sentimental tricks.

> We echo public opinion when we affirm that his professional career is marked by a judgment singularly correct; that his accuracy of conception enables him to represent the real character or affected habits with equal felicity; that he is at all times remarkable for the purity of his elocution, and that his actions and deportment are alike suited to the passion he represents and the sentiments he utters. In short there is no actor among us who is more uniformly entitled to a universal and profound attention, and indeed, to speak the truth, none who more generally receives it (April 21, 1819).

Two comments by a reviewer, perhaps the same one since they appeared within a month of each other, brought another point forward which was related directly to theories of acting underlying the discussion of performers. In discussing Cooper's acting of Virginius and later assessing Kean's acting in general, the writer emphasized

the need to know the human heart. "In a performance of this kind the mind and the heart must be active agents, or the representation is lamentably defective, and the heart never acts without giving instant and indubitable testimony of its presence" (November 18, 1820). Kean was declared to be, "In characters full of gloom and unhappiness, and subject to violent transitions of passion . . . awfully impressive: and uniformly displays a thorough knowledge of the human heart" (December 26, 1820).

Edmund Kean was also the subject of a review of King Lear which illustrated why he received more attention than any other actor, at least from the Evening Post.

> Mr. Kean is the actor, who, alone, since Garrick, is capable of doing complete justice to the author. So closely did he identify himself last evening with the character he personated, from beginning to end, that there could be traced not even a distant resemblance to himself individually, or to any other character in the drama he has ever assumed (March 17, 1821).

The value of this praise may be judged by the critics' estimates of the essential difficulty of acting Shakespeare and particularly King Lear, which will be used to close this section. A few months later these plaudits were reinforced by an additional remark drawn from a review of Richard III that underscored the role natural endowment played for which diligence could not be substituted.

> We are well aware it is not very difficult to produce effect in most of Shakespeare's plays, because the characters are relieved with such prominence and vigor, that the hand cannot be laid upon them without bearing away some kind of impression; but to transmit them into full and accurate beauty to the eye, to transmit the image from the volume in its splendour to the stage; to summon up before us in actual tangible existence the conceptions which have crowned our silent study, with

> richness and beauty, with fondness of love--the fierceness of headlong ambition, and the fluctuations of sublime spirits destracted by jealousy, superstition and revenge, require a faculty no teaching, no diligence can give. It must be born with the actor (October 8, 1821).

Upon the arrival of Opera in 1825 Signorina Garcia captivated her audience including the reviewer. She introduced some variations in her acting that were accounted for as genius, but which may not have been so acceptable in another performer.

> She has a perfect and animating conception of her parts, and after having seen her often in the same piece, one perceives that she plays variously at various times and under the excitement of the moment. This is the inspiration of genius, and it is this which makes us so confidently hope and believe, that our youthful favorite, who is but beginning . . . may . . . divide the prize with the Pastas and Catalinis of Europe (January 11, 1826).

Another quality was cited in a review of Macready's Macbeth which had been noted for its lack in earlier performances. Macready was able to provide

> a unity in his conception of the character, which made the development of Macbeth's feeling and prompting motives, as represented by him, perfectly intelligible, from his first interview with the weird sisters, to the final overthrow of all his hopes, and his desperate conflict with Macduff. He did not play detached scenes of the tragedy, with a view of producing effect; leaving the whole scope and great moral outline of the character out of the question (October 5, 1826).

The last performer used to illustrate the application of acting theory to current productions on the New York boards was Edwin Forrest, who originally had the sagacity to chose his roles carefully for his own qualifications and later had characters written specifically for him. He played the role of Faulconbridge in King John, where his

> fire and youth, his broad style of satire, imparted to the noble Bastard all that the dramatist intended. Indeed, although we hold Faulconbridge but as a Shakespearian melange of bully and patriot, rounded off, "to suit the ears of the groundlings," with some good set swearing & profanity--yet we shall pit Mr. Forest [sic] against any we have seen, for making the patriot the prominent characteristic, and for drawing forth the few beauties of feeling that are to be found in this blustering, honest character (November 17, 1828).

In a later review, this time of the play King Lear, the reviewer pointed out Forrest's skill and at the same time summed up the essence of acting style. It was difficult, maintained the writer, to point out an instance where Forrest "has not fully comprehended his author; and with regard to the execution,the tears of many of the auditors attested both the irresistable pathos of the situations and language of the poet, and the fidelity to nature of this admirable tragedian's delineations." The play itself apparently had the strength of one scene in it, the death of Lear's child, which "whole scene, in short, in every particular and trait, was one of the deepest interest, the greatest verisimilitude, of most agonizing truth, that we ever saw displayed" (November 27, 1829).

The reviewers were well aware that a character or a play might require an exceptional amount of effort and study because of its nature. If the author had only outlinedhis creations as Sheridan Knowles did in the long-popular William Tell, the demands might easily go beyond the actors capabilities (October 23, 1826).

On the other hand, the difficulties that Shakespeare entailed were of an entirely different sort and required nearly impossible efforts even by the best performers because of his complexity. A review of Macbeth included the statement,

> In the character of Macbeth, there is a vast field for the display of passions, which are so varied, so emphatic, so extraordinary in their transition, as to demand no inconsiderable power and talent to give them full effect. The vices of Macbeth contribute to make him hateful, and he fails to obtain, what is of great moment, the sympathy of the audience. It is then reasonable to infer, that he who personates Macbeth with effect, who gives a genuine coloring, a force, a point, and stamina to the character, cannot fail in any other prominent part (September 8, 1818).

Later, a review of King Lear pointed up again the difficulties inherent in acting Shakespeare.

> The tragedy of King Lear has been pronounced by distinguished critics as one of the best of all Shakespeare's plays. At the same time, that such are the depth of nature, the whirlwind of passion, the intensity of feeling, and the agonizing throes of conflicting emotion, that it cannot be acted. In the closet it fixes our eager attention, agitates our passions, and interests our curiosity. On the stage the greatest efforts of genius can scarcely hope to give due effect to a character so arduous and so exalted (December 16, 1820).

Other plays required little or no effort and could be ruined only by violating the ban on declamtion as Joseph Holman did.

> The author has drawn a most charming and highly finished picture, and nothing is left for the performer but to conduct himself with ease, simplicity and feeling; instead of that, however, Mr. H. ostentatiously declaimed with so much affectation both of voice and action,that we could not avoid experiencing concern (October 13, 1812).

B. THE TECHNIQUE OF ACTING

In addition to discussing the theoretical bases for the dramatization of a play such as conception, truth to author, truth to character and truth to nature, the Evening Post reviewers also spent a good deal of time discussing stage technique. As they expressed it, a performance consisted of conception and execution.

The matter of "execution" will be the next concern of this study. Some of the material to be covered was summarized briefly in a paragraph in an 1820 review of Kean which observed that Kean's execution differed from that of other great actors.

> There is less of that lofty carriage and sustained severity of deportment; less of that exaggerated stateliness, formality and reserve; less bombast; a greater inequality of general demeanour; more lengthened pauses; more striking and terrific bursts of passion; more rapid and varied expression of feature; and more frequent and sudden transitions of voice, from tone of the fiercest passion, to cadences that are low and familiar (December 26, 1820).

"Execution" had several facets. Among these was a broad area which included make-up, costume, language and action. In discussing these matters, the terms propriety and decorum were often applied, though also used in other contexts. In addition, the critics frequently referred to proper casting, stage business, interpolation and alteration on stage, voice and expression, animation and spirit, and study.

The first reference to make-up was in a review of Thomas A. Cooper's performance of Othello which criticized Cooper for not making-up to suit the character. The writer declared, "we should prefer . . . a darker shade . . . It would give more character and better warrant that part of the Moor's jealousy which is founded on the difference of complexions" (December 21, 1801). References to the Moor's coloring recurred in later reviews of Othello, at times complimentary. Usually, however, the comments were more general and were directed at the actresses. Two examples serve to illustrate. The first was from a review of Isaac Bickerstaffe's

Lionel and Clarissa and expressed a concern which frequently appeared.

> She often destroys the wit of the author, by the ill-judged wish to seem young and handsome, when it is absolutely necessary to appear both old and ugly, or the author is rendered quite ridiculous. If she is willing to personate old women, let her conform to the character in her face as well as walk and dress (March 17, 1818).

A few years later the actress in Thomas Holcroft's comedy The Road to Ruin was admonished for the same reason.

> Instead of shewing the beauty and attraction of youth, it was necessary, to give effect to the incident, and even to the text of the author, more than once expressed, to have appeared somewhat aged and repulsive.--And we take this occasion to observe to the ladies of the theatre in general, that they ought either never to represent age or to do it throughout. What so ridiculously unnatural as to appear with a blooming face and a body of decrepitude, as we have sometimes seen? (December 7, 1822).

Very closely related to the problem of propriety in make-up was that of propriety in costume. In the second critique to appear the writer remarked on the fact that one of the characters was incongruously dressed, "that he should be borne down by disease, and at the same time laced up in a tight coat and vest, is a little improbable" (November 20, 1801). A month later in the review of Cooper's Othello cited above, a comentator declared that the costume "should be both splendid and martial to suit the character, which is lofty and commanding" instead of which it gave the performer an "awkward and uncouth appearance." (December 21, 1801).

Several other factors were involved in choosing costumes. In addition to retaining congruity to the author's intention, it must be in keeping with the actor's and the audience's judgment.

> We cannot however neglect to mention a striking impropriety in the costume of one of the principal performers . . . we are sorry to mention this . . . But surely the performers ought to have an eye to propriety, and to consider, that the judgment of the audience is to be consulted as well as the fancy of the actor (March 10, 1802).

The emphasis remained within the play, however, but even then considered public taste. "It is of the utmost importance to make the dress correspond withthe time, for anachronisms of this kind destroy the effect and give a false impulse to public taste" (September 11, 1818).

Propriety and decorum in language appeared to revolve around three matters, vulgarity, pronunciation and dialect. The first of these was frequently mentioned in discussing morals and manners, as has been noted. Little attention was paid to elevation of language in a social sense save in a review of Sheridan's The School for Scandal in which the reviewer remarked, "there is a broadness in her manner of repeating some of the scandal, that rather belongs to a lower circle" (April 30, 1802). Later in the period John Barnes was warned not to let his low comedy degenerate into low buffoonery and further cautioned to "beware how he indulges in a disposition to give point by his manner to broad jests for the purpose of making them broader. Did he not hear an audible sign of disapprobation on Saturday evening?" (March 17, 1818). Ideally, such propriety as was demonstrated by Miss Johnson was recommended by the critics. In 1817 she was praised because

> The cadences of her voice are finely modulated, capable of expressing the dignity and the pathos of sentiment, as well as the vivacity of repartee. There is nothing

> boisterous or hoydenish in her gaiety; none of that disgusting knowingness in pointing an obvious witticism --Her raillary has an air of perfect good breeding and education (January 21, 1817).

The matter of pronounciation on the stage was a plague throughout the period and probably received more attention than any other problem. Its solution was quite simple according to the reviewers, who recommended "Walker's pronouncing dictionary, the best, indeed, only authority extant." There was a strong prescriptive backing for the insistence upon correct pronunciation. As was pointed out in the same review, "a correct pronunciation on the stage is indispensable--especially in this country where so many provincialisms prevail" (November 29, 1803). The rationale for the first implication of the sentence was later elaborated in a review of The Merchant of Venice in which the reviewer said, "We take this occasion to point out several instances of vicious stage pronunciation, which we have often observed, and which ought to be corrected, because the stage is supposed to afford a criterion for orthoepy" (May 10, 1819).

The second implication, that of provincialism, underwent a gradual change, possibly related to nationalism, until at the end of the period a critic maintained that,

> Hackett's Johathan is altogether the best personation of the New England rustic that we have ever witnessed. Many of the peculiarities of pronunciation were very correctly given . . . He made some mistakes of dialect, however, which he would do well to rectify . . . . A short residence in the interior of New England would give Mr. Hackett a command of these peculiarities, and enable him to diversify very greatly his copies of their manners, and we dare say our eastern neighbors would laugh as heartily as any body else at the exercise of his imitative talents, even though they themselves were the object of it (November 22, 1826).

Somewhat more difficult to distinguish were the critical attitudes toward decorum and propriety in actions. Closely related was the constant admonition to the actor to avoid exaggeration. But the manner in which an actor played a certain role was frequently deserving of comment. One of the earliest remarks was addressed to John Hogg in his role as high priest in Pizarro, who "had little of the solemnity and stateliness suitable to the occasion, but swaggered in as tho' he were enacting Commodore Scud" (December 9, 1801).

The words extravagance and chasteness were frequently juxtaposed in dealing with actions. In 1801 a reviewer of Othello wrote,

> Throughout this extremely difficult scene, Mr. Cooper's performance was judicious and impressive. His attitude and countenance, together with the modulations of his voice, were in unison with the different passions which successively agitated his bosom (December 21, 1801).

In the following year Rowe's Jane Shore was described as a play in which, "To represent the maniac chastely, appears a point of immense difficulty . . . Alicia exhibits all the grades of this situation, from the wildness of derangement, to the frenzy of madness, without trespassing on nature in the remotest degree" (May 3, 1802). That same year an actress was criticized for overdoing some mimicry and overacting while playing an imaginary spinnet. She was advised that, "A beautiful woman should scrupulously avoid all approach to caricature. It bespeaks a degree of good sense in an actor, to distinguish what should be simply related and what should be exemplified by action" (November 26, 1802).

Another general statement of the need for restraint in certain situations appeared in 1817. It was directed at an actress who

> was formed to ride on the whirlwind of passion and to direct the storm of grief . . . . No convulsive heavings, no affected sobs; no unnatural contortions mark the deep and settled anguish of her soul. --All is feeling and taste--Sorrow, though excessive, is decorous, appearing in all the warmth and freshness of nature, without a single tinge of extravagance (October 14, 1817).

In addition to the more general observations, the reviewers were alert to the minutiae of the stage. In 1803 the reviewers of the younger Colman's John Bull cited the impropriety of holding hands, especially when "we have more than once seen an underservant seize the hand of a princess" (November 29, 1803). In 1806 an article on Othello admitted that Cassio "was generally good; but the intoxicated Lieutenant was rather unnatural . . . his stagger was too systematic . . . . His words and gestures too precise for a drunken officer" (January 15, 1806). A year later when a play ended in arrested motion, it was quickly pointed out that,

> Had Mr. Tyler and Mrs. Villiers, instead of having their hands unstretched, and their eyes uplifted, been called upon by the scene, to exhibit such overwhelming emotion as renders the limbs insufficient for their office; had they been prostrate or recumbent, we might have believed that they would remain long in the same posture; but, as they actually appeared, their continued silence and stillness was absurd (February 19, 1807).

Finally, even Edmund Kean, generally highly praised by the Evening Post, was cited for improper acting because he

> resorted to the expedient of expressing strong feeling by throwing in a profusion of those hysterical laughs which in some instances he has employed with great effect, but which ought to be reserved only for rare occasions, and for bursts of uncontrolable passion (November 15, 1826).

The second general area of "execution" in which the critics frequently addressed themselves to the performers was that of casting. Performers who could play all roles were considered rare to the point of nonexistence. In a review of Arthur Murphy's The Grecian Daughter in 1814 the writer remarked, "It almost universally happens, that those who possess supereminent powers in tragedy are greatly deficient in comedy and farce" (April 28, 1814). Earlier, the opposite situation was said to be the case with William Twaits who had attempted the part of Polonius.

> In Caleb Quotem he is unequalled, but the lightness of his figure so advantageous there was a great drawback. . . . However unaccountable it may seem to him, it wanted strength; a strength not to be supplied by all the tricks at his command (July 2, 1805).

The following year, heedless of the suggestions, Twaits, "whose professed and true line is low comedy and broad farce," went ahead and played Richard II. The reviewer reacted.

> In point of conception we have no very great fault to find, but had his conception been ten times as correct and forcible as it was, still for the personation of Richard, he labours under such defects in point of size, figure, face, features, voice, and action, that it is physically impossible he should succeed (May 3, 1806).

When the youthful John Howard Payne appeared on the American stage in 1809, it was quickly pointed out that he, too, should pay close attention to the parts he chose to play.

> He certainly possesses judgment, and a good conception of the character of Young Norval, but his very juvenile appearance and effiminate voice are considerably against him . . . . If Master Payne wishes to attain public celebrity, he will only come forward in the most juvenile personations, and more particularly avoid the Lover, and the Tyrant; at least, till maturity has given that

> stamp to his appearance which such characters demand (February 28, 1809).

Kean was also subjected to criticism on this level, although the enigma of this actor who was deficient in so many respects and yet was able to play so well puzzled many reviewers. In December of 1820, Kean was proclaimed to have as defects

> inadequacy of person and voice to give perfect effect, in all cases, to the idea of the poet . . . under the middle stature . . . he cannot fill the eye, nor realize the glowing conceptions of poetic imagination. This merit, although adventitious, and not necessarily founded in nature, is of vast importance in the drama; the success of which, in some degree, depends upon poetic exaggeration and embellishment (December 26, 1820).

Another comment on the difficulty that presented itself when great comedians attempted to play tragedy was inspired by the attempt of Charles Mathews to play Othello in 1823. A critic of the reviewer's position was rebutted with the remark,

> surely he cannot suppose that he can make the theatre going public here believe that this justly admired favorite in the line of comedy and farce, is equally deserving of our admiration when he leaves his accustomed track to assume the magnificent, lofty and solemn part of tragedy. However adequate Mr. Mathews' conceptions may be, yet, unquestionably, his physical defects in point of voice, gait, feature and action, present insurmountable obstructions to success, that never can be overcome (May 26, 1823).

Finally, Edwin Forrest, who apparently knew his forte better than most actors at the time since he parlayed certain kinds of roles into almost complete dominance of any stage he played on, was reviewed in the role of Pierre in Venice Preserved with attention to his proper casting.

> Pierre is much better suited to his powers and style, than the timid, irresolute and whining lover, too weak to be quite virtuous, and with too many scruples of virtue for the guilty greatness at which his friend aspired. We look to see . . . Pierre performed in a style not before witnessed by New York audience (Ootober 5, 1830).

"Execution" also involved stage business other than that directly involving performers speaking at the moment and often drew attention. An early review complimented an actor by saying about him that no one understood the stage better, and in so doing cited the problem.

> He is distinguished by never forgetting that he is engaged in the scene, as well while he is silent, as while he speaks: he is not one of those who, the moment they are done delivering a sentence, drop the character, and begin to gaze at the audience in the most ridiculous manner (March 22, 1802).

That the crux of the problem lay in the illusion the stage created was made clear by statements appearing in 1803 and in 1818. In the first of these the critic praised an actress for being always in character, whether speaking or not and went on to demand that performers who gaze about or relax completely "should remember that we do not go there to see Mr. A. nor Mrs. B. but the personages they represent" (November 17, 1803). When the second comment appeared fifteen years later, it was stimulated by a different fault, but the assessment of its affect was the same.

> When she draws the plaudits of the audience, she does not lay aside the character she personates to turn about and return her thanks by a low curtesy, which, tho' intended as a mark of respect to the house, is certainly an offence to theatrical propriety, by destroying the illusion of the scene (March 17, 1818).

This kind of distraction was referred to as early as 1803 when the act of acknowledging the applause at the moment it occurred was criticized because, "it betrays a miserable vanity in the actor, destroys all allusion [sic], and confounds the person with the personification" (May 21, 1802). The same words were used a year and a half later in a review of Colman's John Bull (November 29, 1803).

Other stage business required attention at infrequent intervals. In a review of another of the younger Colman's plays, The Africans, the critic referred to "that total inaction which is the most leading characteristic of the figurants, or supernumeraries," and remarked that there was a lack of action on the part of the performers on the stage other than the speakers (January 10, 1810). In 1818 a reviewer suggested a change that he thought would improve Macbeth both in production and acting.

> I confess I should be much better pleased to see it done, as I have heard Kemble does it, that is without any real body to personate the ghost of Banquo; the chair, I think, should appear empty to the guests and the audience, and only be seen to be filled by Macbeth: just as the airdrawn dagger is. This would afford a much better opportunity for fine and impressive acting (September 25, 1818).

A minor distraction about which little was said, other than that to which we have earlier referred, was alteration in the text done by performers. Cooper was taken to task for this habit in 1805. "But why does he so often offend against the rythm by the addition of syllables? And why is he so negligent as to omit some of the best parts of the text?" (July 2, 1805). The following year an actor was blamed because "he too often took unlicensed liberties with the author, by adding, transposing, and curtailing"

(January 3, 1806). The wrath of the reviewer descended the following day on James Fennell in a performance of Hamlet.

> We have, however, another charge to prefer of no trifling nature in the court of criticism where Shakespeare is concerned. It is no less than altering the text. By what authority, or under what pretence, does he give "siege of troubles" "the scourge that patient merit of the unworthy take" "and makes us hear those wrongs we have," cum aliis. Various as are the readings of dull and tasteless comentators on our immortal bard, none can be found to justify the above; and Mr. Fennel is one of the last from whom we should have expected these aberrations (January 4, 1806).

More importantly, the matter of voice and expression was one area of "execution" that drew much comment. From the first review published, in which Mrs. Hodgkinson was criticized for introducing "a kind of rapid flippancy of utterance and an archness of expression that destroys, . . . artless softness . . . and lessens that interest the character is sure to awaken" (November 18, 1801), the critics were quick to remark on such things. It was suggested to Mrs. Jefferson that

> nothing could be of so much consequence . . . as to study in what manner to strengthen her voice; nothing will so much conduce to this end as to keep it down on a lower note, always remembering there is a material difference between loudness and shrillness (February 1, 1802).

In addition to expression and volume the early reviewers declared, as one did in a review of John Bull, that "distinction in articulation is on all occasions indispensible" (November 22, 1803).

A review of "Monk" Lewis's The Castle Spectre, one of the best of the Gothic school, gave a new actor encouragement, and suggested that a certain vocal "tone" was necessary to play certain parts. The actor was well set up in all respects

including his voice, which had

> good bottom and is capable of assuming that deep, guttural tone so well calculated for the expression of solemn, majestic passages, and which is indispensable in those which contain hatred, scorn or reproach. A top to his voice can be gradually acquired (December 8, 1803).

This was stressed a year later when Cooper's performance of Henry IV brought the remark that there were scenes in which a speech, "instead of being delivered in the accents of ungovernable rage, was pronounced, at least the better part, in the drawling tone appropriate to irony" (December 12, 1804). At this time Cooper appeared to be satisfying the critics, for very shortly after this he was praised because

> his judicious exchange of rant and noise for good sense and just enunciation, does him the highest credit. The former manner is possibly by some called more spirited and they may think they ought therefore, to give it the preference, but it was a manner that "could not but make the judicious grieve" (July 2, 1805).

All that was necessary to excel vocally in the execution of theatrical performance was summarized in a review of David Garrick's The Country Girl which related that in Mrs. Jones's

> concluding address to theaudience, there was a correctness of elocution, distinctness of articulation, a just emphasis, and what is very rare in the recital of poesy, a propriety of inflection, accompanied with a grace of manner, that did her infinite credit, and which, judging from her first appearance, we had no idea she possessed (December 7, 1805).

The source of this felicity was probably John Walker's Elements of Elocution although, as a reviewer specified a month later in another review of Mrs. Jones's performance, this time in the younger Colman's Who Wants a Guinea?, it may have been any of several

of Walker's works.

> Mrs. Jones had little, very little scope allowed for her talents in Fanny; this author does not shine in his female characters. In the delivery of the epilogue she had an opening, and she improved it to the utmost. Whoever has read Walker's rhetorical works, and wishes to see the "melody of speaking" practically "delineated" must listen to this lady in her delivery of poetry. Her voice is so sweet and voluble, her emphasis so proper, her accent so correct, her inflections so appropriate, her pronunciation so polite and so accurate, and the whole set off, and recommended with so much ease and grace of manner, that the tout ensemble affords a model of eloquence in the true Walker school (January 21, 1806).

Walker was cited repeatedly in the Evening Post reviews, but most commonly appeared in discussions of Shakespeare, whom he had used extensively in his Elements of Elocution.

> Mrs. Barnes, without knowing it, began and followed this author for about a dozen lines, with scarce a variation. A great proof of her accurate perception and just taste. She was not so happy in pronouncing judgment. This is never to be done in an empassioned tone of voice; instead of that we expect a moderate but dignified gravity of utterance (May 10, 1819).

Several other faults in voice and expression were condemned at various times in the Evening Post. In a performance of Macbeth the actor, again Cooper, was found to have failed by not putting sufficient expression into a role.

> . . . he seemed to be perfectly aware that a feigned passion, whatever be its particular character, is always distinguished by its unnatural excess. Like forgery, it never fails on the side of doing too little, but always falls into the error of doing too much; a trait which to the accurate observer betrays guilt. When therefore Macbeth returns from the chamber, his affected horror should be given in the most extravagant manner; this is one of the few instances where there is no danger of rant (March 11, 1806).

A later criticism, brought on apparently by an instance of extravagant acting, was made in a review of the Reverend Henry Milman's long-popular tragedy Fazio, which was playing for the first time in New York in 1819. Here the reviewer declared that the proper use of the voice was important.

> It requires no great effort either of intellectual or physical powers, to clench the fist, to sob, or to strike the bosom every other minute: but to modulate the voice, and to change the countenance into all the transitions, from desperate to languid sorrow, or from resentment of wrongs to piteous complaint; to become gradually vehement, or gentle, powerful or powerless, as the passions fluctuate--belongs to a master only (April 19, 1819).

Another frequent complaint directed attention to the inaudibility of the performers, which drew several remarks over the period from 1804, when a critic begged, "the next time a play of Shakspeare's is done, we entreat we may distinctly hear the author's sense, and we will give up the rest . . . give us the text, and we will compound" (December 12, 1804) to 1819 when the review of William Dimond's Adrian and Orilla demanded, "we must insist upon their being more audible and distinct in their utterance. We do not look for great acting, but we expect to hear the whole of the story" (April 22, 1819).

The visual concomitant to voice and expression, spirit and animation, also received sufficient attention to make it noteworthy. In reviewing Othello in 1806 the writer judged that the actor was "rather cold. His vindication before the senate, though spoken with judgment, wanted spirit and animation. But in the second act he was himself and imperceptibly interested us"

(January 15, 1806). Later, Miss Holman was praised for her work in The Provoked Husband of Colley Cibber and John Vanbrugh. After commenting on her achievement in earlier scenes, the critic exclaimed, "Nor were her exertions less successful in those scenes of pathos, which require bolder powers and finer feelings. The Lady of fashion, spirit, extravagance and folly, was strongly depicted in her animated and judicious playing" (October 8, 1812). Finally, in 1826 Macready as Damon was praised, even though he was found wanting early in the play. "With the exception of rather a want of energy in the first and second acts, the same spirited and classic delineation characterized his performance that was evinced on its first representation" (October 23, 1826).

The key to technique, as to conception, was, in the eyes of the reviewers, study. An early performance of Richard III drew this comment on an actress who "did not appear so unequal to the execution as wanting in correct conception. We hope she will study it before she is called to appear in it again. And we presume she will not be above receiving advice and instruction from a friend" (December 22, 1801). The lack of study resulted not only in a bad performance but it earned the kind of review from the Evening Post that Thomas Dibdin's The School for Prejudice did in 1803.

> On the whole, never, perhaps, was a play more imperfectly got up than this, and we suspect we injure not the truth in saying, that scarcely one of the company was compleatly master of his part. It is to this culpable circumstance that the piece, take it together, was so very badly performed (January 24, 1803).

But favorable remarks appeared, too, when a player had achieved a satisfactory performance. An example in a review of Fennell's Othello, published early in 1806, maintained, "Nature has done her part to fit him for the personation of Othello . . . his voice, his looks, . . . his fine proportion, evinces it; education and study have completed him , and justly renders his Othello unsurpassed" (January 15, 1806). In another case, John Hogg, as Solomon Grundy in Who Wants a Guinea?. was "dressed in close resemblance of Caleb Quotem, and not improperly, supported the part with much spirit and humour; we give him full credit for his correct study: a piece of good fortune that he cannot very often boast of" (January 21, 1806).

The need for study and the fruits of study were both regularly pointed out to the performers. Cooper was once described as a performer who, "too much neglects to make his personification of leading characters, the 'mellow fruit of toil intense' no man that ever lived could do justice to any one of the principal characters of Shakspeare without the study of months, if not years" (March 11, 1806). But in addition to being especially important for certain characters and plays, study was viewed as essential to the performer's success. Payne had much in his favor naturally, but much more was expected when "study and maturity has given strength to his efforts" (February 28, 1809). In 1817 Mr. Pritchard, who played in Richard Sheil's tragedy The Apostate was told, "with a person, face and voice admirably calculated to give effect to every variety of passion, he should never suffer his genius to flag--

Study, industry and resolution, will in a short time enable him to outstrip most of his tragic competitors" (September 24, 1817).

Even Cooper, at age 43 a veteran of 25 years on the stage during which he received generous portions of both praise and blame from various critics, was told,

> the will alone is wanted to be great in every character he assumes. With powers so extensive, conceptions so just and vigorous, and personal figure and appearance so attractive, he wants nothing to be great and eminent, but industry and application, without which no man, however great his genius, can obtain solid fame; and if he would consent to be a hard student for a year or two, he would reap a golden harvest (November 4, 1819).

C. SONGS AND SINGING

Music, of course, played a major role in the theater, though often unremarked. Even early in the period under study, the introduction of music into a play that formerly did not have it or the addition of a song by a performer to bolster a weak role was accepted and even praised procedure. The Evening Post critics therefore took it upon themselves to advise and counsel the performers on their musical presentations. In a review of the younger Colman's Who Wants a Guinea?, the writer observed with approval that,

> Mrs. Jones, sensible of the insignificance of the part of Fanny, ingeniously altered for the occasion, and introduced with much judgment, the most melodious, heart touching song we ever yet heard sung either on or off the stage. In this she has done more for the author than he has done for himself, and has secured a popularity to his Fanny, which she never was destined to acquire under his auspices (January 23, 1806).

Opposition to this procedure also existed as showed in a remark published in a review of Robin in Prince Hoare's afterpiece No Song, No Supper less than a month later.

> We shall never quarrel with Mr. Barret for giving us one song instead of two, but if he undertakes to substitute songs not belonging to the piece, and having no relation to it, in place of the author's composition, we will quarrel with him and the managers too for permitting such an absurdity (February 15, 1806)

Toward the end of the second decade of the century music became more and more prominent in the reperetory and the reviews reflected the change. The most discussed singer was Thomas Phillipps, but almost every performer after 1815 seemed able to perform adequately in the so-called English opera. Phillipps, in Samuel J. Arnold's The Devil's Bridge in 1817, was praised because

> He runs his divisions with much facility, and executes his cadenzas with wondrous skill, returning to his subject with an emphatic swell which never fails to draw after it the plaudits of the whole audience . . . against this style of singing, we confess our prejudices were strong; but we are now convinced that they were in some measure unfounded; and suspect they originated in witnessing the abortive attempts of those who were unequal to the arduous task of executing it, and still more from seeing the indiscriminate introduction of it into every species of music . . . some, where we still think it wholly inadmissable . . . Irish melodies . . . Scotch airs . . . English ballads. The Italian cadenza into such music is . . . incongruous and . . . out of place (November 4, 1817).

A few days later he was spoken of again.

> Taste, feeling and high cultivation was conspicuous in every song he gives us. Those lines that admit of ornament he embellishes with ease and grace, while those of a different character, are executed with a tenderness and simplicity that charm. Whether in the former or the latter his enunciation is always so clear and distinct, and his emphasis so judicious, that not a word is lost (November 10, 1817).

Even the musicians of the town were advised to watch Phillipps' in his most popular role, Count Belino in The Devil's Bridge.

> We hope these . . . who lay claims to some proficiency in the practical part of music, will avail themselves of this occasion to improve their taste by the performances of this gentleman. Observe his articulation, his swells, his spirit, and the admirable judgment with which he introduces graces, as in the "Beautiful Maid," or with equal judgment avoids them, and gives the simple melody, as in "Eveleen's Bower" (November 22, 1817).

For five years, the name of Phillipps appeared regularly in the columns of the Evening Post. It probably appeared more frequently than any other single performer's name save that of Cooper.

Only one other singer received the same kind of attention that was given Thomas Phillipps. In 1826 the Evening Post announced the arrival of a Mrs. Knight in New York City for the English opera. The article related that those who had heard Miss Povey (Mrs. Knight's maiden name)

> now can scarcely realize the improvement which skill and constant practice have made. Her style of singing is of the same cast as that of the celebrated Miss Stevens, English ballad--and her voice is clear, sweet and uncommonly capacious (November 28, 1826).

Three days later she was reviewed in Thomas Dibdin's comic opera, The Cabinet.

> She not only possesses a voice of great sweetness, compass and pathos, but the power of managing it with uncommon flexibility and ease. Her performances, however, are not merely distinguished by a fine and scientific execution, but more especially by great taste and feeling; and herein lies the secret of the power which she possesses over the audience. She was equally happy in the lively and the pathetic songs. The Last Rose of Summer, which she volunteered, was an example of the latter kind, and was given with great effect. The articulation of this lady is very clear & distinct, and the words of her song are not lost in the melody (December 1, 1826).

The year before another dramatic type, and consequently another set of performers, had begun receiving publicity. The Italian opera, led by Signor Garcia, was apparently an immediate success, though temporary because by 1830 the reviews were discussing its failure. As has been mentioned the opera presented new critical problems. Its acting, too, thrust new difficulties into the hands of the reviewers. The troupe consisted of no fewer than six actors who

> We should esteem in the ordinary comedy, performers of the first order, considered merely as actors . . . . Their style or manner of acting differs widely from any to which we have been accustomed. In the male performers you are struck with the variety, novelty and passion of their expressive, characteristic and unceasing gesticulation.

The female performers

> appeared to us to have less action, though quite as much expression as any we had ever before seen. There is indeed in their style of acting a most remarkable chasteness and propriety; never violating good tastes nor exceeding the strictest bound of female decorum.

From the group two performers were selected for unusually high praise. The first was the troupe leader's daughter, Signorina Garcia. The reviewer described her as "a being of new creation: a 'cunning pattern of excelling nature;' equally surprising us by the melody and tones of her voice and by the propriety and grace of her acting" (November 30, 1825). A week later a more detailed account was given of her merits.

> Her voice . . . fine contralto . . . her science and skill in its management . . . enables her to run over every tone and semitone of three gamuts, with an ease and grace that costs apparently, no sort of effort. . . . The part she performs . . . gives her only the

> opportunity of displaying her superior dexterity. . . . She does not adopt the florid style of her father, but one which is less assuming,and perhaps more proper in a lady and hardly less effective (December 6, 1825).

Two months later the opinions had grown even more effusive and in her role as Desdemona Signorina Garcia was lauded in the extreme.

> We are willing to admit that we have seen Othello before, but not such a Desdemona. Rarely have such elegance, dignity, grace, beauty, passion and pathos been united in any female who ever trod the stage. "Et vera incessu patuit dea." The most fastidious criticism would say that she was faultless, and a generous admirer might be permitted to pronounce that she was almost perfection (February 9, 1826).

The other recipient of the Evening Post critics' plaudits was Signor Garcia. The reviewer declared his talents to be outstanding and found a link to the familiar past.

> Signor Garcia indulges in a florid style of singing, but with his fine voice, fine taste, admirable ear and brilliancy of execution, we could not be otherwise than delighted, nor wished to curtail this exuberance, if it deserves such a term. Indeed, for this style our taste was prepared by our favorite Philipps, whose voice, tones and manner, and especially that impassioned burst of swelling expression which seemed to come from the bottom of his soul, ab imo pectore, carrying every listener before it; the graceful movements of his arms and hands, and every gesture were all brought so forcibly to our vivid recollection, that we saw at once, in Signor Garcia, the master from whom we presume he had so assiduously and successfully formed himself (December 6, 1825).

D. THE ACTOR'S AUDIENCE

As has been shown the players and critics of the time felt very strongly the presence of the audience. Many of the reviewers' remarks about the audience will be discussed in the next chapter. Some of the material, however, was more closely related to the

individual performer and hence more rightly belongs here.

In a very real sense, the audience was the judge of the performer. Under the system that prevailed the audience showed their favor when the player's benefits came around. Hence, the critics' allusions to the judgment of the audience reflected a real power. In 1802 the reviewer of Venice Preserved remarked of John Hodgkinson,

> We sincerely hope that this valuable performer will continue to discriminate between boisterous ranting, and the forcible but natural expression of passion . . . by the latter he will secure the favorable opinion of those from whom alone he can acquire a lasting reputation (April 26, 1802).

The heart of the whole matter was revealed in a comment on a performance by Miss Johnson in 1817.

> What can be a more judicious appropriation of time and money, than that of bestowing means of encouragement for the cultivation of those gifts of nature, which so admirably qualify a person, both in public and private life, to command the esteem and admiration of society (December 29, 1817).

Three years later Kean, who had his problems with American audiences, was characterized as having certain deficiencies in his qualifications as an actor. Since he had neither figure nor voice, then,

> genius must, at the same time, possess a power adequate to counterpoise the disadvantages of natural deficiency, and to carry the conviction of its own superiority into the minds of those who form the tribunal by which he must be judged, or the verdant coronet of enduring fame will never be suffered to repose upon his forehead (December 4, 1820).

At times in Kean's American sojourn it was apparent that he was being judged rather severely.

At about the same time an example of a critic using the audience as a threat appeared in a review of Isaac Bickerstaffe's Lionel and Clarissa. Directing his remarks to Miss Lesugg, the reviewer asked

> leave to remark to her, that the audience begins to be impatient at her forgetfulness of character and situation. When, in the closing scene, her father threatens vengeance on Harman, and prepares to inflict it, she very calmly retires to the back part of the stage, and leaves her lover to his fate. Such gross absurdity shocks a spectator (March 20, 1819).

It is evident that the actors were of almost equal importance with the dramatists in this period of our theater. The growing demands of the performers for parts to suit them culminated in Edwin Forrest and the "stars." The lines in the clash between the old and the new styles of acting which had taken place in England during the previous half century, a clash which was intimately associated with old and new styles in make-up, scene and costume design, were drawn between critic and performer. The growing popularity of music and song and the transient enthusiasm for Italian opera all seemed to be part of a rapidly changing theatrical world.

CHAPTER VI

OF MANAGERS AND THEATERS

It was pointed out in the introduction to this study and repeated since, that the business of a theater in America in the first two decades of the 19th century was tenuous at best. After the third decade was well begun New York City was able to support more than one theater, but New York City was the exception and in the other population centers of the United States theaters remained marginal. The operation of a theater in the United States, then, consisted of a series of crises. Very often the entire responsibility of erecting a theater, assembling a cast, and producing plays fell upon the proprietor of the theater alone. In most cases he was formerly a player and occasionally he would continue to perform as well as manage. The vagaries and trials of the early theater manager have been well documented in the works by and about William Dunlap.

The financial and dramatic crises that occurred at the Park during the period of our study were frequently recounted in the reviews published in the Evening Post. The reviewers articulated, at least partly, the demands of an extremely vociferous audience. But it is safe to assume that the accounts which appeared in the newspaper were generally considerably after the fact, and that the manager had far more to bear immediately from his audience than he had from the pen of

the critic. A critique of The Beggar's Opera called forth by the audience's reaction included a statement of the "respective rights of the audience and of the managers."

> It may not be amiss to say a few words about the respective rights of the audience and of the managers . . . there is this implied contract: The purchaser gives the manager a dollar . . . he shall have the privilege . . . to take a seat in the theatre . . . to see a certain performance . . . executed by certain persons named in such a bill . . . a change of entertainment, or even the dramatis personae . . . is a failure of the contract on the part of the manager . . . he has a right to his money back again. . . . He has also the privilege . . . to express . . . disapprobation of the performance. But here his right ends. If he asks for more . . . it must be requested. . . . Never was a more generous, reasonable, and indulgent audience, than that of the New-York theatre, nor do we think they have just cause of complaint that their complaisance towards the managers and performers is not reciprocal. But there is certain loose and erroneous opinions gone abroad, respecting the rights of the respective parties, which have a tendency to create mischief, and which, therefore, it is proper should be corrected . . . we unite with the editor of the Advocate, in deprecating any thing like riot, and hope, with him, it may never again occur (October 29, 1817).

The Evening Post did not consistently document the accession of a manager to his position. William Dunlap's part in the early management of the theater was mentioned, but only two other managers were noted in the reviews and then only in passing. In 1805 it was rumored that Thomas Abthorpe Cooper was negotiating a lease as head of the theater and the paper inquired, "with a good company and such an actor at the head, what might not be expected?" (February 22, 1805). At the end of that year, however, the Evening Post announced that John Johnson and John Tyler, both actors, had taken over the theater on the death of the lessee.

If the reviewers were vague about who was managing the theater, they were far more clear about his responsibilities. His obligations were to procure and encourage new talent for the theater, without, of course, causing it to be fettered with managerial chains; to maintain order in his theater; and, in general, to "please the public." The efforts of the manager to acquire talent were described in several reviews. In 1805 the manager offered William Twaits an engagement, but he had already committed himself to the Boston manager (July 5, 1805). In the same year the reviewer recorded a more successful recruitment. "We regard Mrs. J. as a valuable addition to our Thespian corps, and doubt not she will prove a distinguished favourite with the New-York audience" (November 29, 1805).

The successful efforts of the managers to procure good personnel were reported sporadically over the years, as were their failures. In later years the attempts to get outstanding individuals became the dominant feature of the theater and the "star" system evolved. In 1821 the manager was complimented on his swift work upon the arrival of Junius Brutus Booth in New York.

> The managers ever anxious to please and gratify the New-York audience, (for which by the bye they merit every encouragement,) immediately engaged that gentleman, and with a promptness we cannot too much praise, he was announced to personate "Richard" within twenty four hours after his arrival (October 8, 1821).

The following year a more general statement praised the acquisition of George H. Barrett.

> The managers of our Theatre deserve great commendation for their constant and untiring exertions to please the public. The variety and novelty of their pieces, the expence with which they are got up, and the conspicuous

> talent that they have at different times employed, manifest a desire to give the highest interest to their entertainments. Without meaning any invidious comparison, I venture to say their present engagement with Mr. Barrett is as judicious and meritorious as any during the season (March 5, 1822).

In 1824 the extent to which managers were forced to go in search of personnel was reflected by the following, although by this time overseas recruitment was growing easier as the stature of American theater grew. "Miss Kelly, and several new performers, are expected by the packets which sailed from London and Liverpool on the 1st August, and others are to follow in succession" (September 1, 1824). Later, when more than one theater was functioning in New York City, a visit to the Chatham Theater elicited this remark. "Judging from the appearance of the audience last evening, we should conclude that if a good company of French comedians could be procured to perform occasionally, they would draw full houses" (November 15, 1826). Even at the end of the period when the reviewers appeared to feel that the theater was in a decline and couldn't find a cause for it, or perhaps found too many causes for it, a reviewer declared,

> the manager has not relaxed his exertions to gratify the few whose good taste and discernment still induce them to patronize this, the principal theatrical establishment in the Union. We say, without fear of contradiction, that since the golden days of the drama in this country, no theatre in America, can now boast of a better company than the present corps of the Park (March 13, 1830).

The encouragement of talent was also a managerial responsibility and the career of John Howard Payne owed much to the theater proprietors' early efforts on his behalf. A reviewer thought highly of these endeavors. "We highly commend the manager in supporting Dramatic

talents in every line, and every encouragement ought to be given to both him and his Protege" (February 28, 1809). But a critic also warned of the dangers of managerial interference two years later and indicated that Miss Gordon would be first rate, "if properly supported and encouraged, untrammelled by managerial fetters and the inexorable code of laws which govern the stage" (April 26, 1811).

In 1817 the strength of the New York Company was assessed, some of the company's weaknesses were noted and the responsibility of the manager to acquire new talent was summed up. In looking over the corps the writer declared that there were some good players

> but there are too many faces with which we are too familiar. As there is but one theater in this populous city, the managers would probably find their account in playing every night, if they had a sufficient variety of talents and countenances to exhibit. To do it with any prospect of advantage, they should increase their force by an accession of at least one-third in numbers, and a still greater proportion of ability (September 5, 1817).

Related to the acquisition and encouragement of performers was their proper utilization once they had been secured--the problem of casting. From the very beginning the reviewers' comments on casting were quite frequent. The earliest remarks were made in a discussion of Othello in which the critic agreed that Cooper was properly placed as the moor, but that the remainder of the casting was "weak and injudicuous." The review cited the reasons why various performers were improperly cast (December 21, 1801). A few days later Dunlap's casting acumen was again called to account and the public was scolded for putting up with such usage (December 26, 1801). For some unmentioned reason some plays were well cast, while "valuable tragedies" were not.

Again the critic demanded that the public disapprove because "Those who frequent the theatre for their own amusement will quit it with murmurs--while those who can estimate the real value of Dramatic productions, will feel more seriously offended, to see them thus injured and degraded" (March 30, 1802).

One of the reasons for this uneven casting was a matter of "theatrical etiquette," A review of Sheridan's The School for Scandal which sarcastically suggested that it was impossible for Cooper to play a supporting role, closed with the remark that, "theatrical etiquette would have it so: To be sure the play is sometimes ruined, and the audience dissatisfied--but what then?--Theatrical etiquette is not to be violated" (November 26, 1802). In 1805 Otway's The Orphan brought forth the same problem treated in a similarly sarcastic manner.

> It is much to be lamented that the pride and dignity of our Tragedy Kings and Queens is so immoveably fixed on stilts that the strength of the company is never brought out in a single play, because it cannot be done without coming across the self-consequence of some one or other of these great personages (June 27, 1805).

Even in 1818 a critic was forced to inquire, "was it necessary, by the rules of green-room etiquette to thrust Garner, a singer of the 4th rank, into the part of Florian, whose affected attempts to embellish, threw the house into a fit of laughter?" (October 19, 1818).

The answer came six years later when Cooper and William Augustus Conway played in Venice Preserved.

> We cannot omit saying, that our gratification with their respective performances was enhanced by observing the cordiality with which they seconded each other;

> it was as honourable to their liberality of feeling as their reputation is to their talents (February 4, 1824).

But the fact that two strong players appearing in one play was still noteworthy said much about the situation even then. Two years later The Comedy of Errors, usually a ticklish casting problem, was presented with John Barnes and James Henry Hackett in the leads.

Other casting choices were remarked on by the critics as they found certain players more fitting for certain roles and agreed or disagreed with the manager's choice. In 1806 the reviewer of Frederick Reynold's The Blind Bargain thought John Hogg might more appropriately have been cast as Sir Andrew Analyse because the role was more in his line of acting (January 3, 1806). In 1809 Mrs. Young and Mrs. Poe were "highly respectable in their several casts, and equally graceful and pleasing," in "Monk" Lewis's harrowing Adelgitha; or, The Fruits of a Single Error (September 23, 1809). Ten years later a bit of unusual casting received praise, the manager was complimented and the critic seemed satisfied.

> His bill of fare presents us with a great and novel attraction, Hamlet, by Mrs. Barnes--We have scarce a doubt that she will give us a correct and animated personation of this very interesting, but arduous, character (June 10, 1819).

The responsibility of maintaining order in his establishment also fell to the manager. In concluding a discussion of a disturbance in the theater a reviewer asked,

> what Gentleman will take his Lady or family to a Theatre, where they are sure to be alarmed, and obliged to hear and witness the noise and tumult of vulgarity or intoxication? But we are persuaded that the Managers will promptly prevent the repitition of such scenes (September 16, 1815).

Toward the end of the period theatrical management was the object of growing criticism. That this increase stemmed from the decline of the theater was implied more than once by critics. The decline itself was attributed to many causes, but most frequently and vehemently to the faults of the managers. In 1829 an article pointed out that it was well known that theater patronage had also fallen off in London and that only buffoonery was drawing full houses. It continued,

> These facts go far in corroboration of an opinion which we have long entertained, that the ill success of theatricals is, in a great measure, ascribable to the injudicious extravagance and short-sightedness of those whose duty it is to provide for the public amusement. Managers, instead of seeking to derive their profit from the legitimate sources of theatrical revenue; instead of aiming
>
> "To wake the soul by tender strokes of art,
> To raise the genius, and to mend the heart;"
>
> have perverted their stages to representation of costly spectacles, mixed up of bombast and unmeaning splendour, thus feeding the eyes of the gaping valgar, to the neglect of the cravings of well regulated taste. For a while these novelties drew numerous spectators, leading rival establishments into a most expensive competition, as each strove which could produce the most costly attractions, and in the quickest succession.

The demand of the writer, with which he closed his argument, was intended to mitigate the problem.

> Let the conductors of theatres, rejecting the foolish and showy farragoes which, like the child's rattle, but please for a little while and are thrown aside, persevere in representing in an efficient manner the most sterling productions of dramatic writers, and we have not the slightest question that a more steady and profitable patronage will ere long return to their vacated benches (August 4, 1829).

It was partially in an effort to acquire some legitimate drama that a prize was offered for a tragedy in 1829. The manuscripts were to be submitted to Mr. Blake, the treasurer of the Park Theater, and the judges were Fitz-Greene Halleck, James G. Brooks, P. M. Wetmore, James Lawson, E. Simpson and William Leggett (October 24, 1829). The following year a reviewer reported that business was gradually improving at the Park but that the proprietors were not yet meeting the expenses of a theater "which amid the revolutions public taste has experienced, has been distinguished for its uniform adherence to the "legitimate drama" (March 13, 1830).

A minor responsibility that the critical writers demanded the managers assume was that of curtailing and editing plays to fit the stage and the audience. Since this practice has been discussed at greater length earlier in this study, only brief mention will be made of it here as it applied to the managers. In 1801 Dunlap was told in a review of his translation of L'Abbe de L'Epee that "these additions do credit to the taste and judgment of the manager" but that he might improve the play still further by curtailing it in some other respects (December 14, 1801). A week later, however, he was praised for "getting up" the plays of Shakespeare, but was warned that it would be better to let them sink into oblivion than thus to draw them before the public eye, merely to mangle and murder them (December 21, 1801).

In 1817 editing was mentioned in a somewhat jocular manner when a review closed

> by expressing a wish, that the manager would apply a little of his pruning knife before another representation of Brother & Sister, either to the page of the author, or to the tongue of some of the company. "Let your clowns say no more than is set down to them" (December 12, 1817).

Sets and scenery also received occasional comment, for the most part favorable. In later years when pageantry began to dominate the stage, second only to "stars," little was said except to express growing disapproval of unusual extravagence. Shortly after the reviews began, however, it was observed that the scenery and pageantry of Pizarro did credit to the taste and attention of the manager and that the temple of the sun and the torrent scene were "grand and striking exhibitions" (December 9, 1801). That the love of spectacle was already present was clearly stated in a review of the spectacular-operatic-melodramatic Blue Beard of George Colman the Younger, the scenery and settings of which were described as very elaborate. The man directly responsible for this "elegant scenery" was Mr. Ciceri, about whom it was said, "it is to him . . . that this romantic exhibition must own its popularity." The only flaw in the piece was that the scene shifters were apparently inept for the reviewer found the audience became impatient, which was "extremely unfavorable to its success" (March 10, 1802).

Other pieces that impressed the newspaper critics in one way or another were the Younger Colman's The Forty Thieves, got up in 1809, which drew the remark,

> the creative pencil of Mr. Hollan gave a fairy land rich in imagery, appropriate and splendid. . . . To the talent and industry of Mr. Twaits, the Director of the Stage business, we are indebted for the correct arrangement of this difficult piece (March 27, 1809).

In 1822 Henry IV, Part II, presented in the manner of a spectacle, drew this comment.

> The play being hurried over by about 9 (and we hope it will not detain us so long again) the preparations for the grand exhibition were heard . . . the life and soul of this splendid pageantry, unprecedented in this country, is Simpson, whose sleepless activity and never tiring exertions could alone have produced it (February 5, 1822).

The Spy, an adaptation of Cooper's novel by Charles P. Clinch, was also presented in 1822 and drew a comment that implied incipient disapproval. "The piece had every advantage of scenery, music, firing of small arms, and a plenty of powder and smoke, enlivened with the blaze of a house o'fire, which was permitted quietly to blaze on, undisturbed by any body near it" (March 7, 1822). Finally, Mordecai M. Noah's rather conventional melodrama The Grecian Captive warranted this exasperated comment.

> Seriously speaking, although an Elephant may serve very well to fill a house, it is to be hoped some other expedient may be resorted to for that purpose, and that if this is not the first Elephant that ever appeared on any stage, it is to be hoped that at any rate, it may be the last (June 19, 1822).

The only reference to lighting that appeared was a complaint early in the period that the lights were not strong enough to allow one to see the occupants of the boxes between the acts. But truly admirable acting made the critic forget his dissatisfaction (April 24, 1802).

The orchestra received the attention of the reviewers in the early years, generally, only for being so bad. They were criticized in 1802 for having "only three numbers they have been playing for

three years" (March 10, 1802). The following November the orchestra was again castigated for playing the same music over and over, this time it was "the same half dozen symphonies for eight years together" (November 17, 1803).

In 1805 the orchestra was again criticized for not offering any new music (December 7, 1805) and a week later for being too loud. The reviewer this time said that the only instrument necessary was Mr. Hewitt's own violin since, "He always accompanies with taste, judgment and correspondent execution . . . let it never be forgotten that the song must be distinctly heard" (December 14, 1805). In January 1806 a critic was dissatisfied with the lack of music before the play and between the acts, claiming, "we seldom have any music at all; but are left to enjoy the whistle and noise of the gallery" (January 3, 1806). That any music would be an improvement was not the conclusion of an article the following month which reminded Mr. Hewitt that he should see that those under him did not grossly err and then proceeded to demand, "in the name of harmony omit that trio, unless it can be relieved from some of those ear crucifying sounds which hitherto have tortured our auricular nerves" (February 15, 1806).

Mr. Hewitt apparently was able to weather the criticism because in 1817 a review of Thomas Dibdin's The Cabinet declared, "altho' it is not our design to write a critique on the play, or the performers generally, yet should we do great injustice to our feelings if we did not make our acknowledgements to Mr. Hewitt" (November 19, 1817). It was also clear that the musical situation at the Park Theater was undergoing a change for in 1821

> the orchestra is complete with nineteen excellent performers, under the direction of a leader unrivalled in this country; the different instruments are so judiciously proportioned to each other that none is heard to predominate, but when that effect is desired; and the whole produces the finest body of harmony ever heard in an American theatre (October 30, 1821).

The reviewers also spoke of the responses of the audience to the play and to the performers. The hushed silence has been mentioned as characteristic of the American audience. Its counterpart the theatrical riot was not unusual in the early national period. The Boston theater-goers expressed their disapproval of Kean by hooting him off the stage and pillaging the theater, which drew only a brief remark in the Evening Post, a consistent support to Kean. Audience intervention was commonplace in the American theater at this time. In 1801 a critic of Dunlap's Pizarro recommended that the sacrifice scene in the play be cut because of its "unnecessary and we must think unreasonable length" and went on to remark that although he did not condone audience interference as had happened, he recommended, "to the manager to curtail it of some of its slow length" (December 9, 1801).

Although the reviewers ordinarily expressed disapproval of audience participation in rectifying theatrical problems, the audience nonetheless continued it throughout the first half of the 19th century. The Kean incident in Boston occurred in 1825, the Astor Place riot in New York City in 1849.

Dissatisfaction with an entire play occasionally was expressed as violently as that with a single performer. 1817 seemed to be a vintage year for theater violence. An article on The Beggar's Opera

consisted largely of a discussion of a riot or near riot which had occurred. At the fall of the curtain the article related that "marks of approbation" were heard and

> those especially who did not know the history of the piece, so absurdly misnamed, but came with expectations of seeing something entirely different, were quite offended and disgusted; which they were at no pains to conceal. A well regulated theatre may justly be regarded as a school of morality, literary taste and instruction, blended with innocent amusement: the attendance on which serves to divert youth from passing a leisure hour, in some other place far less innocently. When, therefore, a piece is presented, which militates in the most important of those particulars, it reflects credit on the audience that they bestow unequivocal marks of their disapprobation.

The audience also demanded a song which the actor Incledon refused on the grounds of exhaustion. Finally, the reviewer reported, the "civil authorities" were called upon and some "acts of personal violence took place" (October 29, 1817).

One of the causes of the above disturbance was the demand for an additional song that was not part of the bill. This apparently became so much of a problem that it required special attention from one of the reviewers.

> One word as to a practice which ought never to be encouraged in a theater--the call for what is no part of the bill. Once establish the precedent, that any person in any part of the house may call for any song that may happen to strike his fancy, and the consequences that would inevitably result must strike the most careless observer. The property of the manager must be in continual jeopardy, in case he declines to comply with the irregular call of any individual who has influence enough to raise a riot (November 26, 1817).

At about the same time as Kean made his rapid departure from Boston, the Evening Post told of some Kean-related difficulties

in New York City. In fact almost the entire article was devoted to discussion of the near riot which had occurred the previous night between the supporters and detractors of Kean. Fortunately, the writer stated, this night, save for some minor lapses, the play went on and "now, quiet confidence good nature and forgetfulness sat upon every brow." The crisis seemed to have come prior to curtain when the shouting crowd made it impossible for the play to go on. When the tumult reached the point of violence, however, the shout of one man restored order and from then on "all appeared to be lost in the scene; the actor himself was forgotten, and Othello only was before us. Frequent peals of applause were given without being succeeded by any marks of disapprobation." At the end of the play

> A loud and anxious call was then heard for Richard III, as it was not heard by the audience on Monday night, and in a few minutes it was announced to the house, the request should be complied with this evening instead of that which had previously been determined on. Good humor and reconciliation are we trust entirely restored (November 17, 1825).

Another common means of registering audience disapproval was reported in a review of "Monk" Lewis's The Castle Spectre in 1803. The writer commented with disapproval on the behavior of a group in the theater, telling that they had hissed when it was announced that illness prevented the farce from being presented. He concluded, "we hope for the honor of the house never to witness a repetition of this indecorous and unreasonable behavior" (December 8, 1803).

But fifteen years later the practice of encoring brought a disquisition on the etiquette of hissing in a review of Count Belino in The Devil's Bridge. In this case the writer disliked hissing an ill-timed encore because it gave the performer the feeling that he was being disapproved. The reviewer proposed that "It were very much to be wished that this custom should be reformed, and the monosyllable 'No' or 'Too much' be substituted; reserving the hiss for the proper occasion" (March 5, 1818).

In some cases, as in the Beggar's Opera incident, the reviewers gave somewhat more than tacit approval to the actions they usually condemned. Referring to John Howard Payne's play of his fifteenth year Julia; or, The Wanderer, produced under the pseudonym of Eugenius, Gentleman of the city of New York, the critic wrote,

> to conclude these hasty remarks: I do not scruple to say, that this attempt to force down the throat of the public, a play, not only without merit, but containing incidents offensive to the cheek of modesty, ought, in my opinion, to meet with the chastisement of undisguised opprobrium; and the most proper and salutary advice I can give this youthful candidate for popular favor, in order to entitle him to the "fostering regard," he asks for is to dismiss a portion of that unbecoming vanity which leads him to overrate his capacity, and misapply his time and talents in a manner that can neither be valuable to society, nor profitable to himself (February 16, 1806).

Five months later an Englishman discussing John O'keeffe's afterpeice The Farmer; or, Ups and Downs defended the rather unusual position he had taken by calling upon the audience to support his disapproval of the play, saying, "if I was not grossly mistaken in their shrugs and other indications of dislike during the performance, they assuredly thought as I do" (June 20, 1806).

But not all of the audience response was disapproving although much of it was disrupting. Two of the most striking examples of audience approval recorded took place in 1817. The first was an incident

> shewing the power of musical sounds . . . a man in the pit, . . . became, at least, so engrossed, that he involuntarily uttered a loud note, in perfect unison, and immediately was seized with an hysteric fit, which deprived him of his senses and he was carried out of the house (November 10, 1817).

The other incident was undoubtedly more typical of an American audience and probably was a regular occurrence. "A countryman, sitting in the back in the boxes, exclaimed, at the end of the second encore, 'by jingo! if he would sign that song once more, I should be willing to lie right down and die'" (December 18, 1817). More general approval was expressed when Phillipps was taking his departure from New York City

> When the curtain dropt, the pit rose spontaneously and gave him three cheers, in which they were joined in the boxes. Thus it is, the New-York theatrical public delight to reward great professional merit, when backed by an unblemished and respectable private character (November 26, 1817).

Attempts to explain the theater's financial and nonattendance problems began to appear early. In 1803 the theater appeared to be in trouble and the reviewer remarked, "the truth is, the town is so far gone in dissipation, that private parties have at length become fairly a business, and the more quiet and rational pleasures of the Theatre have lost all their relish" (February 24, 1803). A year later the same complaint was heard again, almost like an echo.

> What has become of the taste of the town? Have balls and card parties so entirely absorbed the fashionable circles that no time is left for rational amusement? The visitor of our Theatre would really be led to believe that among us, mental recreation formed no part of the enjoyment of social life (January 14, 1804).

In 1811 the lack of interest in the theater was attributed to "the frequent disappointments the audience have met with, and the total deficiency of taste and talents manifested in the performer" which "has produced an apathy and chilling indifference difficult to be overcome" (April 26, 1811). Fifteen years later in response to complaints that the theater was repeating the same piece too often, a critic defended repetition of the basis of economy and excellence and stated,

> if our ladies of the first class would only come to an understanding that private parties should give place to the more refined pleasures afforded by a well sustained opera, at least, twice a week, it would turn out to be a real saving in the course of the season, and economy itself would be consulted in introducing into fashionable life, a new source of pleasure, so delightful, so improving and so refined (December 6, 1825).

In 1828 the Evening Post lamented the passing of "legitimate drama" in New York City. In a review of a farce the critic said, "We are very sorry to add, that the house was by no means a full one--sorry . . . because we fear that the cause is to be found in the decline of taste for the legitimate drama in this city" (May 16, 1828). However, two years later the situation seemed to have changed and an article was published that fairly shone with critical optimism.

> We are inclined to think that the time has arrived which will witness the resuscitation of the drama, and revive the splendor of "Old Drury," as this theatre has appropriately been termed. It will show that the

> citizens of New York, still possess their characteristic good taste, and prove that they can find sufficient attraction in the production of the parents of the drama, without waiting for a ranting debutant, a glittering pageant or . . . rope dancers (March 13, 1830).

The high estimate of the "citizens of New York" was maintained throughout the entire period and a frequently recurring subject was the nature of the audience. But the reviewers' comments seemed to reflect more that which was desired than that which was. The most common remark about the audience was that it was a fashionable group and that attendance at the theater was also fashionable. In fact, so often did the phrase "fashionable and respectable" occur that it nearly became a stock opening. Other remarks made it clear that the theater crowd was not entirely fashionable.

The portion of the audience that would not have been put into the category of "fashionable and respectable" very frequently caused not a little disturbance in the theater. In 1803 the writer of a review found

> the decent part of the audience this evening, was extremely annoyed by some unruly sailors and boys in the gallery, who pelted the performers with oranges, and spit down on the heads of those in the pit . . . . If such conduct is suffered, the number of those who yet frequent the Theatre, will be still more diminished (February 24, 1803).

Three years later an English visitor wrote a review of John O'Keeffe's The Farmer; or, Ups and Downs in which he noted "some very pretty ladies cracking nuts in the genteelest part of the house" and, in an incredible pun, that there was "a gentleman puffing forth the fumes of fell mandungus in an obscure corner" (June 20, 1806).

In 1812 an article on Frederick Reynolds' The Lake of Lausanne; or, Out of Place, a farce, contained a jocular hint at the make up of the audience. The actor under discussion was Hilson, whose "farce was too farcical" and the writer suggested that "a little restraint upon his fine flow of spirits would be discreet, and ensure him the undivided applause of the judicious as well as of some dozen barren spectators (October 13, 1812). Three years later the situation appeared not to have changed from that described in 1803. Now the house was disturbed by "tumult and noise . . . to such a degree as to destroy the pleasure and tranquility of the audience. A few nights since . . . a set of ruffians . . . appeared to be fighting, and struggling to throw some body into the Pit! . . . Such behavior is an insult to the audience and to the managers, and a disgrace to our Police." The Evening Post demanded that the theater "guarantee the safety and tranquility . . . by posting a few constables to carry off to prison any person who is so destitute of sense and decency as to be guilty of mal-conduct" (September 16, 1815).

Finally, in the last year of the period under study, theatrical abuses were again attacked, this time very specifically.

> The admission of females of abandoned character, and the nature of the scenes and kind of dissipation which occur in the part of the theatres appropriated to them, were . . . mentioned . . . as causes of the decline of theatrical patronage in London. We . . . hope that public attention may be turned to it. It is shameful that a parent cannot take his daughters, a brother his sister, or a husband his wife to the theatre, without the necessity of their being present with persons, and perhaps witnesses of conduct, from the contamination of which, they should be kept as from a pestilence. . . . In this city it occupies the most prominent part

> of the place devoted to the most rational of public amusements. Virtue and infamy enter in contact, and the loud laugh of painted harlots or their meretricious conduct not unfrequently attracts more eyes than the actors on the stage. "Reform it altogether." (October 14, 1830).

Two minor items will reestablish a sense of historical continuity after a chapter which has showed a theater different in many respects from today's. The first consists of excerpts from two reviews spaced ten days apart. In the first passage the reviewer stated that "we are pleased to see the front row of the dress boxes almost undisfigured by any of those large, looming bonnets, which certainly have no business there, and which we hope will soon be banished altogether" (October 20, 1821). The second passage also brought up the subject of coal shovel bonnets and congratulated the ladies who had turned to a turban.

In the same review the writer spent a paragraph discussing the problem of the usurpation of reserved seats. He felt that the house boxkeeper should be responsible for correcting the interloper and not the ticket holder. That the patron should have to claim his own seat, "should not be the case in a well regulated theatre" (October 30, 1821).

CHAPTER VII

OF NATIONS

Two strains of nationalistic sentiment were apparent, by no means uniformly, in the reviews published in the New York Evening Post. The first considered, or at least implied, that America was still English in thought and culture. The second was incipient Americanism. But the newspaper was neither unduly chauvinistic nor, as has been claimed by some historians, did it appear in the reviews to be excessively anglophiliac. Rather, most of the nationalistic comments were incidental and seldom did they dominate a review until the closing years of the period. Predictably, the number increased after 1815, but even then the Americanism of the Evening Post was far from dogmatic.

In part this was to be accounted for by a national inferiority complex, an urge to defer to that which was British. Frequently, when the fact was stressed that a play or a production was "American," it was less a matter of pride than an admission that it must be judged by different standards than "British" materials. There was, of course, a change in this sentiment from first to last. Rather than attempt to distinguish comments chauvinistic from comments paranoic, a chronological treatment of nationalism as it appeared in the Evening Post reviews will be employed.

The first comment to appear in the Evening Post theatrical department that may be considered remotely nationalistic was in the third critique to be published, a review of Pizarro in Peru; or, The Death of Rolla, one of William Dunlap's most popular adaptations. In it an attempt was made to explain the reactions of an American audience to these productions.

> When . . . tickled with splendid pageantry, striking attitudes, tinsel sentiment, or noisy passion, (which their judgment considers appropriate) they express their approbation with their hands. But when their feelings are deeply interested, they hang in mute and motionless attention on every word, look and gesture of the actor, or express their delight in confused and half suppressed murmurs.

Then the reviewer gave his reason for attempting to explain these peculiarities. "Hence strangers . . . when they find the most valuable performances played to a silent audience, and the mummery of pantomime received with reiterated plaudits, are apt to accuse us with a want of just taste and discrimination" (December 9, 1801). Clearly, the earliest nationalistic comment was a reaction to what was felt to be an unjust criticism.

In the following year the same "American" characteristic was discussed further in a review of Romeo and Juliet in which Mrs. Anne Merry played, whose skill was a high point in American theater referred to for many years after. She received the "American" applause and the critic maintained that "when the tragedian can excite that expressive silence, which last evening was produced . . . it is the most unequivocal mark of admiration and respect an auditor can bestow, or a performer receive" (April 20, 1802). The same year mention

was made for the first time of an American theatrical presentation. In a review of Frederick Reynolds' Folly As It Flies, the writer apologized for not mentioning William Dunlap's The Merry Gardner; or, The Night of Adventures in the manner it deserved as an American production (February 15, 1802). More attention was apparently needed, however, for it failed after a few repetitions.

Another review of Folly As It Flies, one week later, acknowledged a difference between England and American by which "some of the allusions . . . lose much of their force. Thus, the . . . arrangements of a spunging house are unknown to us, and the reference to ladies on the subject of drama, becomes, in this country, a vulgarism" (February 22, 1802). Finally, in that year, theatrical, if not national, pride was present in a comment on the fact that the younger Colman's Blue Beard was presented with "incomparably more splendour than in Philadelphia, and nearly vies with the Blue Beard in London" (March 22, 1802).

The year 1803 was the year of the great satire, James Fennell's The Wheel of Truth, about which much has been said earlier. The only nationalistic comment to be recorded in discussing the play was one which accused the acting company of anglophilia, which may very well have been true considering the number of English members it had.

> All this . . . does not in the least prevent the ladies and gentlemen of the Theatre from believing and declaring . . . that in an American audience no man is to be found, unless he happens to have been born in London and have visited for some years both Theatres there, who has any pretensions to taste or judgment, at least compared with those among themselves who have had these shining advantages (January 31, 1803).

One need not look far in the press of the time to find blunt sarcasm.

Three years later the editor of the Evening Post introduced the "little weekly paper," the Thespian Mirror, of the young John Howard Payne, fourteen at the time, and for the first time an American talent was promoted in the theatrical columns of the Evening Post. The praise was effusive.

> In my judgment, we have scarcely any thing in the annals of letters that is superior to the prosaic productions of this American youth . . . nothing can be found in the youthful efforts of Cowley, Milton, Pope or Chatterton, evincing a strength of mind superior to the ordinary and daily productions of the little lad (January 24, 1806).

The editor then published the prospectus of the Thespian Mirror in which Payne proposed

> to comprehend a collection of interesting documents relative to the Stage, and its performers; chiefly intended to promote the interests of the AMERICAN DRAMA, and to eradicate false impressions respecting the nature, objects, design and tendency of THEATRICAL AMUSEMENTS (January 24, 1806).

The feeling of competitiveness that motivated much American literary activity at this time was illustrated by a passage in a review of Hamlet. In it the reviewer stated, "We consider Mrs. Wignell's Ophelia as the most charming and finished exhibition of talent ever seen on the American boards; it probably is unsurpassed at Covent Garden or Drury Lane" (March 6, 1806). Until the latter half of the period stronger statements than this seldom appeared, but an undercurrent of resentment existed and such statements were made with increasing frequency, expressing the growing irritation many Americans felt toward their implied reliance on England.

A satirical review which discussed Mrs. Villiers (Mrs. Twaits) was published in 1806, signed by Anglicanus, and prefaced by an editorial comment which claimed that because it contained "the opinions of an entire stranger to our theatre, to the audience, the dramatis personae, and musicians, it must possess uncommon interest with those who delight in this species of reading." The intent, however, was confusing since the object of the satire was never made clear. In one passage Anglicanus claimed "the Belles" represented an attack on the mother church.

> Puritanism, it is true, would fain destroy the fretted vault and ivy circled columns which once sheltered the Monk, and still rivet the attention of the man of science; and I have no doubt that they would like to see all the Church Bells in these states converted into cents, in imitation of the late revolutionary transactions in France (June 20, 1806).

In 1808 the competitive attitude cited above reappeared when a reviewer expressed the feelings existing between New York and London.

> Divested then of all national and partial prejudices, it is but justice to acknowledge that the Honey Moon of New-York, possesses charms and interest very little inferior to the Honey Moon of the great capital of London, of which the author of these trifling comments subscribes (September 19, 1808).

John Howard Payne returned to the columns of the Evening Post the next year, this time in a slightly different capacity. Now he was introduced with the comment that "the expectation of the Public has been for some time awakened by the promise of an American Roscius . . . . It is at length gratified, and we here offer an humble critique" (February 28, 1809). A month later a review of Romeo and Juliet, in

which Payne played, proclaimed,

> The public will always feel a lively interest in the success of this native of our land: and . . . we may confidently expect that when times shall have hardened "the gristle of youth into the bone of manhood" America will also have her Garrick to boast of (March 18, 1809).

At the same time that America acquired her "American Roscius" she also gained another American play, this one by James Nelson Barker. It was originally written as straight drama but was produced as novelty with music and songs. The Evening Post said,

> The Indian Princess is one of the most favourite modern productions--has been performed with unbounded applause in the principal Theatres on the Continent, and is considered in point of dramatic composition, one of the most chaste and elegant plays ever written in the United States (June 13, 1809).

In 1810 a comment appeared which was distinguished by its directness. Previously, the comments on the relationship between England and America had stressed competition rather than influence. In this remark the reviewer reflected the mixed attitude of Americans when he "will only express his extreme regret to find that Mr. Cooke has brought any of that vicious pronunciation which has . . . obtained on the English stage" and referred him to no less than the dictionary of the "great English Orthoepist, Walker" (November 27, 1810).

Nothing relevant to Americanism was then said until 1812. In that year Mrs. Young, who had been welcomed from Theatre Royal, Norwich, England, and the Boston Theatre seven years before, was referred to as "a native plant" which, "ought to be here kindly watered and nurtured in a genial soil and under a kindly sun"

(April 22, 1812).

The following year in a review of Hamlet, John Howard Payne appeared again in the Evening Post theatrical department. The article began with a plea that was to grow as the century passed until in time it became a major theme of American literature.

> Our country has long been considered a safe retreat for those whom the sword of persecution or the arm of tyranny may have driven from distant shores: by her coldness and indifference may she never drive her poets, her men of science and learning, and her tragedians to deck their brows with laurels gathered on foreign ground.

At the present time, although the condition of the expatriates must be lamented, the situation was in part a subject for pride because

> The painters of America have long held the first rank in Europe. . . . Payne on the other side of the Atlantic is now adding lustre to the American stage --when here, he was justly admired, and now, Englishmen are ready to own and reward his merit (December 21, 1813).

Almost a full year later, after reprinting an article from an English paper about John Howard Payne, the editor remarked,

> It is with satisfaction we observe that the talents of our country are respected abroad; and that even this unnatural war, in which we are engaged, has not extended the spirit of hostility in Great Britain towards the individuals of our nation whom nature has endowed with genius or splendid acquirements in the arts and sciences (September 16, 1814).

For three years thereafter the Evening Post published no remarks relevant to American literary nationalism, and relatively few comments about literature in general. Then, in an 1817 review of Bickerstaffe's Love In A Village, a reviewer cited the forcible

impression the actor Incledon made on the house with the song of "The Storm." The critic then proceeded "with great deference to better judges" to object "to the trill and falsetto which he introduced into a song meant to be descriptive of the utmost distress and despair." The review contained strong opposition to the dictates of the English critics. As the writer reasoned,

> When we are listening to such sounds . . . we experience a kind of shock at being forcibly called off to witness an ill-timed exhibition of science and voice by the musician. I only mean to say, if those great critics that preside in an English theatre, from whose decisions there is no appeal, had not given this incongruity their sanction, we should hazard the opinion that it was a violent deviation from both nature and a just taste (October 21, 1817).

This statement was a bench mark, for from this point on reviewers seemed to gain more and more confidence in things American and were less and less equivocal about their relationship to England. The policy of deference to things English did not disappear, but the reference to things American grew more and more self-assured.

The next year in reviewing The Merchant of Venice a comment appeared that implied that the English reciprocated this feeling somewhat. An English player named Harry J. Finn

> looked the character extremely well, and certainly made some fine points, very fine; but in the judgment scene (which by the way must appear little better than absurd to Americans) he came "tardy off." We have heard, that he was impressed with the idea that it was necessary to restrain himself before the New-York audience, and the fear of going beyond the mark, rendered him in a degree tame, where we expected the finest exercise of his powers (January 17, 1818).

That the American attitude had not changed as much as may have been suspected was reflected in a review of Bickerstaffe's Lionel and

Clarissa which found Americans to be quite generous to the English.

> As it contained some high compliments on British valor, it was, at least, questionable how it would be received by a miscellaneous audience; but the tumult of applause, and the loud and unanimous encore that succeeded dispelled all doubts, and certainly reflected the highest honor on the liberality and magnanimity of an American public . . . . This is one instance to shew that when we proclaimed in the national charter, that we would be "enemies in war, in peace friends." The sentiment was uttered with sincerity (March 17, 1818).

This attitude of "liberality and magnanimity" was to be remarked upon in the future as a handicap when the self-concepts of the nation had changed even more.

In the summer of 1818 the theater was refurbished and Mr. Simpson went to England "for the purpose of adding to the stock of dramatic merit." The reviewer was forced then to admit,

> As yet, we have it not effectually in our power to attract performers of great merit from England. The theatres in London, the focus of talent, receive from an overgrown population, a steady and liberal patronage, which must be reciprocated by managers in the selection and engagement of such performers whose celebrity is known and admitted. It requires, therefore, strong inducements to performers of talent, to quit a country, where merit is fully patronized, and when our managers have it not in their power to offer, as yet, an equivalent for their services and sacrifice.

But he was by no means despondent and related,

> There are some, however, whose enterprise and love of novelty have surmounted these difficulties; who have relinquished profitable engagements to try their fortune in the new world, and whose confidence in the discernment and liberality of an American audience, has led them to brave the dangers of the ocean (September 8, 1818).

Emerging confidence in America's ability to draw talent combined with declining dependence on England, caused a reviewer to praise Wallack,

less for his ability, which was limited by his shortness of stature, than for his sagacity. The reviewer asserted,

> His defects are such as may be easily surmounted, and when we consider the embarrassment inseparable from a first appearance, we have much to applaud and much to anticipate. Mr. Wallack, in making this country the theatre of his experiments, has not waited in his native country until his powers have been exhausted and his talent on the wane; he has not presented to the American audience an epitome of what he was, but what he will be . . . he will in due time be equal to the greatest performer we have ever seen on this continent (September 8, 1818).

Soon American critics began to comment openly, too, on peculiarities in American taste which seemed to them to reflect American traits. In this year a review of Coriolanus explained,

> This tragedy has never been popular with our audience; and however strange it may appear to commingle national feelings with historical facts, perpetuated in the drama, our citizens do not relish that patrician sway which lords it with so high and sweeping a hand over the rights of the people, in a country miscalled a republic (September 11, 1818).

The critics also mentioned characteristics of the English stage and proclaimed themselves decisively opposed to certain features.

> I do not know but the custom prevails on the London stage of turning the sound of the letter y into that of e; but it has not and I hope will never be adopted here. It is an innovation which ought to be resisted. . . . I trust his good sense will at once renounce this vicious habit (October 12, 1818).

The actor whose pronunciation required reforming was Wallack in the role of Octavian in The Mountaineers of George Colman the Younger.

English plays, however, continued to receive that "magnanimous and liberal" treatment, although with reservations. In a review of

Thomas Moore's M. P.; or, The Blue Stocking Club the writer declared,

> We confess that, although, from the deserved celebrity of the author, in works of fancy, we should have expected very much, yet, from the local nature of the piece, as indicated by its title, we were inclined to suppose it would be found to possess little interest in this country.

However, after reading the play, a rare occurence itself, the reviewer said,

> The title, to be sure, alludes to customs and facts, which are almost unknown to us, but the princi-[sic] part of the opera, deals in incidents which will be recognized as faithful pictures of human nature every where, and must always excite the greatest interest wherever they are exhibited, equally as much in America as in England (October 23, 1818).

In 1819 the review of Frances Wright's Altorf exhibited again the increasing independence of thought that the critics were feeling. The play not only represented something that they felt was basically American, but inspired them again to express their critical, if not actual, freedom from English influence.

> We have had an opportunity to read the piece, and can say the subject is very interesting and the play full of merit. The scene is laid in Switzerland, and the period chosen, that of the first struggles of that republic for liberty, against the immense power of Austria. In addition, therefore, to the novelty of a first representation, will be added the deep interest which every American must necessarily feel in the events of a revolution so similar in many respects to our own (February 17, 1819).

Five days later the reviewer continued,

> What then was our surprise in reading a work, which, . . . may challenge . . . the best productions of the British stage . . . we advance this opinion, without waiting for the fiat of an English audience, or an English review--and we are sure that it will be confirmed by all those of our countrymen, who dare to think and to judge for themselves.

Here were all the elements of an American declaration of literary independence and furthermore,

> The author is unknown--He has trusted his work to its own merits and to the unprejudiced liberality of an American audience. . . . We sincerely wish success to this beautiful production. Shall it be said that we must import for ever our literature, our opinions, and our fashions, from England? Our country is daily becoming more illustrious in arms, and in the arts of government. It is time for the muse of tragedy to try her flight in America, and we trust that she will be cheered in her progress by every American heart.

In closing the reviewer expressed his opposition to the subject matter of the plays imported. "We wish success to this play on another ground. It is a republican play, and we are really tired with always weeping at the sorrows of kings or queens, lords or ladies, as if our sympathy would be degraded if it ever descended below the peerage" (February 22, 1819).

The following month John Howard Payne's tragedy Brutus; or, The Fall of Tarquin, which had already been produced in England, was reviewed. The American dilemma was well illustrated in the two reviews of this play published in 1819. In the first the reviewer stated,

> Of the merits of this play we need speak no further than to say it has obtained such extraordinary success on the London boards, that it has been performed eight successive nights to crowded houses, and passed the fiery ordeal of the English critics, notwithstanding all their prejudices, entirely unhurt (March 15, 1819).

When a second look was taken at the play the American made very certain that his position was clear.

> To judge of this tragedy by its success on the London boards, we should say, that it was a masterpiece of the age; but accustomed to decide for ourselves, and governed by those sincere and unallayed feelings for which the American audience are distinguished, it

> would be sufficient to say that Brutus is the best modern tragedy now holding possession of the stage; and notwithstanding that our compatriot, the author, lays claim to a small portion of originality in its composition, yet the talent required to weave the materials together, to produce a work so finished, is of a high order indeed (November 4, 1819).

One reason given for abridging plays at this time was to make them morally suitable for American audiences. In a review of Dibdin and Braham's showy The English Fleet in 1342 another reason was given. "The national compliments to English bravery and the English navy, of which the piece was curtailed to suit it to an American audience, could, alone, have even rendered it passable at any theatre in London.--Requiescat in pace" (April 27, 1819).

American plays now began to appear properly identified on the Park stage, and in 1820 two were reviewed. The Mountain Torrent was attributed to a young New York gentleman (Samuel B. H. Judah). Although this spectacular melodrama was perhaps best soon forgotten, the Evening Post claimed

> It should ever be the proud boast of every American citizen, whene'er an opportunity occurs, that they can and are willing to reward native merit, especially when it is taken in consideration that it is public patronage alone which can stimulate an author in his exertions to excel, and in this instance particularly, as the author of the Mountain Torrent, is quite a youth (February 29, 1820).

The second review, headed for the first time "American Drama", discussed Mordecai M. Noah's Yusef Caramalli; or, The Siege of Tripoli, which was never successfully resuscitated after its first run was cut short by fire in the Park Theater. In addition to outlining the plot some hints about the nature of subjects that interested Americans

were given.

> from the distance of the place--the contrast of habits, manners, religion and costume, it may be easily imagined that the events of that war would form an interesting subject for an American drama. . . . Such are the outlines of the piece, which unquestionably possesses interest; and when combined with those scenes so honourable to our country, will no doubt be well received (May 12, 1820).

But a few days later the reviewer claimed that the performance had value beyond mere entertainment.

> But principally we esteem this performance as being well calculated, by its tone and sentiments, to awaken that national spirit; that elevated pride of character, which is essential to a high minded people, and is always the attendant of that patriotism which disdains equally to receive or to brook insult, whatever quarter it may come from (May 16, 1820).

A few months later the Evening Post demonstrated that it would not accept gratuitous insults, especially from England. The paper printed one of its rare excerpts from a London paper which expressed fear that Kean would lose the fine tact that had distinguished him in England by striving to adapt himself to the reigning taste in America and hence would forfeit English applause. The Evening Post reacted with,

> This is a sample of the manner in which the mercenary newspapers of London speak of us poor benighted and uncivilized barbarians. Whatever we may be, we shall continue to judge of English actors and actresses, and speak of them, with the same unrestrained freedom we have always done. And if, in striving to please us they lose their fine tacts and fine taste, it is to be regarded only as a lamentable misfortune which they share in common with all their species, who degenerate, in figure as well as talent, from the moment they land on these inhospitable shores (October 17, 1820).

Kean was welcomed and a review of Richard III suggested how Americans

viewed themselves.

> This gentleman comes to us backed by the recommendations of English audiences; and, although the materials of which those audiences are composed essentially and in effect differ from what we are accustomed to meet on this side the Atlantic, there is an operative courtesy amongst us which induces for every performer, thus supported, respectful consideration and an impartial hearing (December 4, 1820).

Whether Kean would have subscribed to this statement when he was in America is moot. He later made statements to this effect.

The next year Thomas Phillipps expressed himself after a review of Bickerstaffe's The Maid of the Mill had claimed, "to have talents come among us we have only to cherish and reward them, as to say the truth we have always done" (November 5, 1821). The next day the reviewer reported that Phillipps had,

> After the fall of the curtain to the first piece . . . stepped forward, and, in the warmest manner, expressed his gratitude . . . said that while in Europe he had never for a moment ceased to remember the generous liberality he had met with in the United States, and especially from the New York audience (November 6, 1821).

The following year the Evening Post reviewed Charles P. Clinch's adaptation of an American novel, The Spy. In the article a critic admitted for the first time that certain circumstances could shake his "impartiality."

> All our editors unite in extolling the production of the juvenile author, as possessing uncommon merit; and, although it will never be allowed to warp our judgment, knowingly, yet it is a circumstance, which will always have a very considerable weight with us, that it is a native plant, & of course one that is justly entitled to be watered and sunned with our own hands. . . . The youthful drammatist is not even personally known by us, but it is enough for us, that our friend Croaker has thought it not beneath him to

> volunteer a song, in aid of the piece, and as a mark of friendship for the author (March 5, 1822).

In 1823 American audience response was blamed for leaving the audience open to certain abuses. Although American audiences waxed very critical at times, a review of Charles Mathews in Othello claimed that at the play the liberality of the audience was

> a politeness; it was an indulgence, at the sacrifice of taste and judgment. The acknowledgement was justly due, and properly made. But, let that pass; we will now be plain. This appearance, out of character, on our boards, has been good naturedly, but mistakenly permitted too long for the reputation of the American audience. We do hope we have now seen the last of it (May 26, 1823).

That fall the attention of the reviewer of The Renegade; or, France Restored, a tragedy by "two gentlemen of this city" Drs. Cooper and Grey, turned to the subject of dramatic literature and its lack in America.

> It has been the subject of much speculation whether the dearth of good American plays result from a want of talents on the part of our authors, or from a want of sufficient patronage. Why is the fostering hand of public favor so often withheld from native works of real merit while thousands are enthusiastic in the praise of exoticks, of, perhaps, far less intrinsic value. If the patrons of the drama once resolved to give native genius an opportunity to display itself . . . there could be no doubt that our country would soon produce as good dramas as those with which we are constantly furnished from a foreign source (September 26, 1823).

1824 brought forth a comment on music which would have been subscribed to by a literary nationalist as well. While reviewing the performance of a Mr. Pearman, the reviewer pointed out,

> By the occasional visits to our country of such men as Philipps, Incledon, and Pearman, our musical taste

> is elicited and formed, and we have only to encourage the best talent of Europe, in order to command it. We are half a century advanced in our knowledge and love of vocal music, since the first visit of Mr. Philipps to our country, and it only remains with ourselves to invite to our shores a Braham, a Stephens, or a Catalini (May 20, 1824).

Later the same year the editor of the Evening Post received word that Mathews had returned to London and had begun portraying New York merchants in an unflattering light. His ire was aroused and he reacted with an article.

> In perusing the following article our feelings of indignation at the ungrateful returns of this low mimic, for the liberal but it appears undeserved patronage he received while in this country, are only exceeded by those of ineffable and undisguised contempt for the wretch who now seeks to fill his pockets by exerting his monkey faculties to beget and perpetuate national antipathies of the most mischievous nature. His utter disregard for even verisimilitude, so that the disgraceful fabrication only answers his end, may be judged of by the following portrait he exhibits to the good people of London of the New York merchant (November 18, 1824).

The apparent low status of all things American in Europe continued to disturb the Evening Post. In 1825 the familiar story of the necessity of using subterfuge in order to get American materials published in Europe was repeated with appropriate comments. The writer maintained,

> We are not unfrequently accused by the English, and not, we admit, without some color of truth, with national vanity, but may we not retort the charge by accusing them in turn with national envy and injustice? We have seen some of the best specimens of American poetry republished in the London leading newspapers, carefully concealing their American origin, and without scruple serving them up to the public as English originals.

He then related a story of a Mr. Gilfort of Charleston who wrote a song for the Dublin theater and, fearing the reception it might meet, put the name of Carl Von Gilfort of Prague on the song which then proved a success. "The real author of the fortunate song, is now the actual American manager of the theater at Albany, and can at any time produce, at pleasure, equally beautiful compositions, with out the prefix of a Carl or a Von to his name" (July 23, 1825).

In the same year the opera arrived in New York City and the reviewer of Il Barbiere di Sivilgia expressed his conviction that,

> We consider the question whether the American taste will bear the Italian Opera as now settled. We predict that it will never hereafter dispense with it. Nothing could have been more judicious and liberal, if they wished that it should obtain a permanent establishment among us, than the course the managers have pursued. They have brought out at once a large number of first rate performers, and we may boast that we begin with as good a troupe as London, Paris or Naples can furnish (November 30, 1825).

Two events reviewed in 1826 led to expressions of nationalism. The first was the publishing of a play, Richelieu, A Domestic Tragedy by John Howard Payne, which the reviewer asserted had been accepted for performance at Covent Garden before it was ordered altered by the Lord Chamberlain and produced under a new name. The reviewer went on,

> What were the alterations upon which the Lord Chamberlain insisted, before suffering this tragedy to be performed in England, we are not told. It is hinted, however, that they were made for political reasons; and the author, with a proper spirit of independence, refused to be privy to them. It is fortunate for us that no such reasons can operate here; that our stage is permitted faithfully to reflect the manners of every condition of life; and that no play can be prevented from being performed, on account of any supposed coincidence of the

> events of the plot with certain infamous passages in the life of an individual, however distinguished (November 17, 1826).

The second event was the occasion of Mr. Kean's farewell address to America. Kean claimed that he was leaving for health reasons but that there were also groups in America attempting to drive him away. However he maintained that "the American public have been the means of restoring a suffering individual to fortune, fame, and home." The reviewer of this incident stated,

> We may congratulate America on the course she has taken as regards this distinguished actor, with very few exceptions . . . he endeared himself to the American public . . . by the splendid bursts of his transcendent genius in public . . . by his respectful conduct in private . . . The squeamish advocates of morality and national insult, for those were the topics upon which Kean's enemies seized, entailed upon themselves the odious but well merited epithet of persecutors, and like the spears of Ethuriel healed the wound they inflicted (December 8, 1826).

The year 1828 began with a comparison of audiences in New York and London and ended with another essay on American dramatic literature to announce Forrest's prize. The comparison was inspired by the scene stealing of Placide and the review declared, "Such conduct would be hissed upon the London stage; and though N. York audiences are proverbially good natured, they may be tried too far (February 20, 1828).

The essay on American dramatic literature, coming in the last part of the period, is worth reproducing at some length.

> The great dearth of dramatic writers in our country, which still continues, notwithstanding the increased patronage of theatrical amusements, and the improving taste of our audiences, has been a matter of complaint and regret to the friends of the American drama. That our history,

> manners, and peculiarities can furnish incidents and character sufficiently dramatic to give a large variety of selection to our play-wrights, cannot be doubted. The greatest obstacle which has hitherto operated against more frequent attempts, appears to have been a want of pecuniary inducement, added to that extreme uncertainty of success, which must from a combination of circumstances, always attend whatever is written for the stage. In fact, it is rather singular, that dramatic literature should have been so long neglected, considering the progress we have made in other departments of literature.

The essay then suggested sources for American drama.

> Among the various subjects for comedy, there is, perhaps, scarcely any character in the known world, which would afford an American audience so much amusement, as that developed in the manners and peculiarities of some of the older and more homogeneous settlements of our country, and particularly among our eastern neighbors, properly drawn and faithfully and strikingly represented on the stage (November 29, 1828).

The promotion of things American was now part of reviewing for in 1829 Home, Sweet Home; or, The Ranz des Vaches, an English opera by Charles A. Somerset, called forth the reviewer's opinions on the source of more "American" drama and the reasons for its lack.

> It is rather owing to want of effort than of talent in our present dramatic writers, that no works are produced which "the world would not willingly let die:" for many of the petit comedies, farces and operas, which have of late been reproduced on the American boards, evince the possession of the material in the mind of the authors, which careful study and industrious application might erect into some more durable memento of their ability and worth (May 26, 1829).

That year, too, a final facet of the demand for the promotion of American drama was revealed in a review of Lorenzo da Ponte's Almachilde. "It seems to us that the manager of an American theatre, in the case of a native tragedy, or evident respectability, to say the least, should give it a fair trial, by committing the principal parts to the best performers of his company (August 12, 1829).

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSION

Although there is no particular reason why 1830 should be chosen as the terminal date in a study of theatrical criticism in the New York Evening Post, yet about this time a number of changes were taking place in the literary, dramatic and journalistic worlds of New York City. By the year 1830 the New York stage was firmly established. From it and other theaters in America during the thirties and forties were to develop such remarkable players as Charlotte Cushman, Mrs. Mowatt, "Yankee" Hill, E. L. Davenport, and William Warren, Jr. all of whom were born on American soil and all of whom appeared with great success before British audiences.

The achievements of these distinguished performers were not the sole evidence of expansion and increasing maturity in our theatrical life. In New York particularly new theaters were being built with a frequency hitherto unparalleled. The monopoly of the Park and the Bowery was ended by the opening of the Franklin, the National, the New Chatham, the Olympic and Palmo's. It must be admitted, however, that the increase in number and quality of theaters and actors was not matched by a commensurate improvement in the dramatic fare. Apart from Shakespearean favorites, the stage was largely given over to inconsequential British pieces of the ilk of The French Spy, Rory O'More and His Last Legs which took the place

of The Beaux Stratagem, Venice Preserved, Love for Love and Jane Shore. But the firmest basis for hope in the future was to be found in the increasing number of plays written by American authors.

The American theatrical critic was also well established at the end of the period and during the next two decades the newspapers and periodicals quite commonly published regular critical articles about the plays and the acting. Although the quality did not increase as rapidly as the quantity, the ranks of the theatrical critics soon numbered such men as Edgar Allan Poe and Walt Whitman. After 1830 it was clear that there was not further development in newspaper criticism itself. From that time we can be sure that whatever else it got the theater received at least a proper share of contemporary, somewhat honest, discussion.

American publishing underwent its most significant change in the decade of the thirties, too, with the advent of the technological processes that made possible the publishing "explosion." Improvements in presses and papermaking machinery made possible vastly increased circulation of periodicals and larger, more rapid printings of books. Soon newspapers and magazine circulation was calculated by thousands instead of hundreds. The result was an enormous quantity of writing surrounding all phases of literature.

Before 1830, then, the destiny of the American theater and American theatrical criticism had been shaped. When the American theater was young, Washington Irving, writing as his invented correspondent, Andrew Quoz, in the Morning Chronicle, stated the

critical ideal of his day by challenging the presumptions of the New York reviewers in 1801. "Let me ask them one question," demanded Quoz. "Have they ever been to Europe? Have they ever seen a Garrick, a Kemble, or a Siddons? If they have not, I can assure you, (upon the words of two or three of my friends, the actors) they have no right to the title of critics."

But during the period studied the American critic became less and less obliged to go to London because more and more of the important figures of the stages of London came to America. During the period New York City became the distributing agency and unchallenged theatrical capital of America. During the period American types and American themes began to find their way behind the footlights, soon to contradict, in fact even then contradicting, the declarations of Sydney Smith. The very fact of changing environment and growing nationalism were reflected in American periodical literature and consequently in American criticism. What the Evening Post critics chose to stress or to neglect in itself tells much about the development of American literature.

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Rowe, Nicholas. The Fair Penitent. April 24, 1802. #136. (H. Thespis).

_____. The Fair Penitent. June 25, 1805. #1118.

_____. The Fair Penitent. February 20, 1807. #1623. (Zoilus).

_____. Jane Shore. May 3, 1802. #144. (O. Thespis).

_____. Jane Shore. February 25, 1807. #1627. (Zoilus).

Schiller, Johann. Fiesco. March 30, 1802. #115. (H. Thespis).

_____. The Robbers. April 14, 1802. #128. (O. Thespis).

Scott, Walter. The Doom of Devorgoil. June 9, 1830. #8692.

Scott, Walter. Auchindrane; or, The Ayrshire Tragedy. June 9, 1830. #8692.

Shakespeare, William. The Comedy of Errors. October 24, 1826. #7573.

_____. The Comedy of Errors. October 28, 1826. #7577.

_____. The Comedy of Errors. November 22, 1826. #7598.

_____. Coriolanus. September 11, 1818. #5068. (Thespis).

_____. Hamlet. February 19, 1802. #82. (H. Thespis).

_____. Hamlet. July 2, 1805. #1124.

_____. Hamlet. January 4, 1806. #1283.

_____. Hamlet. March 6, 1806. #1335.

_____. Hamlet. December 21, 1813. #3551. (Aristides).

_____. Henry IV. December 12, 1804. #954.

_____. Henry IV, Part II. February 5, 1822. #6117.

_____. Julius Caesar. November 17, 1828. #8212. (Archias).

_____. King John. November 17, 1828. #8212. (Archias).

_____. King Lear. December 15, 1820. #5768.

_____. King Lear. December 16, 1820. #5769. (A. Philadelphian).

_____. King Lear. December 26, 1820. #5776. (A Philadelphian).

_____. King Lear. March 17, 1821. #5845.

_____. King Lear. January 3, 1826. #7324.

_____. King Lear. October 24, 1829. #8501.

_____. King Lear. November 27, 1829. #8530.

_____. Macbeth. December 15, 1804. #957.

_____. Macbeth. March 11, 1806. #1339.

_____. Macbeth. September 8, 1818. #5065. (Thespis).

_____. Macbeth. September 25, 1818. #5080. (An Impartial Spectator).

Shakespeare, William. Macbeth. October 6, 1826. #7559. (Thespis).

_____. The Merchant of Venice. December 6, 1804. #949.

_____. The Merchant of Venice. January 17, 1818. #4867.

_____. The Merchant of Venice. May 10, 1819. #5272.

_____. The Merchant of Venice. June 7, 1828. #8074. (Q.).

_____. A Midsummer Night's Dream. November 10, 1826. #7588.

_____. Othello. December 21, 1801. #31. (H. Thespis).

_____. Othello. December 26, 1801. #35. (H. Thespis).

_____. Othello. January 15, 1806. #1292. (Curatii).

_____. Othello. November 28, 1820. #5754. (Crito).

_____. Othello. March 15, 1821. #5843.

_____. Othello. May 26, 1823. #6520.

_____. Othello. November 17, 1825. #7286. (Thespis).

_____. Othello. April 15, 1828. #8028. (Q.).

_____. Othello. April 4, 1828. #8035. (Q.).

_____. Othello. September 25, 1830. #8784.

_____. Othello. October 5, 1830. #8792.

_____. Richard III. December 22, 1801. #32. (E. Thespis).

_____. Richard III. February 26, 1802. #88. (H. Thespis).

_____. Richard III. March 8, 1806. #1337.

_____. Richard III. May 3, 1806. #1383.

_____. Richard III. November 30, 1820. #5756.

_____. Richard III. December 4, 1820. #5759. (Crito).

_____. Richard III. December 5, 1820. #5760.

_____. Richard III. March 24, 1821. #5851.

Shakespeare, William. Richard III. October 8, 1821. #6018. (Patronus).

_____. Richard III. November 15, 1826. #7592.

_____. Richard III. December 13, 1826. #7615.

_____. Romeo and Juliet. April 20, 1802. #133. (Thespis).

_____. Romeo and Juliet. March 18, 1809. #2198. (A Friend to the Drama).

_____. Romeo and Juliet. April 26, 1811. #2782. (Philo-Drama).

_____. Romeo and Juliet. April 18, 1816. #4227. (Philo-Dramaticus).

_____. Romeo and Juliet. December 31, 1817. #4853.

_____. Romeo and Juliet. February 16, 1828. #7978. (Q.).

_____. The Winter's Tale. May 5, 1820. #5578. (A. B. C.).

Sheil, Richard. The Apostate. September 24, 1817. #4770.

Sheridan, Richard B. The Rivals. December 2, 1802. #326. (Arouet).

_____. The School for Scandal. April 30, 1802. #142. (H. Thespis).

_____. The School for Scandal. November 26, 1802. #321. (Arouet).

_____. The School for Scandal. February 15, 1806. #1319.

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Siddons, Henry. A Tale of Terror. January 26, 1804. #682.

Smith, Richard P. The Deformed; or, Woman's Trial. February 6, 1830. #8588.

Somerset, Charles A. Home, Sweet Home; or, The Ranz des Vaches. May 26, 1829. #8372. (Clio).

Southerne, Thomas. Isabella; or, The Fatal Marriage. April 28, 1802. #140. (E. Thespis).

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_____. The Honey Moon. October 13, 1812. #3189. (Thespis).

Unknown. Cherry and Fair Star; or, The Children of Cyprus. April 5, 1826. #7403. (Thespis).

Unknown. The Mayor of Garratt. June 24, 1828. #8088.

Wright, Frances. Altorf. February 17, 1819. #5201.

_____. Altorf. February 20, 1819. #5204.

Young, Edward. The Revenge. June 22, 1805. #1116.

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