1960

The Subjective Perspective; Aspects of Point of View in Modern Drama.

August William Staub

Louisiana State University and Agricultural & Mechanical College

Follow this and additional works at: https://repository.lsu.edu/gradschool_disstheses

Recommended Citation

Staub, August William, "The Subjective Perspective; Aspects of Point of View in Modern Drama." (1960). LSU Historical Dissertations and Theses. 638.
https://repository.lsu.edu/gradschool_disstheses/638

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at LSU Scholarly Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in LSU Historical Dissertations and Theses by an authorized administrator of LSU Scholarly Repository. For more information, please contact gradetd@lsu.edu.
STAUB, August William. THE SUBJECTIVE PERSPECTIVE; ASPECTS OF POINT OF VIEW IN MODERN DRAMA.

Louisiana State University, Ph.D., 1960
Speech – Theater

University Microfilms, Inc., Ann Arbor, Michigan
THE SUBJECTIVE PERSPECTIVE;
ASPECTS OF POINT OF VIEW IN MODERN DRAMA

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of Speech

by

August W. Staub
B.S., Louisiana State University, 1952
M.A., Louisiana State University, 1956
August, 1960
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The writer wishes to express his gratitude to Dr. C. L. Shaver for his kind guidance and encouragement in the preparation of this manuscript. He also wishes to thank Dr. Waldo Braden and the other members of his committee for their reading and editing of the work, as well as for their interest and suggestions.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS ............................................... ii
ABSTRACT ...................................................... iv
PREFACE ....................................................... vii

CHAPTER

I FROM EURIPIDES TO ULYSSES: THE STRUCTURAL PROBLEM
OF UNSPOKEN THOUGHT ....................................................... 1

II THE TWO DIRECTIONS OF MODERN DRAMA; THE EXTERNAL
AND THE PAN-PSYCHIC DRAMA ............................................. 48

III THE DREAM AND THE MONODRAMA; STRINDBERG AND
EVREINOV STATE THE PROBLEM ........................................... 88
   Strindberg: The Dream Play ........................................ 88
   Evreinov: The Theatre of the Soul ................................. 116

IV THE EROSION AND DISSOLUTION OF THE INDIVIDUAL
VIEWPOINT; KAISER AND PIRANDELLO SEE THE
EGO AS A PHENOMENON ON THE WAY TO DESTRUCTION ............. 133
   Kaiser: From Morn to Midnight .................................. 133
   Pirandello: Six Characters in Search of an
   Author ............................................................... 161

V THE INTRODUCTION OF OLDER TECHNIQUES; O'NEILL
AND GIRAUDOUX USE OLD MEANS TO A NEW END ............... 192
   O'Neill: Strange Interlude ...................................... 192
   Giraudoux: The Madwoman of Chaillot ............................ 218

VI THE SOLILOQUY DRAMATIZED; MILLER AND THE
EXTERNALISTIC PRETENSE; ANOUILH AND THE
CLASSICAL COMPROMISE ................................................ 237
   Miller: Death of a Salesman .................................... 237
   Anouilh: The Waltz of the Toreadors ............................ 255

VII THE SUBJECTIVE PERSPECTIVE: A SUMMARY .................. 272

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY .............................................. 281
VITA ............................................................. 288
ABSTRACT

When late 19th-century Romanticist thinking culminated in modern individualism, there resulted a philosophic shift from universal objectivity to individual subjectivity, from absolute morality to relative morality. Artists wishing to express the new philosophy had to search out fresh methods of presenting their material. Writers of fiction realized that the traditional omniscient approach to the problem of rendering unspoken thought was no longer acceptable, since omniscience rested its argument on the concept of universality, whereas Relativism demanded a concern with the problem of point of view. Moreover, the new science of psychoanalysis soon conceived of man as governed chiefly by his most primitive, irrational impulses. Consequently, the question of point of view became the problem of rendering not only the individual's consciousness but also his metacognitive states as well. Thus, the concern with point of view also became a concern with the convention of stream of consciousness, that is, with a convention capable of expressing a totally subjective perspective.

After the novelist Henry James clearly articulated the problem,
a number of impressive experiments with point of view in general, and stream of consciousness in particular, came from such novelists as Proust, Joyce, and Faulkner. So striking were these experiments that some students of the novel have assumed that the problem is indigenous only to fiction. Actually, the issue of point of view is basic and vital to the whole concept of Relativism, and in appropriately altered form it stands as the essential question of most modern arts.

It is the purpose of this study to demonstrate that point of view, or the subjective perspective, is the primary and distinctive feature of modern dramaturgy. To support this contention, the development of modern drama is presented as paralleling that of the modern novel. Like Zola and Flaubert in fiction, Ibsen first attempted to present his Relativism through third-person dramatization, but when this approach failed to satisfy him, Ibsen tried to pierce third-person objectivity with symbolism. That he was not totally successful in his attempt did not keep his younger contemporary Strindberg from completely discarding third-person in favor of first-person dramatization. After Strindberg had stated the problem, many important dramatists followed him in exploring and exploiting the subjective perspective.

This study investigates eight significant point-of-view experiments in drama. Strindberg's *The Dream Play* and Evreinov's *The
Kaiser's *From Morn to Midnight* and Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search of an Author* are offered as plays concerned with point of view because their themes centered about the concept of the disappearing ego. O'Neill's *Strange Interlude* and Giraudoux's *The Madwoman of Chaillot* are studied as solutions drawing upon older dramatic techniques. Finally, *Death of a Salesman* by Miller and *The Waltz of the Toreadors* by Anouilh are presented as representative of recent trends toward compromise.

Viewed in terms of method, modern drama need not be considered as a mass of conflicting and confusing "ism's," for it consists, briefly, of two broad, interrelated directions, both of which share a common romantic background. The first direction, popularly called Realism, is based on a third-person objective dramatization; the second direction, a later stage and consummation of the first, is that of first-person subjective dramatization. For identification, the two directions may be labeled Externalism and Pan-psychism. Pan-psychism, the more subjective and irrational direction, had tended toward deep pessimism. This pessimism apparently touched bottom with Pirandello, for recent point-of-view dramas have tended to compromise with approaches involving saner and more lucid subject-object relationships.
PREFACE

This study is one in dramaturgic method. In a very broad sense, it is also a study in comparative literary forms, for the particular dramatic problem which is investigated is that structural issue long known to students of the modern novel as point of view. Regarded in another light, the study may also be considered as a historical-philosophical presentation of certain trends in modern dramatic literature, for although the main emphasis is on close critical analysis of eight plays by eight representative modern playwrights, the general historical background and the past and present philosophic implications of the matter under study are not ignored as if the plays and playwrights existed in a cultural vacuum. On the other hand, this work is not intended as an exhaustive treatment of history, philosophy, or comparative literature. It is, first and last, chiefly concerned with the place and function and evolution of the convention of point of view in contemporary drama.

The question of point of view as an important structural problem first began seriously to be considered by the authors of the late 19th-century, who, acting under the pressure of a philosophic shift from universality to individuality, from absolutism to relativism, began to be less interested in the total action of a story and more interested in the post from which the action was
observed. Thus, many of the major novelists of the time began to exchange their omniscient approach for that of a third-person objectivity. As the twin concepts of relativism and individualism gained more and more acceptance, writers dropped third-person objectivity for first-person subjectivity. Subsequent experimentation with first-person presentation ultimately produced the technique known as stream of consciousness, a device which attempted to present the most basic and unintellectual areas of human thought.

The critics of the novel have produced a number of long studies of the nature and evolution of the concept of point of view in the modern novel. In terms of the drama no such studies exist. Indeed, some students of the novel even feel that the problem of point of view is peculiar to the novel, but a number of the more respected dramatic critics—men like John Gassner, Allardyce Nicoll, and Alan Downer—have, at one time or another, commented on the presence of the problem of point of view in the modern play. None of these comments, however, has been very extended. There seems, therefore, to be a need for a study of some length on the problem of the subjective perspective, i.e., point of view, in drama.

In general the investigation is divided into two major parts. The first, and shorter part, presents the general background. Chapter One offers a broad consideration of the total concept of
point of view in literature. In brief fashion, the chapter presents the development of the modern problem of point of view out of the ancient and continuing issue of unspoken thought. The modern convention is related to the philosophic shift from absolutism to relativism, and the chapter concludes with a brief glance at some of the solutions, from James to Faulkner, which have been attempted in the contemporary novel.

Chapter Two concentrates only on drama. Those men and forces in drama which shaped and influenced the 20th-century playwright's concern with first-person presentation are presented and briefly discussed. In general, the chapter traces the late 19th-century dramatist's attempts to present his relativistic philosophy, first, through third-person objectivity and, finally, through more subjective approaches. The chapter presents these attempts as forces which caused modern drama to take both a subjective and an objective direction, two seemingly opposed but on a structural level, quite closely related forms.

The second and longer portion of the study is an examination of eight plays by eight different playwrights. The playwrights are selected for various reasons. First, because as a group, they form a representative cross-section of trends in modern drama. Second, because as an international company, they suggest the scope and extent of the problem of point of view in modern dramaturgy. Finally, the playwrights fall into a rough chronological pattern.
which provides a basis for a general consideration of the evolution of the subjective perspective within the modern dramatic framework.

The playwrights are studied in pairs. Strindberg and Evreinov are considered first because they serve as examples of early experimenters with the new problem. Kaiser and Pirandello are next presented as two slightly later playwrights who took up the problem of viewpoint because of their need for a device which would adequately present their philosophy of the ego as a spiritually isolated, constantly eroding and dissolving phenomenon. The third pair of playwrights considered are O'Neill and Giraudoux. These two writers are among that group which sought to solve the problem of point of view by reintroducing older dramatic techniques, techniques which were held in disfavor by early modern dramatists. The last two playwrights studied are Miller and Anouilh. The two men exemplify certain recent tendencies toward compromise. Miller attempts to reunite third-person with first-person subjective dramatization; Anouilh returns to an even earlier tradition and combines the modern subjective perspective with the omniscient technique of Moliere.
CHAPTER ONE

FROM EURIPIDES TO ULYSSES

THE STRUCTURAL PROBLEM OF UNSPOKEN THOUGHT

Sophocles begins the second choral ode of Antigone with the triumphant:

Many are the wonders of the world
And none so wonderful as Man.

And after listing the many achievements of man, the poet cries out:

Language withal he learnt,
And thought that as the wind is free,
And aptitudes of civic life:
Ill-lodged no more he lies,
His roof the sky, the earth his bed,
Screened now from piercing frost and pelting rain;
All-fertile in resource, resourceless never
Meets he the morrow...1

In these ringing words, Sophocles not only pays tribute to the indomitable human spirit and intelligence, but he also hints at one of the most difficult problems which confront any artist when he attempts to capture within the limits of an art form the reality which is man—the problem of basing his work on some manifestation of human "thought that as the wind is free." And Sophocles all but acts as prophet to the many and varied forms which this artistic difficulty will produce when he sings that man is "all-fertile in resource, resourceless never."

______________________________
The Sophoclean metaphor which catches up thought and wind into a single complex brings to mind those medieval icons which depict the winds as blustery and full-cheeked gentlemen strongly suggestive of cloud formations. The relationship, of course, between the two devices is truly of the slimmest, but they jointly suggest certain problems which face any artist who addresses a particular art form, be it poetry, painting, sculpture, or--and these especially--narration or drama. Art is, despite the currency of the term abstract, to some extent always concrete, limiting, tangible. What Mark Schorer says of fiction can be extended to all the arts. "Fiction, we propose, is solid, is formal, is selective."2 On the other hand, much of natural and most of human, activity is nonlimiting, nontangible, in short, nonobjective. The artist's basic task then is to reconcile irreconcilables, to fix, at least for an instant, boundaries for the boundless; to give form to the formless; to create concrete counterparts for the irretrievably abstract. Some of the aspects of this labor are solved by the very act of selecting an art form; others, however, are compounded by that very selection.

The painter, for instance, who selects a canvas of a given size has by that act set limits to limitless space, although he may, as did the painters of the Renaissance, feel that the limits are too binding and immediately set out to enlarge them through

such devices as perspective. Actually, viewed from one angle, the entire history of painting since the Renaissance can be told as the struggle of the artist to extend the spatial restrictions imposed by the very selection of his medium. Segfried Giedion in his monumental and aptly titled work, *Space, Time and Architecture*, attempts just such a historical study in terms of architecture. In fact, when considering the problem of space in the plastic arts, we may be forced to a strange conclusion: the nature of the spatial arts constrains those working in them to attack reality just at that point where the art form is most restrictive—in the area of space. This paradox, in appropriately altered form, can be extended to all arts.

Thus the poet, dealing most often with nonverbal matter, directs a great portion of his energy to extending the frontiers of the words and rhythms which define his peculiar art. In like manner the musician is often at odds with the very bars and measures which he cherishes most. The ways of this paradox are devious, and its resolutions, usually only partially successful, are as numerous as the possessors of the "all-fertile" human resource, but as Sophocles's metaphor and the medieval geographer's rendering of the winds suggest, the solutions have a certain common ground, a certain affinity. Each attempts to lay open the puzzle through some fashion of alternate- or even anti-reality, to substitute, as it were, some type of artistic pattern for the general disorder of reality, and consequently to solve the difficulty by partially or completely ignoring the real world. At the risk of oversimplification,
these patterns may, as a whole, be encompassed by the critical term "artistic convention."

Conventions and their uses often become the key to a given art form, for the manner in which an artist chooses to counter-attack, that is, to ignore or conventionalize, reality can usually provide us with the basic clue to what the artist wishes to say about man in the universe. Moreover, while there are other avenues of approach open to the critical mind, the way to art through its conventions may often be the most fruitful way. As H. D. F. Kitto argues, and there are many to support his claim, there is no dividing of form and meaning. The two are functions of one another. The former may be found only through the latter; the latter will usually suggest and dictate the former.

Now there is a certain truth in arguing that "a rose is a rose," but such an argument is, after all, nought but an admission that the work of art has left us with nothing to say. It is only by careful and close analysis that we are able to understand and demonstrate that a play by Shakespeare is superior to one by Pinero, and analysis implies a study of meanings, intentions, and, above all, conventions of form and structure—conceived and conceivable. Moreover, even as it is possible to study and understand conventional uses within a given work of art, it is also possible to extract these from several works within a particular period in order to compare them

---

to each other and to trends in the era as a whole.

Nothing will be gained by denying that some violence is necessarily done to the single work by disturbing its inherent unity, but such violence is justified if insight can be gained into the total corpus of a given period. Ultimately, what damage is done to the single work will be more than compensated for by our gaining a greatly enriched understanding of the individual work when the so rudely separated and studied part is once more returned to its rightful whole. It is with this hope of an improved understanding that our attention will presently be brought to bear on a particular artistic convention in a given period of creative activity.

The period which will be the ultimate focus of our attention will be that era which extends from the last quarter of the 19th-century to the present day, the era which we have roughly termed "modern." The convention which will be studied is that of point of view, in particular the peculiarly modern interest in first-person subjective point of view, an interest which arose out of a philosophical shift from absolutism to relativism, from rational objectivity to irrational subjectivity. Prior to the modern period, artists, like the rest of humanity, assumed that all men took the same general view of reality. Individual differences were, of course, recognized, but these were assumed to be minor variations within an unchanging over-all pattern. Thus, paintings were executed to be observed by the universal viewer from the universal viewpoint. Stories, dramatic and narrative, were
presented omnisciently. With the coming of modern relativism, all
this was changed. Each post of observation was understood to be
decidedly different; each was considered equally valid. To the
painter this meant an abandonment of perspective: to the writer,
a discovery of new narrative means to isolate and give emphasis
to individual subjectivity as opposed to universal objectivity.
In other words, there was a great effort made to perfect and
exploit the various possibilities of point of view. It is this
effort, as it manifests itself in modern drama, which forms the
basic matter of this study.

Before an investigation of point of view in the modern drama
is undertaken, however, it will first be necessary to isolate the
convention historically and artistically in order to establish in a
general manner its nature and importance. To do this, let us return
to Sophocles and the problem suggested by his figure, "thought that
as the wind is free."

That paradox which we have been discussing—i.e., an art
form seems to focus the activity of the artist on the very area in
which he is most limited—centers itself especially in the related
arts of narrative and drama near to, or in the very center of, the
fugitive phenomenon of human thought. In both narration and drama,
the principal tools of comment are human character and human action.
The writer, be he author of novel or epic, classical tragedy or
modern melodrama, must make his major statements in terms of these
two elements. Now the common source of both character and action—
indeed their fountainhead—is the hidden, motivating thought, which
as Sophocles suggests, is as elusive as the wind. To be precise, we may say that it is neither character nor action, but that it may manifest itself as one or both of these. Thus, one of the major problems of the playwright and the narrative artist is not only to depict character and action but also to reveal or suggest the thought which lies both beneath and beyond these two literary elements. In short, the author must devise a convention which will be an acceptable vehicle, i.e., counterpart or substitute, for the reality which is thought.

The attempts to meet the challenge of presenting thought in a literary art are sometimes facile, sometimes subtle, sometimes heavy-handed, but almost always interesting, for among all the structural problems this is the one which as Ellis-Fermor says "goes near the roots and is closely linked with many others."^4 Stated in a different manner, all narrative and dramatic art is ultimately centered on the inner thoughts of the characters, those things which form character and prompt decisions and external actions, and it is in the area of thought that the writer is most restricted; to this restricted space he bends his inventive efforts in an attempt to open it as perspective opened the interior space of a Renaissance painting.

As early as the fifth-century B. C., the problem of hidden thought was faced and partially solved by the Greek tragedians in

their reworking of an existing convention and in their particular attitude toward the playhouse, an attitude which was to lose ground during the succeeding centuries. When the Greek playwright turned his attention to matters psychic, he found one ready instrument for his needs in the chorus, which had survived from an earlier, more ritualistic period. Thus, among its many burdens, the chorus was also asked to function, from time to time, as a "reflector" of the moods or thoughts of the characters. Sometimes this was done by having the chorus act as a confidant, one who obtains moods or motivations by questioning actions or simply by acting as an available listener to one who wishes to complain or explain. Or again, in a more ritualized variant of the convention, the chorus may directly or indirectly take up the unspoken thoughts of the character. This technique is most frequently employed by Euripides, though it may be found in several isolated instances in the work of Sophocles, and its use is especially apparent in the Orestia of Aeschylus. An excellent example of Euripides's method may be seen in the choral ode which follows Medea's sending of her children, with their fatal gift, to the new bride of Jason. Though the chorus ostensibly comments only on the situation, the direction taken is obviously that of the silent thoughts of Medea herself.

A second device used by all three of the ancient tragedians was the direct public address, a device which grew out of the very nature of the Greek theatre. A theatre, springing from religious ritual and still lingering within the shadow of that ritual, may allow its characters certain formalized activities. Apparently,
one of these permissible activities was direct public address to the audience. In fact, not only was this device permissible, it seems to have been expected as one of the early speeches of the central character; usually, it was the first speech he delivered. The early speeches of Oedipus, Creon, and Clytemnestra in the Oedipus, the Antigone, and the Agamemnon stand as examples of this practice. In these direct addresses to the audience—or through the chorus to the audience—the speaker is allowed to cover some or all of the expository matter and to disclose to the audience certain essential traits of his character. In line with the latter privilege, he sometimes articulates what would normally be considered unspoken or unspeakable thought. This convention of direct public address is heavily stylized, and it could well be that a concentrated study of each of these speeches might lead to a discovery of certain principles governing the use of this device.

For one thing, it is apparent, even to the casual observer, that the practice is intimately related to the Athenian’s passionate interest in written and spoken rhetoric, and the speeches seem to conform closely to the then prevailing rhetorical theories.

A variant of the public address technique is used by Euripides in such plays as Medea. In the latter play, perhaps in an attempt to gain greater verisimilitude—Euripides has been accused of this—the playwright allows us to examine the hidden thoughts of Medea through a series of short, off-stage soliloquies which the audience overhears. This technique of the overheard
soliloquy seems to mark the extent of the Greek experimentation with the then existing conventions, though it is possible that in such a play as *Medea*, Euripides may well be striking out in a new direction, a direction which would have to wait some twenty-four centuries before it was again to be single-mindedly followed.

When, after the demise of ancient drama, the Western theatre was reborn on the altars of medieval churches, it was inevitable that its forms and conventions would be influenced, as was the classic drama, by the philosophic and aesthetic climate of its age, and thus it is not surprising to discover medieval playwrights surrendering to that overwhelming need of the Middle Ages to thicken all symbolism to the point of personification. Developing concurrently with the tendency toward personification was a whole body of dramatic literature which completely rejected the external world and concentrated on the struggles within the soul of man. The medieval playwright, at least in the moralities, not only was interested in revealing internal psychic processes, he was, above all, concerned with dramatizing them through conventions heavily dependent upon the uses of personification. Accordingly, in such plays as *Everyman* the human soul became a battle ground on which the various aspects of human personality waged a constant war. Each of these aspects were abstracted and universalized into a living entity. Thus, Man talked to and argued with his own Knowledge. In essence, what the medieval playwright did was to attempt to reveal inner conflict by compartmentalizing the human personality, and, for the most part, broadly dividing it into those
parts which recognized the beauty of doing good and those parts which
hungered after evil. Just how extensive this division and sub-
division became can be seen in *The Castle of Perseverance* where
man's intelligence becomes the good and the bad angels, and where
man's basic drives are first dichotomized into virtues and sins,
and then subdivided into seven of each type. All sixteen of these
personifications walk the stage along with man, and in addition to
such abstractions as World, Confession, Penance, Death, and Truth.

Together with heavy use of personification as a means of
rendering thought, there was also in the medieval drama, as in
the classical drama, some use of the soliloquy, but it was not
until the advent of the English Renaissance that the full potential
of the soliloquy and its sister device, the aside, was realized.
In addition to these two conventions, the Elizabethan dramatists
also brought to full bloom a device found wherever dramatic
poetry is practiced—imagery. Of these three means of presenting
unspoken thought—the aside, the soliloquy, and imagery—the latter
is probably the least dramatic and is most appealing when it is most
subtle. Unfortunately, it is just at this point that it loses
its effectiveness in the theatre. Consequently, despite the preva-
ience of a latter-day intellectual game, that of picking to pieces
the uses of imagery by Shakespeare and other Elizabethans, we must
be extremely careful not to attribute to imagery more weight than
it can carry. In poetry and closet drama it may reign supreme,
but in any work intended for the theatre, imagery must be counted
as less important and less effective than the aside, the soliloquy, or even the stage setting as a means of conveying ideas, especially when those ideas remain as unexpressed motives. With this reservation, it is still possible to say that imagery often functioned as an invaluable vehicle for rendering unspoken thoughts in Elizabethan drama. For instance, in *Henry V*, where the imagery throughout is fairly obvious, the various changes in Henry's underlying mood can be noted by the changes in the figures of his speech. Thus, as he begins his conversation with Princess Katharine, his images, since he still views her as something akin to a prize of war, are for the most part warlike.

If I could win a lady at leap-frog, or vaulting into my saddle with my armour on my back, under the correction of bragging be it spoken, I should quickly leap into a wife.

When, however, the princess has not responded to his warlike advances, when she has refused to be impressed by his soldierly attributes, and when, in fine, Harry has come to realize that he must meet her on more courtly terms, the King's imagery becomes what for Henry can only be described as most unmanly.

No, Kate? I will tell thee in French, which I am sure will hang upon my tongue like a newly married wife about her husband's neck, hardly to be shook off.

But even such obvious imagistic changes as are found above are likely to go unnoticed in the theatre, so that modern interest in Shakespearian imagery notwithstanding, it was truly in the aside and especially in the soliloquy that Elizabethan dramatists achieved consummate conventional forms. As Ellis-Fermor says:
But at its finest, as at the height of the Elizabethan period, the soliloquy, by its rapid and profound revelation of thought and passion, serves the very ends of drama. It reveals what we could not otherwise divine of the depths of the speaker's mind, compressing into some twenty lines of vivid illumination what might else have taken the better part of an act to convey.\(^5\)

The aside served, to a lesser degree, much the same function as the soliloquy, with the added advantage of allowing the character to discover to the audience his secret thoughts while he was surrounded by other characters who, during the aside, became conveniently deaf. The richness of psychological texture and humor to be obtained by an effective use of the aside may be seen in the famous dialogue between the Jew of Malta and Lodowick, a suitor of his daughter.

An interesting feature of the Elizabethan aside and soliloquy is that while they were obviously directed at the audience, they still were not formal public speeches. That is, they remained, for the most part, within the framework of the action taking place on the stage. There were, however, numerous exceptions to this practice. Richard III, for instance, can hardly be telling himself he is a villain. He is obviously, in his opening speech, addressing the audience in direct public speech; as in the opening speech of Oedipus, Richard is functioning much more as an orator than as a character in the play. This aspect of the aside and the soliloquy became more and more popular as the Renaissance exchanged its

\(^5\)Ibid., p. 105.
romantic tendencies for more neo-classic ones. By the time of the triumph of Restoration comedy in England, the twin conventions of the aside and the soliloquy were fast assuming the shape of direct public address to the audience, the shape which they had originally taken in the Greek drama.

With the change in the formal direction of the two devices came also a change in their uses. Throughout the late 18th- and 19th-centuries, the aside and the soliloquy tended increasingly to function as a means of conveying exposition and as a way of preparing for plot complications, rather than as vehicles for presenting hidden moods and motives. This transformation in function held true throughout the 19th-century and by the third quarter of that era, the two devices remained in English and continental drama only as methods which allowed lazy or inept playwrights to handle situations which would have taken some skill to dramatize effectively. In short, during the 19th-century, the aside and the soliloquy served only to provide the playwright with a line of retreat into the narrative.

Historically, from 5th-century Athens to 19th-century Europe, the basic approach to unspoken thought, regardless of the conventions used, was much the same. No matter who the character, be he Claudius, Oedipus, Everyman, or Hamlet, the audience understood that the playwright expected his viewers to see beyond the thoughts of the individual characters to the play as a whole action. The audience realized that back of the insight of a given character lay matters which may be unperceived by the individual, but which are perfectly apparent to the audience, and these were meant to be so. Over the
whole of the dramatic action lay the shadow of great and absolute
verities of which only the audience and the playwright were aware.
In accordance with this approach, the playwright was granted the
ability to select at will the hidden thoughts of as many characters
as he wished. This license was granted with special generosity to
the Elizabethan playwright. Thus that artist was able to create
an intensely dramatic scene in which each character revealed, and
acted on, his own insight, while the audience saw and understood
both individual viewpoints and the greater universe which lay beyond.
An example of such a scene is the chapel scene of *Hamlet*.

As this scene opens, we learn from Claudius's soliloquy that
he cannot bring himself to pray, though outwardly he appears to be
doing so. Thus, Claudius, if killed now, is a prime candidate for
hell. However, we immediately learn from Hamlet's soliloquy that
the Prince's insight has failed him, for Hamlet believes the King
to be praying. And so Claudius is saved. The drama in the scene
lies in the irony revealed by juxtaposing the silent thoughts of
each character. As far as external action goes, the scene is static
enough to satisfy the most fervent wishes of Maeterlinck. The most
important point to be made about the scene, however, is not that the
audience is allowed to perceive the thoughts of both characters but
that the audience is aware throughout that it is to comprehend the
revealed thought only in terms of the greater action of the scene and
the total action of the play. From the drama of the Greeks to the
last quarter of the 19th-century, the dominant attitude toward the
rendering of thought and concealed motives was the attitude exemplified
in the above scene, the attitude which may best be described as
absolute. That is, the individual's motives were always placed against the background of great moral and ethical values. But as far back as the Greek playwright Euripides, there were indications that another, subtly but significantly different approach was possible.

H. D. F. Kitto in his *Greek Tragedy* has suggested that, in such works as Medea, Euripides was not writing classical tragedy at all, but was composing what in modern idiom would be called a psychological drama. Medea, for instance, is not to be viewed as a character, but as a particular state of mind and soul. She might even be considered a personification, much as the sin of envy was personified in the medieval morality play. It is difficult to argue with Kitto on this point, for when his premise is granted, many of the puzzles of the play resolve themselves. The *deus ex machina* at the end, for example, becomes not mere trickery, but a meaningful necessity, for if Medea is the passion of jealousy, she truly belongs to the total universe and to the gods, and cannot suffer herself to be destroyed by man. More important than this, however, is the solution which Kitto's theory provides for the problem of Jason. It is a common complaint, even among students in a freshman play reading course, that it hardly seems possible that such a sanguine woman as Medea could have committed so many horrible deeds

---

In the past and contemplated such unnatural murder in the present solely for the love of such a spineless, colorless man as Jason. And, indeed, it does seem improbable if we approach Medea in the traditional manner, but if we accept Kitto's suggestion and follow it to its conclusion, we find that the Jason puzzle no longer exists. For Jason exists only in Medea's mind, and Medea is naught but ruthless jealousy, made shocking by human suffering but not limited by human logic.

To explain, Euripides was actually writing, perhaps for the first time in literary history, a truly modern psychological work, and he was using as his basic technical device a convention which we have earlier referred to as first-person subjective point of view. In Medea we have a play which does not immediately allow the audience to see the characters interacting against the backdrop of a larger action; we have in Medea a play which permits the audience only to see the characters against the background of Medea's passion. That is, we see Jason only from Medea's point of view. Considering the state of her mind, it is little wonder that the hated man appears as stupid and insipid.

This method of rendering soul states, this filling of the stage with a single viewpoint, which, as it were, lays a psychic smoke screen between the objective action and the audience, was from time to time to be tinkered with in the centuries of literary effort which followed the work of Euripides, but it was not again to be wholeheartedly pursued until late in the 19th-century. There may be some validity in arguing that the medieval moralities were, after a
fashion, examples of the use of this method, and, of course, there is some affinity between the two. There may even have been, though it would be difficult to prove, some attempt on the part of the medieval playwright to employ variations of point of view, but it could hardly have been serious or extended effort, for the important point in the moralities is that the audience be able to comprehend the actions of man in relation to the actions of the absolute laws of God and church. In other words, the audience was expected to understand the actions of the individual from the viewpoint of the great moral laws, not to understand the laws from the viewpoint of the individual.

A basic change in artistic philosophy was ultimately to reverse this situation, but the approach of the medieval playwright, as has been noted earlier, was to continue as the prevailing attitude toward the individual ego throughout the 16th, 17th, 18th, and most of the 19th-centuries. There are, of course, numerous isolated examples of a more modern approach to point of view. There is, for instance, the exciting banquet scene in Macbeth, which is only to be understood as a direct rendering, for that scene at least, of the point of view of a single individual—Macbeth—to the exclusion of all others. But the scene once over, the action returns to a more universal objectivity, and the scene becomes, in the totality of the drama, a sort of dramatized soliloquy, an involved variation of the same technique earlier applied in the "Is this a dagger" speech.

Samuel Richardson, the first English novelist, is another
example of those men who serve as forerunners to the modern interest in subjective points of view. Casting about for a means to tell his stories, Richardson hit upon the epistolary method, an approach which forced him to present his narrative from a point of reference quite close to the viewpoints of the characters themselves. Richardson's technique so appealed to Coleridge that according to Leon Edel the great romantic poet was moved to comment that Richardson demonstrated "the morbid consciousness of every thought and feeling in the whole flux and reflux of the mind, in short its self-involution and dream-like continuity."7 From our present vantage point, it hardly seems that Richardson's technique quite accomplished what Coleridge thinks it did, but we must make allowances for the extravagance of Romantic criticism.

What Coleridge did recognize was that Richardson's method was a new direction, and a very important one. But its importance aside, it was in advance of the time when a shift in philosophy would prompt widespread exploitation of his new method. The age of Richardson was the Age of Reason, and Reason was more interested in the final forms and results of thought than in the processes by which the final forms were reached. Because of this, the age was interested, as no other has been, in the general not the particular. Racine's universalized men and women were more esteemed than Shakespeare's somewhat more individualized people. The ideal of all, in science as in

literature, was not analysis but synthesis, and, thus, the novelists and playwrights, in the main, tended away from investigations of idiosyncrasies. Like Moliere, they were interested in extracting the essence of a character, his dominant trait, that universal quality which he shared with all men, or at the very least with all men of his type.

As the Age of Reason gave way to the onslaughts of the Romantic Revolution, the playwright, while he continued to use the soliloquy frequently and the aside excessively, veered more and more in the direction of melodrama, and consequently shunned—indeed, abhorred—any extensive treatment of psychic depths. The fervor of the steadily growing romantic philosophy and the popularization and vulgarization of the theatre gave additional impetus to the melodrama as the chief dramatic mode. The triumph of romantic realism and the pièce bien faite was approaching, and what need had a dramatist of intrigue with thought or motivation? In the melodrama then, the aside and soliloquy became monologues in the true sense, direct public addresses to the audience which provided rapid exposition or preparation for plot complications.

As the drama after the Age of Reason drifted more and more into melodrama, the novel steadily gained respect as a literary form, but though the novel soon became one of the chief literary media of the Age of Romanticism, its practitioners stubbornly refused to relinquish the tradition of the omniscient author, the author who through the grace of neoclassic dispensation was able to see all and tell all. Moreover, the novelists had good reason for
their stand. Theirs was a new genre, freed from the temporal and spatial restrictions of the stage, flexible enough to allow the omniscient author an almost unlimited choice of approaches and subjects. Even after the Romantic Movement had completely eliminated the philosophic demand for omniscience on the part of the narrator, the 19th-century novelists continued to feel no need to consider a new convention. Why should they? The had not yet completely realized the full potential of the old.

It is true that there were some steps taken in the direction suggested by Richardson. There was even some dalliance with the presentation of entire stories through the first-person, such a presentation as is found in David Copperfield. But the first-person as Dickens and others presented it was more objective than subjective. As Percy Lubbock observes: "David offers a pair of eyes and a memory, nothing further is demanded of him." In other words, David's vision is a universal vision. It might belong to anyone. Moreover, behind that vision, and never very far away, was the more omniscient perception of Dickens himself. In short, the essential address was still that of the omniscient author, but little circumscribed by the first-person technique. But such flirting with first-person objective as we find in David Copperfield and kindred works must be considered more as an attempt to add variety to a slightly stale approach than as an indication that a new

---

development was at hand. Any really significantly different method of narration, either in the novel or in the drama, had to wait until a drastic philosophic change had occurred, and that change was long in coming.

Universally held beliefs yield slowly, if ever, to changes. The Romantic Movement had succeeded in overthrowing reason and in establishing passion as a key to human activity. This revolution had seriously weakened the foundations of a Western philosophy which had remained relatively intact since the late Middle Ages, a philosophy based on Aristotelian ideals of synthesis, a philosophy which had reached its latest apogee in Augustan England and Baroque France. But however weakened its foundations, its superstructure stood for more than a century. If great passion must be more highly esteemed than clear reasoning, so be it. But even great passion must be synthesized into its ideal counterpart, its "ideal grace." Thus, Thackeray may be free to scratch about in the hidden corners of Becky's soul, but he is also equally free, as the author, to comment on her relation to more ideal standards. Not only is Thackeray free to do this, but as Lubbock says, he takes a "positively willful pleasure" in doing so. There are even times when Thackeray will "boast of his own independence, insisting in so many words on his freedom to say what he pleases about his men and women and to make them behave as he will." 9

9Ibid., pp. 87-88.
But even as Thackeray wrote there were forces forming which were ultimately to make a complete shambles of the philosophy of absolutism upon which Thackeray rested his argument for the free manipulation of his men and women. These forces, many of which had been created and all of which had been incubated by the Romantic Revolution, were, in the last quarter of the 19th-century, to cause a complete transformation in the thinking of Western Culture. They were forces which would find their culmination and finest expression in a new generation of artists and philosophers, in such men as Ibsen, Zola, Flaubert, Strindberg, Freud, Nietzsche, and Henry and William James. These were the men who saw a new vision of the world, and it was they who gave a new direction and impetus to the dying romanticism of the 19th-century.

Different as these men were from one another, they all had a common romantic heritage and from it they fashioned a new and distinctly modern philosophy. To ferret out and discover the origins of those concepts which formed the bases for their new philosophy would be an intriguing study, but one which is certainly too vast to be attempted herein. It is more to the point at hand to recognize that by the final quarter of the 19th-century a significant mutation in romantic thought was observable. Out of such things as the increasing scientific interest in energy systems; out of the evolutionary theories of the natural sciences; out of the general scientific concern with the "how?" instead of the "why?"; out of the Positivism of Comte and the Individualism of John Stuart Mill, out of these concepts and the trends which produced them, the
artists and philosophers of the late 19th-century built a new, modern world view.¹⁰

As the 19th-century drew toward its final quarter, the romantic mind felt it had earned a right to be a bit smug. In no small measure it had aided the creation and growth of modern democracy. It had succeeded in freeing the arts from the oft-times pointless restraints of neoclassicism. It had even, albeit not always with good grace, seen the industrial revolution through to its accomplishment, and it now had the pleasure of watching the new sciences show man the way to "progress" and to God's kingdom on earth. It was a time to be pleased. It was even a time to be sentimental. Despite certain signs to the contrary, it was even a time to cry out that God was in his heaven and all was right with the world. But such a declaration might indicate a trifle too much protestation. The sentimentality of the time might well be an attempt to gloss over a deeper unrest. Both suppositions appear to be true. For the preaching about the well-being of the world and the sentimental approach to the individual seem to have been futile efforts to avoid the truth of the matter: romanticism had passed its first rush; it had worn itself out, become decadent. The individual man, having gained steadily in importance as a social entity through the breakdown of absolute standards, demanded the increased

respect possible to one who could be regarded both as a social and
a scientific phenomenon. He wished to be analyzed along with the
other natural forces and energies. In its decadence the age had
grown morose and turned in upon itself.

This was the atmosphere in which such men as Nietzsche and
Zola wrote and thought. It was in this climate of strong intro­
spection that they were prompted to develop their sacred reverence
for the individual into what has been called the "cult of the ego."11
Essentially this meant that truth as they saw it was an irrational,
subjective phenomenon. Truth was in Nietzschean terms, Dionysian
not Apollonian. In other words, the individual ego did not exist
in the world; the world existed in and for the ego. Stated in terms
of the arts, the cult of the ego invites the following comparison with
more classical standards: Classicism's genius lay in the artist's
ability to make the subject serve the object; modern romanticism's
genius lies in the artist's subordination of the object to the
subject.

This passionate interest in the worth and value of the indi­
vidual soul went hand in hand with yet another important tenet of
late 19th-century thought--the belief in a relative moral standard.
The absolute morality of an earlier day, which throughout the century
had been steadily losing in importance, was now entirely discarded by
many intellectuals, and in its place was set a sliding yardstick

11 Laurence LeSage, "Jean Giraudoux, Surrealism and the
German Romantic Ideal," Illinois Studies in Language and Literature,
XXXVI, No. 3 (1952).
of values which changed with each new individual and each new set of circumstances.

With the triumph of individualism and relativism, with the exchange of universal values for pragmatic and utilitarian ones, with the total retreat from absolutism to empiricism causing, among other things, the change to a more scientifically and individually centered psychology, it is not strange to note that the writers of the late 19th-century, particularly the novelists, became more and more interested in the "how?" and less and less interested in the "why?" This new quasi-scientific interest in individuals as energy systems called forth in the first instance the laboratory objectivity of Zola's third-person objective approach. But it was not long before the restrictions of this objectivity became oppressive to those who felt that it afforded them little opportunity to handle what had become for them the chief problem of the novelist—that of describing as completely as possible the flux and reflux, the "Newtonian psyche," as it were, of the individual ego in a relative world.

To solve this problem, the novelist must discover some means of presenting the pure and untouched center of the ego. This approach is especially necessary if the underlying philosophy is relativism. If an absolute morality is no longer to be held in high regard, then we must, in order to comprehend individual moral decisions, understand them as the individual understands them. To do this, we must see the world from the same posture as he sees the world. In fine, we must locate ourselves within the individual, and, by placing ourselves there, we automatically force ourselves into seeing and feeling only from his point of view, not from our own or
from that of an omniscient author. We may, of course, catch some knowledge of the greater action in which the individual operates, but we can see only that aspect of the greater action that the private viewpoint allows. As Frederick J. Hoffman observes, "the control which a point of view exercises upon the probabilities of action immensely and splendidly qualifies our awareness of them." It is true, of course, that once away from close identification with the viewpoint of the central consciousness of the story, our own conclusions about the action may be different, more intelligent even, but on the surface, at least, we can have no more knowledge of the whole action than that possessed by the character whose insight we are sharing.

This then is the new method, the new structural approach through first-person subjective point of view. The reader or listener is no longer permitted to catch up the total action in the same fashion that he could in the Hamlet-Claudius scene. How much he is able to see beyond the individual point of view of a given character, how much he is able to judge for himself will depend upon the sensitivity of his intelligence and the extent to which the author has lent himself to the ideals of relativism. In the main, the reader's interest is usually deliberately turned from universal moral issues and becomes fixed instead on the motions of the individual soul. More often than not, there is little effort

---

made to relate the individual to any fixed points of reference, for the author seeks a response rising more from the reader's empathy than from his intellectual sympathy.

The new method, found in tentative experiments throughout the history of Western literature from the plays of Euripides to the novels of Flaubert, was firmly established as the most important structural concern of the modern novel by the American author Henry James. As Hoffman remarks, "The greatest contribution of James to modern fiction is his discussion and use of what he has variously called the 'large lucid reflector' and the 'central consciousness.' Thus the range of the novel's donnee is seen in terms of the character who provides its point of view."13 James himself described his method in terms of his novel Roderick Hudson as the location of the "centre of interest throughout Roderick...in Roland Mallet's consciousness, and the drama is the very drama of that consciousness."14 Percy Lubbock describes the Jamesian technique in terms more reminiscent of the science of modern physics when he says: "we watch the thought itself, the hidden thing, as it twists to and fro in his brain--watch it without any other aid to understanding but such as its own manner of bearing may supply."15

13Ibid., p. 4-5.
As Lubbock suggests, James was attempting to tell the "how?" not the "why?" of his characters, and yet ingrained beliefs die so hard that his famous brother William, a most militant relativist, despaired of understanding Henry's later work and complained that in Wings of the Dove Henry had violated the first precept of storytelling, that is to tell it. But how could Henry himself tell the story? According to both his and William's philosophy, the story was relative to the viewpoints of the characters caught within the action of the tale. It was not one story, but many. Select one character, the story was a melodrama; select another, the tale was a bitter tragedy.

As James began to experiment with his new convention, he found more and more variety inherent in it. At first, as in Portrait of a Lady, he limited himself merely to placing emphasis on Isabel through empathic narration. He described his technique in Portrait as the placing of the "centre of the subject in the young woman's own consciousness."

Stick to that—for the centre; put the heaviest weight into that scale, which will so largely be the scale of her relation to herself, and this relation needn't fear to be too limited. Place meanwhile in the other scale the lighter weight...press least hard, in short, on the consciousness of your heroine's satellites, especially the male; make it an interest contributive only to the greater one.16

16James, op. cit., p. 51.
As can be seen, what James was deliberately striving for was that flux, reflux, and self-involution of his heroine's mind which Coleridge claimed Richardson had achieved. But James was going about his task with infinite caution. While placing the heaviest weight into Isabel's scale, he was reserving for himself the right to warn his reader each time he came to load that scale. He still narrated to some extent, omnisciently; we are notified about what Isabel thought; we rarely see the thought itself without authorial comment.

Presently James was to become bolder. In Portrait we know what Warburton and Ralph are like, not because Isabel tells us, but because James does. In The Turn of the Screw we have a total study in point of view. We know nothing about the characters except that which we are able to glean from the limited perception of the Governess. In fact, so rigorously does James hold himself to the viewpoint of the Governess, that a violent critical controversy is still being waged about what actually took place in the action of the novel.17

Always an experimenter, James was not content to remain within the bounds of such works as The Turn of the Screw and What Masie Knew. He began to flirt with a number of complications and complexities indigenous to his method. In Wings of the Dove, for instance, he presented not one but multiple points of view, chief among which were

17 For an interesting comparison of critical opinion on Turn of the Screw see Schorer, op. cit., pp. 563-606.
those of Milly Theale and Merton Densher. Each point of view served as a reflector of the others, and all served as reflectors of the joint action shared by every character. As to the author, James stood aloof and above, never intruding. This technique certainly has its points of similarity to the multiple soliloquizing of the Elizabethans, the difference again being one of a shift in emphasis caused by a change in underlying philosophy. Elizabethan characters were seen in relation to the whole action. Jamesian action was seen only in relation to the characters. James's combination of inter­acting points of view allowed him to gain the same irony in Wings as Shakespeare had obtained in Othello by playing the point of view of Iago against that of Othello, but James's method also allowed him to gain the further end of using action as a means of access to character, as a means of making a relativistic statement.

As has been pointed out earlier, James's experiments with first-person point of view came at the end of a long Romantic Move­ment. As the 19th-century drew to a close, the romantic mind, as might be expected after almost a century of focus on human indi­viduality and passion, became more and more morbid and began to involute excessively. The time was, as Leon Edel terms it, a time of inward turning, and James's work was but one milestone in that process of self-involution. The modern literary convention of point of view may, perhaps, have remained where James found it, had it not

---

18Edel, op. cit., p. 41 f.
been for the growth of two other literary phenomena—Freudian psychology and the Symbolist movement. James, of course, was not directly related to either, but his work is a significant example of the trends which produced the two movements—specifically, a relativistic philosophy and an interest in the workings of the mind operating in no larger sphere of action than the mind itself.

James, as he used point of view, was to give almost equal weight to external and internal action. Perhaps the major reason for this split in emphasis was James's own philosophy, best embodied in his favorite work—consciousness. In short, James was still enough of a traditional moralist to remain throughout his life a champion of human awareness. He was most interested in the human mind from the time the thought took phrasable shape until the time it reacted to external pressures, and, of course, the reverse of that process. He lacked both the philosophic need and desire to pursue the mind's involutions any deeper than the level of intelligent awareness. As Hoffman tells us, "James's concern with fiction was preeminently a moral concern; he insisted upon the highest degree of cultivation and sophistication in the characters who were the central consciousnesses of his novels. A crisis had therefore to be a moral crisis; and the decision taken by his character was therefore not forced upon him but arrived at after a careful and often attenuated moral concern over it."¹⁹

¹⁹Hoffman, op. cit., p. 9.
Moreover, had James's philosophic posture been slightly different, it is doubtful that he would have proceeded much farther in the development of his method. He lacked the knowledge and he lacked the tools. The one was to come with Freudian psychology; the other, the tools, were to be provided principally by the Symbolists, who ultimately came to seek a new and only partially conscious means of presenting human thought. Essentially, human thinking, as seem by the Symbolists, was a nonorderly process. So inextricably united was it, in each of its phases, with external and remembered experiences, that it could only roughly be approximated in language and then only by a series of loosely related concrete instances. An artist was henceforth to walk as Ezra Pound later said "in fear of abstraction"; and he was to use what T. S. Eliot was later to call "the objective correlative," some sort of concretion which "captured an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time." In short, the artist was to recognize the essential irrationality (or more precisely nonlogicality) of the human mind and he was to capture and represent this' by telling his tales, writing his poems, making his statements in symbols. The symbolists were, in fact, taking the first of modernism's steps towards the type of artistic and poetic freedom which Jacques Maritain describes as a three-fold process of freedom from "nature and the forms of nature," freedom from and "transformation of rational language," and,
finally, freedom to enter the "regions of obscurity."\textsuperscript{20}

This is not to say that Henry James did not use symbols, for he used them lavishly, but withal he employed them as writers of all ages have used them. They were important, but they were not the core of his work, and when he did use them, they were not the final end of his work. There is no denying that the dove symbol is made to labor long and hard in \textit{Wings of the Dove}, but behind it lay the conscious thinking of Milly, Kate and Densher; behind it lay some manner of orderly thought process, some manner of abstraction in the minds of each of the characters who were in any way caught up in the symbol. That the dove symbol became a way of making statements in the novel is true, but it is not the only nor the most important way. Always there was the consciousness; there was, for instance, Densher consciously working out the meaning, for him, of Milly's death and sacrifice, proceeding in his mind through many of the abstractions of which the Symbolists were to walk in dread. James may not have been a profound philosopher, but it is unfair to say of him as does T. S. Eliot that he had a mind so fine no idea ever violated it. Eliot's evaluation notwithstanding, we may

say that with James, as with any other presymbolist writer, the symbols used issued from the idea, the abstraction, were a partial manifestation of it, and were ultimately encompassed by it. In symbolist literature, the symbol is the abstraction; it exists as greater than the abstraction, and it is the end towards which the abstraction irresistibly moves.

Despite their oversimplification and the narrowness of their approach, the Symbolists had hold of not a little truth, and they had not long to wait in order to find their beliefs "scientifically" justified by the students of the new psychology. As early as 1890, William James recognized that beneath any orderly thought process lay a strata of less orderly thought—awarenesses which bubbled up from some deep well of human perception or memory and which, in their original form, had no resemblance to what is called reason. They came up, unbidden, from the sub-and unconscious, and if they were not acted upon in some way by the organizing intelligence, returned to whence they had come. This phenomenon William James named the "stream of consciousness," implying by the very metaphor he selected that the thought was in constant flux, uncontrollable, and organizable only by labored effort. In other words, the phenomenon which William James identified as the stream of consciousness is an "apparently unorganized succession of items connected on the grounds of association." In short it is "the sequence of idea
and image in the mind."\(^{21}\) This aspect of the mind was, of course, recognized by the Elizabethans in such renderings of the flow of thought as those found in the mad scenes of Ophelia or Lady Macbeth. But the phenomenon was conventionally used chiefly to portray madness, or states of mind bordering on insanity. When a sane character thought, he thought in coordinated phrases as does Macbeth or Brutus. It was not until the late 19th-century that the divine state of madness and its corresponding stream of thought became the possession of every little humdrum merchant who wandered the streets.

Before the century had turned, Freud was to study the attitudes of some hysterical individuals, and, consciously or not, compound his theories with that of the stream of consciousness and those of the Symbolists, and come up with a new proposition concerning human behavior, a proposition based upon the symbolic manifestations of human desires as discovered in the symbolism occurring in the waking, and particularly in the sleeping, dreams of men and women.\(^{22}\) Within a short time, Jung was to expand this theory into a broad, transcendental philosophy. With Jung, symbols acquired a


\(^{22}\) Though Freud has several times stated and restated his theory of dream interpretation, perhaps his most lucid explanation, at least for the uninitiated layman as the present writer is, is Part II of Freud's *A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis* (New York: Washington Square Press, 1960), pp. 87-252.
metaphysical nature. They were not the sole possession of the individual. They were shared by all through the universal unconscious.23

The result of all this was by 1913, a year before Henry James's death, point of view as a structural convention was once more applied by Proust to the autobiographical novel, one of the forms which had earlier served as a forerunner to the Jamesian method. This time, however, there was a marked difference. As has been observed earlier, the first-person as used, for example, by Dickens in David Copperfield was simply a variation on the omniscient author, or more precisely, on the third-person objective. Copperfield could tell the story because the interest was fastened on the external action. We are more interested in the story David tells than in his point of view of it. In Proust's work a different dog is loose. We are there watching the very motion of a mind, the external action is only incidental; indeed it is entirely dependent upon the quirks of direction taken by the mind of the central character, the author himself. As Irene Cornwell says of A La Recherche Du Temps Perdu:

Whether or not Temps perdu is a memoir or a novel Proust himself was not able to decide. Certain it is that if a novel requires composing, with an introduction, a climax, and an unravelling of plot, the work does not meet the specifications. There is no definite con-

struction in the Temps perdu, which has no plot, no action, but which emphasizes absolutely every trait, quality idea, and motive.24

The essential formlessness of Temps perdu is probably the result of Proust's philosophy which regarded thought as an "aesthetic, rather than a logical process."

For Proust, as for Bergson, the external world had no existence of its own, is but a projection of our feelings and states of consciousness, and in final analysis Proust's consciousness is not essentially more real than the universe. Developing the theory of multiple personality to the extreme limit of plausibility, he conceives of consciousness as never two minutes alike, to such an extent that we cannot think of a self, but only of an infinite number of selves, each in succession increasingly different from the first of the series. The only link between these is memory.25

In other words, what we have in Remembrance of Things Past is an artistic rendering of the newly discovered logic, crystallized through the wedding of psychology and symbolism, the logic of free memory-prompted and essentially uncontrolled association. Relativism as practiced by Henry James had reduced traditional action to a secondary position. Free association, as practiced by Proust, went a step farther and subordinated traditional space and time, for what intrigues Proust is neither events nor their normal sequence. He and his reader dispense with traditional action and set out to study the author's mind in the very act of dredging the stream of consciousness for impressions which can be considered by


25Ibid., p. 375.
the organizing intelligence. That is, Proust is presenting a unique aspect of his point of view, an aspect which shows him in the act of raising the constituents of his stream of consciousness up to the level of the Jamesian consciousness, that is, to the level at which those constituents coordinate in some way with external stimuli, which in turn act upon the subconscious to call up other impressions long hidden. Proust's work, then, is a classic study in modern psychic flux.

If this technique could work autobiographically, it could also work when applied to other people. Thus, it is not surprising that within a decade after the appearance of Proust's first efforts, James Joyce had published *Ulysses*, a novel which experimented with the presentation of the points of view of several characters as seen through their respective streams of consciousness. Only enough external action—walking, for the most part—is provided in *Ulysses* to stimulate the memory of the characters or to give their thought streams sufficient opportunity to react on various levels of awareness. The Night Town section even makes an attempt to penetrate into that shadowy psychic area where only pure images exist. In brief, in *Ulysses* Joyce not only tries to extend the Proustian method to psyches alien to his own, but also pretends as well to the study of the very actions of the metaconscious personality as it leads its own life submerged below the stream of consciousness.

By 1925, the new technique was sufficiently established to be exploited in a number of ways by a diversity of novelists. Not all of them were willing, or able, or philosophically desirous of
following Joyce as he quested through the thorny ways of *Ulysses* into the labyrinth of *Finnegans Wake*. Most of them were able journeymen in their craft who accepted the convention of point of view as an accomplished fact of the novel form. Some like Faulkner and Gide were true innovators, using with genius the various possibilities of point-of-view techniques. Almost all, however, journeyman or genius, were to grasp the fact that the future forte of the serious modern novelist would, in the main, be introspection not intrigue. In like manner, almost all were to become, if not profound, at least facile users of symbolic logic and of the symbol as an independent device or, more often, as a contributory technique in a point-of-view study.

Gide and Faulkner have been mentioned above as a pair of contemporary masters in the uses of point of view because they serve as examples of the inherent diversity of the approach as applied to the novel. Faulkner, for instance, in his masterpiece, *The Sound and the Fury*, utilizes the streams of consciousness of three different individuals—an idiot; a tormented, neurotic boy; and a petty and miserly small town merchant—to throw light first upon one another, then upon a fourth person—the sister of all three—and finally upon a family and a whole civilization. Faulkner, however, pushes beyond simple presentation of various streams of consciousness. In order to make his final statement, the author gathers all special insights once more to himself and concludes the novel with a final section narrated omnisciently. Faulkner's method of combining point of view with omniscience is, of course,
a perfect reflection of his concern with both the value of the individual and the ultimate triumph of the great and universal moral issues. Concerning Faulkner's use of point of view, Hoffman has said: "Though there is every possible difference between his work and that of Henry James, no novelist since James has developed so skillfully a genuinely effective management of point of view... In many ways, this novel (The Sound and the Fury) is a more honest and more efficient use of the so-called 'stream of consciousness' technique than Joyce's notorious Ulysses."^26

Unlike Faulkner, Gide, in a novel like The Counterfeiters, prefers to remain within the older, more Jamesian tradition, and to approach his situation not through a series of conflicting or contrasting streams of consciousness, but through several different layers of intellectual awareness, all of them remaining on or close to the James level of consciousness. Simplifying Gide's novel greatly, we may, for our purposes, present a scheme of it in terms of concentric circles. First, at the center, there is the point of view of a youth taking cognizance of the action. This viewpoint is encircled, and thus slightly altered and heightened, by the point of view of the central character, Edouard, a character whose sensitivity and intelligence amply qualifies him as a "large lucid reflector" in the full Jamesian sense. Edouard's awareness is, in turn, encompassed by that of the author acting as third-person narrator, and, finally, the whole of the novel is embraced by the

^26Hoffman, op. cit., p. 176.
author acting as omniscient commentator not only on the novel and the characters in it, but also on his own relation to them as well. In fact, almost the whole history of the techniques of the modern novelist is interwoven into this one short work. There is even one section— that of the visit from the angel— in which Gide attempts some sort of symbolic approximation of the stream and substream of consciousness.

James, Proust, Joyce, Faulkner, and Gide are but five examples, albeit outstanding, of the diverse approaches to the issue of point of view in the modern novel. It would be possible, of course, to go on adding examples of the different modern solutions to the problem of point of view. Instead of Faulkner or Gide, it would, for instance, be possible to cite works by Virginia Woolf, or Conrad Aiken, or F. Scott Fitzgerald, or even Thomas Mann. But to do this would be attempting more than is intended in this chapter, for the intention herein is to do no more than to glance at the postures of one or two representative modern novelists as they addressed the question of point of view.

Actually, the aim of this chapter has been twofold: first, there has been an attempt to establish in general terms the continuity and importance of the problem of revealing unspoken thought in a literary form; and, second, there has been an attempt to study in more detail the question of hidden thought in relation to the modern shift from an absolute to a relativistic world view. That is, the ultimate purpose of this chapter has been especially to seek out the problem of point of view at that time when it ceased to be one
of rendering any unexpressed thought and became one of establishing a particular point of view solely for its own innate values.

A brief review of the material covered by this chapter will indicate that although the discussion of unspoken thought began with Greek tragedy, that is with drama, the focus was gradually shifted to the novel as we came to discuss the modern period and its concept of point of view. Such a shift in interest would indicate that the modern problem of point of view was a structural manifestation of the novel alone, and there are those who would argue that such is actually the case. E. M. Forster, for instance, in his very influential work, Aspects of the Novel, states that "the problem of point of view certainly is peculiar to the novel." Whether Forster is correct or not there is no denying that while critics of the novel have been very much alive to the uses of point of view in the novel, and while they have contributed a number of fine studies of the problem, studies ranging from Lubbock's The Craft of Fiction to Edel's The Psychological Novel, the critics of the drama have all but ignored the question of point of view in the drama. Some men have taken note of the place of first-person


28Lubbock and Edel have been previously cited. It would be difficult to present a total list of the various critical studies which have been concerned in some manner with point of view, but to cite some of the more important ones: Joseph Warren Beach's The Twentieth-Century Novel (New York: Century Co., 1932); M. J. Friedman's Stream Of Consciousness, a Study in Literary Technique (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1955); Robert Humphrey's Stream of Consciousness in the Modern Novel (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1954).
subjective in dramatic method, men like Gassner, Nicoll, and Alan Downer, but none of them, with the exception of Downer,\(^2^9\) have been willing to consider it as central an issue to modern drama as it is to modern fiction. Just why there has been a lack of recognition of the place of the central consciousness in drama is difficult to say. It may well be that the critics of the drama have simply accepted such pronouncements as Forster's, and instead of seeking a broad structural base which might embrace the whole question of method in modern drama, they have busied themselves with classifying modern plays into realistic or expressionistic, symbolic or grotesque. Perhaps this approach has been taken because the critics of drama have meekly followed the lead of the leading literary critics of the day, and, as Joseph Wood Krutch has observed, drama in general is held in very low esteem, so low that such men as Edel seem to feel that in such point-of-view studies as *Strange Interlude* the playwright is not making an original statement but merely imitating the novelist James Joyce.\(^3^0\) Moreover, Edel is prone to believe that even in this imitation O'Neill succeeds only in "employing merely the time-honored 'asides' of the old plays or a series of soliloquies."\(^3^1\) Whatever the reason, whether it is the result of the attitude of the


\(^3^1\)Edel, *op. cit.*, p. 85.
critics of the novel or whether it is the result of their lack of perception, the students of modern drama have failed to seek out and study in detail the presence of point of view in modern drama.

Such failure on the part of the dramatic critics might constitute a serious oversight, for even on a priori grounds there is every reason to suspect that point of view as an important structural element plays as significant a role in the drama as in the novel. To begin with, it is hard to discover an adequate foundation for the contentions of such critics as Edel and Forster. It hardly seems logical to view the novel as so totally unique an art form that it alone is able to encompass the significance of the device of point of view. Reason lies with the contention that it is more usual for the arts of a given period to be viewed as parallel expressions of a common philosophy of the times, a condition which would normally force the arts into similar, if not nearly identical, structural patterns. This certainly seems to be the case in the modern period, where artists have been particularly concerned with expressing a highly romanticized, essentially subjective and irrational relativistic philosophy. In order to present their world view, more than one of the modern arts have been concerned in some measure with the issue of point of view. In modern painting, for instance, there are the abstract landscapes of Kandinsky and the symbolic fantasies of Paul Klee. The former can only be understood as the chromatic translation of the artist's stream of consciousness and the latter can be equated to that same world of
Jungian imagery that Joyce unearthed in the Night Town section of Ulysses. Or we may take as additional proof Helen Gardner's definition of Cubism as "a succession of points of view such as front, profile, and back, known to the mind but not seen by the eye simultaneously."32

With such an interest in point of view evidenced by the visual arts, it would be surprising to discover that drama, a form which draws its strength from both the visual and literary arts, would have ignored the question entirely. And, indeed, such is not the case. In fact, the contrary is closer to the truth. Edel's accusation of O'Neill notwithstanding, there is every indication that the playwright's interest in point of view was awakened just as early as that of the novelist, and there is some reason to contend that dramatic experiments with the presentation of intensely subjective and highly individualized viewpoints may have predated some of the more important innovations in the novel.

The above listed concepts form part of the matter of this study, for it is the concern of this investigation to establish to some extent the scope and nature of the convention of point of view in modern dramaturgy. In order to do this, eight plays by eight representative playwrights have been selected to stand as evidence that point of view is as important to the modern dramatist as it is to the novelist, and that the dramatist's solutions are not merely

unsuccessful imitations but are just as successful, varied, and interesting as are those of the writers of fiction. To support the above contentions, it is the plan of the thesis to establish briefly the trends in modern drama which led up to the contemporary experiments with point of view. These trends once established, attention will be turned to the individual plays. In the case of each playwright studied, the attempt will be first to demonstrate that as a modern subjective relativist he was forced into selecting subjective point of view as his approach. Once this has been accomplished, attention will be turned to his play and the work will be carefully analyzed in terms of the uses and meanings of point of view in the dramatic illusion.

As can be seen from the above outline, it is not the intention of this study to survey the whole field of modern drama, but rather to sample judiciously a few plays by playwrights generally recognized as representative, in one way or another, of the trends of modern drama. By taking such an approach, it is hoped that this investigation will not only reveal the nature and offer a detail examination of some of the solutions to the problem of point of view in drama, but also that as the study progresses it will suggest the presence of certain trends that will clearly support the proposition that the attack and resolution of the structural issue of viewpoint became one of the major activities of an important group of dramatists and that it touched, to some extent, the efforts of all but the most confirmed dramatic reactionaries.
CHAPTER TWO

THE TWO DIRECTIONS OF MODERN DRAMA

THE EXTERNAL AND THE PAN-PSYCHIC DRAMA

It is difficult to say whether the honor of developing modern realism should go to Norway or to France. Traditionally, the study of realism begins with Ibsen, but this precedent cannot obscure the fact that the well-made play, as developed by Scribe, was pointed from the first in the direction of modern realism. Moreover, the best of Scribe's successors, Augier and Dumas, fils, continued the realistic evolution by adding, within their own narrow sphere, a certain honesty to the treatment of social themes. In this same tradition, Zola appeared, urging a naturalistic treatment of life on stage. Then too French practices were not limited to France; their influences were wide-spread. As Carpenter points out, the two great English realists before the advent of Shaw--Jones and Pinero--owed more to France than to Ibsen. But despite its importance, early French realism was a

thin brew, and there is no denying that the dramatic philosophy of 19-century France forced her playwrights into a literary cul-de-sac. The leading critic, the reigning dictator of the French stage, Francois Sarcey, articulated the ideal of all when he argued that a play was but a machine for holding the attention of the audience for two hours and then sending it home in good humor.2

It is not difficult to realize that a drama with such a philosophy dooms itself to superficiality and sterility. Thus, although realism may have developed first in France, the contributions of the Gallic genius were restricted to the well-made play form and to a few broad hints at the possibilities of the social theme. Briefly, in terms of modern realism, French efforts were early and secondary.

Norway's contribution, on the other hand, was late and primary, for between 1869 and 1872, Ibsen seriously turned his genius to the well-made play and the social thesis. He lifted the twin concepts of realism and the social theme from the squirrel cage of French drama, stripped them of the unhappy accumulations of almost a century of existence, and presented his refined versions to an awe-struck world. The difference in degree between the work of Ibsen and that of the

French school was so great that his stunned contemporaries soon heralded him as the creator of a new dramatic mode. For many years he was considered the St. George of the modern theatre. But viewing him from the advantage of three quarters of a century, Ibsen appears much more clearly as the savior rather than the destroyer of the well-made dragon. It is no secret that Ibsen was strongly influenced by the French playwrights, and most modern critics will agree with MacGowan and Melnitz that Ibsen was the "master architect of the truly well-made play." What the master architect did was to take a rather shop-worn and mechanical form and freshen it and give it life by emphasizing its better features while playing down its more obvious faults. Thus it was that Ibsen added vigor to the French play by reconciling its characters with a more recognizable middle-class scale and by treating social problems that were more directly related to the mercantile society of the day rather than following the practice of casting about for his theses in the shadowy demi-monde so dear to the heart of the Gallic romantic. In keeping with his tendency to establish a more truly functional relationship between drama and society, Ibsen also attempted to eliminate the often very shabbily forced happy ending and the unneces-

sarily rigid assignment of precise tasks to each of the five formal acts. Each of these changes was probably necessary, but they were modifications of, not departures from, the piece bien faite. They may have been striking reforms, but they were more obvious than profound. It was in his sweeping introduction of an entirely new approach to the total dramatic illusion that Ibsen made his truly significant change in the well-made play.

To Ibsen, the French dramatist's excessive use of the aside and the soliloquy, not as devices for investigating hidden thought, but simply as supports for faltering dramatic imagination, were particularly offensive structural crudities. And when considering the following three examples, we cannot but agree with him:

GEORGE. In a word, I have seen and admired you.
DORA. (Aside) He has a strange way of showing it.

European, I suppose.

LADY TRAVERS. Is my son here?
BARNEY. No, my lady.
LADY TRAVERS. (Aside) So much the better. (Aloud) Is the lady of the house in?

WINTERBOURNE. So you are at this moment. We can dream that we are in that happy place.
DAISY. (Aside) He can do with me what he will.
(Aloud) I'll tell them to keep you a seat. 4

4The first example is taken from Dion Boucicault's The Octofoon, 1859; the second from Steele MacKaye's Hazel Kirke, 1880; the third from Henry James's adaptation of his own Daisy Miller.
So much did Ibsen dislike such practices as the above, that he reformed them not by returning them to an earlier and better tradition, but by ultimately eliminating the two devices entirely. In fact, as early as the writing of The League of Youth, Ibsen boasts that he has accomplished "the feat of doing without a single monologue, without a single aside." This is indeed a feat, and it is this accomplishment, more than any other, which created modern stage realism! For in eliminating asides and soliloquies, Ibsen limited himself to the study of character only through the external word or action. In other words, without recourse to the aside and the soliloquy, Ibsen had no other choice but to make his statements solely through the agency of the surface elements of human experience, that is, through the elements of objective reality. To write plays without employing the two most prominent conventions of Western drama is undoubtably difficult, but it is not necessarily praiseworthy. In doing what he did, Ibsen gained a certain kind of verisimilitude, but he did not come any closer to reality, per se. What he did do was to create Ibsenism, a highly conventionalized mode of drama which replaced the omniscient author with that of the third-person objective narrator, which in turn had the effect of an illusion of complete surface reality.

Despite Ibsen's feat, there is nothing inherently weak in the aside and the soliloquy. In the hands of a Moliere or a Shakespeare they become the most dramatic of conventions. There did, however, exist in Ibsen's time a considerable abuse of these conventions, but this could have been corrected. Reformation, however, was not Ibsen's intention, for as long as the aside and the soliloquy remained in the drama, their presence belied the relativistic statement which Ibsen was attempting to make. Consequently, Ibsen elected to reject rather than rescue the two techniques. In short, Ibsen relinquished entirely the previously omniscient approach of the dramatist and substituted in its stead a new, totally objective one. Before Ibsen, the dramatist could never, perhaps, lay claim to the narrative flexibility of the novelist, but in his own much more direct and immediate medium he had his share of freedom. Ibsen altered this, and, after the acceptence of his problem play, playwrights in the classic Ibsenian tradition could report only; never, unless very obliquely, comment. Nor could they directly reveal the inner reality, the hidden thoughts of their characters.

Out of Ibsen's new third-person objectivity grew his so highly admired presentation of exposition, which was in reality the exchanging of one convention for another. Ibsen's new method of exposition, by seemingly natural conversation between major characters, was, in great measure, a reworking of the approach found in many Elizabethan plays.
After all, the major expository load in *Hamlet*, for instance, is shoulderered by Hamlet and Horatio. What made Ibsen's exposition sufficiently different, however, was his need to bring it into line with his new objective point of view, that is, to reveal all information only through dialogue or action. Today, his so-called realism in exposition—as, for example, in the long conversations between Nora and Mrs. Linde—often seems as stiff and as stylized to us as do the inane dialogues between the older drama's ever-present butler and maid. Much like the older drama, Iben's exposition—conversations are often tedious and dull, and, more frequently than not, they contain things which people just don't say to one another, or facts which they must surely have revealed long ago. Too often these conversations begin rather clumsily, as, for instance, when Tesman says to Aunt Julia in *Hedda Gabler*:

> And now look here—suppose we sit comfortably on the sofa and have a little chat till Hedda comes.

The little chat continues into a long one, long enough to cover most of the background of the play, and much is stated that would either have been said long ago—the condition of Aunt Rina's illness—or never have been said at all—Tesman's luck in capturing Hedda and in having eliminated his rivals. All this is not to say that the playwright cannot be granted some license, or that Ibsen's handling of ex-
position is extremely poor, but only to establish that it is every bit as unrealistic and stylized as any other method previously employed by playwrights. As pure verisimilitude it has its gauche elements, and as an attempt at rendering life, it comes no closer to the total phenomenon than do the aside and the soliloquy. All are artistic conventions.

When Ibsen early in his career stated that the illusion he wished to create was that of reality and that he desired to depict human beings and therefore would not have them speak the language of the gods, he did not go on to qualify his definition of reality. If he had, he most certainly would have been forced to concede that under given circumstances some human beings could very well speak the language of the gods. What Ibsen most likely meant was that he was seeking to produce an illusion of a particular kind of reality and a particular kind of human being. He wished to depict the surface, the readily perceptible, reality of middle-class Europeans of the late 19th-century. At least this is what he accomplished in such plays as Ghosts and Pillars of Society, and it is no mean accomplishment. Nor can it be said that there is anything inherently wrong with the goal Ibsen set

---

for himself. It does however have its limitations, not the least among which is the loss of the principal dramatic means of rendering hidden thoughts and moods; and it does have its dangers. Among the latter, the most difficult to avoid is that of inadvertently creating a social history rather than a play, with the resultant loss of dramatic appeal to all but a very few in a very limited time and culture range.

Ibsen managed to some extent to overcome these limitations and dangers because he was a great playwright. Those who followed Ibsenism did not always fare so well. The names of men like Brieux and Galsworthy, good journeymen playwrights, are rapidly fading as their so carefully recorded realism becomes, with time, less and less immediate. Presently they will be understood and appreciated only by the historian. Scores of less talented playwrights have even disappeared from the historian’s view.

But the form which Ibsen utilized, despite its obvious pitfalls, has continued to be the most popular approach of the modern theatre. It repeats itself endlessly through dozens of Broadway, Paris, and West End seasons. It is the basic form for the great bulk of modern plays and into its mould are cast such commercial successes as *Stalag 17* and *The Seven Year Itch*. That basic form is the well-made play. The asides have been eliminated and so has much of the wit, but the essen-
tial ingredients are as present today as they were in *Le Mariage d'Olympe* or *A Doll's House*. Shake the bloom from the average Broadway hit, *Tea and Sympathy*, for instance, make some allowances for changes in social custom--in the 19th-century a woman who offered herself in sexual sacrifice to save a teen-age boy from homosexuality simply could not command sympathy--and there you have the old French thesis play with its "big curtains," its love triangle, its contrived misunderstandings, its staunch friends, its good women, and its pretentions, all decked out in the straight-jacket of Ibsenian third-person objectivity.

It is an old story, and one that does not need retelling here, of how Ibsenites everywhere created new methods of staging and acting which provided productions reflecting and paralleling the objectivity of Ibsen's scripts. Antoine, Brahm and Grien brought "free theatres" to France, Germany and England respectively, and in Russia Danchenko and Stanislavsky established the famed Moscow Art Theatre. It was the latter group, more than any other, which popularized the primary convention of the objective production--the convention of the "fourth wall." Ibsen had suggested the exclusion of the audience as a participant when he eliminated the aside and the soliloquy; Stanislavsky made this exclusion more definite when he placed chairs, facing upstage,
along the plane of the proscenium arch.

With the establishment of the "fourth wall," the audience realized that it was no longer part of the total theatrical experience, except in its role of mute and carefully concealed observer, crouching silent and hidden in the dark auditorium like a natural scientist studying the habits of beasts in their native surroundings. It was this concept of the audience as a silent, and, indeed, unnecessary observer, that became one of the major tenets of Stanislavsky's early artistic philosophy. As Bakshy has said:

There will be no difficulty in recognizing the basic principle which lay at the foundation of all the experiments of the Art Theatre, tacitly admitted as the natural and only artistic form of theatre. This principle was representation. The object of the theatre was understood not to present a play through the medium of the stage, but to represent it as a separate entity existing side by side with the observing audience....of the two elements of the theatre, the stage and the audience, the second operated merely as some superfluous attachment making itself felt only through the necessity of providing for it the huge window of the stage through which it could get a glimpse of the world enacted.\(^7\)

Such a philosophy was only possible after the appearance of the objective play, and after the disappearance of the most direct means of communication with the audience--the aside and the soliloquy. Once

Ibsen had objectified the play, however, it was only a matter of time before someone would perform a similar service for the production. The third-person script and the third-person production were absolutely necessary to one another, and the existence of the one predicated the existence of the other. In proof of this, the "fourth wall" has continued, like the Ibsenian version of the well-made play, to be the most popular mode of stage presentation. It influences contemporary practices in directing, scenery, and lighting, and it forms the basic precept of the "method school" of acting.

The tendency towards the exclusion of the audience was intensified by the practices and polemics of Naturalism, an artistic movement which began with Zola in France and soon spread throughout Europe. Its quasi-scientific ideal was not to present an "illusion of reality," but to present reality itself, the so-called "slice of life." The dramatist was to become so completely an objective recorder that he was to become, as it were, a case historian, forfeiting any right to interpret or exercise selectivity. He was to study "feelings, ideas, virtues, and vices...objectively, physiologically, and functionally in the theatre, just as sugar and vitriol are analyzed in the laboratory."

---

While Naturalism in its extreme form never quite carried the stage, it had a significant influence on the works of many modern realists. Its effects are especially apparent in the plays of the Russians, particularly those of Checkov. In addition, Naturalism, with its total emphasis on understatement, caused a number of playwrights to abandon, for a time, some of the more striking features of Ibsenism. Playwrights like Galsworthy and Hauptmann, for instance, suppressed the plot and did away with the "big curtain." But while Naturalism helped further to loosen the formal act structure and, in some instances, to increase the poverty of modern dramatic prose, its general effects were, for the most part, short lived, and the well-made play as Ibsen made it survives today as relatively intact. The chief and lasting effect of Naturalism was the great stress it laid upon objective surface realism, especially upon the treatment of sordid details. In this respect it out-Ibsened Ibsen and encouraged and strengthened the use of the objective viewpoint.

In short, we may say that modern realism is one important direction of contemporary drama. It was fashioned from French matter by a Norwegian playwright, and its most distinctive feature is an objectivity of viewpoint, which was achieved by the elimination of the aside and the soliloquy. However, it is not, as many believe, anything resembling a total break with the pièce bien faite. As Martin Lamm
has commented:

In so far as Ibsen surpassed the Frenchmen, he also naturally learned, as he says in a letter to Brandes in 1896, to avoid their grossest errors and misconceptions. But this should not be taken to mean that he disregarded their technique. In stating a problem, working out a plot, drawing a character, or writing dialogue Ibsen was developing the techniques of the French drama.\(^9\)

This is not to say that modern realism did not conceive of itself as making a completely new direction, for its whole focus was, in fact, on the rejection of the past. As Raymond Williams points out in his discussion of the "newness" of *A Doll's House*:

The play does not go any deeper than the usual mechanisms of intrigue; it does not undercut the assumptions of romantic drama, with its mechanical versions of experience; it merely provides a reversal within the romantic framework. It is not a new positive dramatic standard; it is simply anti-romantic, a negative within the same framework of experience.\(^10\)

This negative attitude towards the past, this attempt to reject it, is labeled by Joseph Wood Krutch as "modernism." As already mentioned in Chapter One, modernism is that change in late 19th-century philosophic


\(^10\)Raymond Williams, *op. cit.*, p. 66.
posture which attempted to establish a difference between the past and
the present principally by rejecting all vestiges of the older abso-
lute values and by placing in their stead a new subjectively based
relativism. In discussing An Enemy of the People, Krutch noted this
phenomenon, and he said, "at last we have reached something that, for
the first time, might actually justify talk about a chasm separating
the past from the future."

A new world which had come to accept an all-inclusive rela-
tivity actually would not be merely different from, it
would be genuinely discontinuous with an old one in which,
on the whole, it was assumed that some unchanging princi-
pies were eternally established.\textsuperscript{11}

What is so intriguing about this whole business is that while
modernism and modern realism proclaims aloud its break with the abso-
lutism of the past, it is, essentially, an extension of the romanti-
cist thinking of the 19th-century, and in so many ways it continues to
perpetuate the dramatic mode which rested its argument on an older
absolutism. In searching for a new, anti-absolute and anti-universal
form, the realists introduced a new structural approach, a third-
person objectivity which gained for their plays a quality of surface-
reality. In doing what they did, they eliminated a gross misuse of
omniscience by the premodern playwrights, but they also limited them-

\textsuperscript{11}Krutch, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 12.
selves tremendously in that they excluded from possible direct considera-
tion any of those subjective areas of human activity on which a relativistic creed must ultimately be based. By accepting objectivity, realism had henceforth no recourse but to depict surface elements of human experience.

The achievement of third-person objectivity was, however, a significant and critical step, both for the realists and for another important group of modern dramatists. For the realists, surface objectivity was the method by which they retained the virtues of the piece _bien faite_ while they corrected many of its vices. For a second group of playwrights, the objective perspective served as an irritant which prompted them to invent various means of circumventing the obstacles it posed. The activity of the latter group of dramatists forms the second direction of modern drama, the direction which will be the ultimate concern of this study, the move toward nonobjectivity.

It is difficult to state unequivocally that modern drama would not have developed a corpus of nonobjective writing if it were not for the existence of the objective playwright, but we may say that it is likely that modern subjective forms would have been considerably different. Undoubtedly, the move toward objectivity was a crucial one and served, at least negatively, if not positively, to hasten the development of contemporary subjective forms.
Alan Downer, at least, seems to feel that this is true. As he points out, realism "involves the concept of point of view for the first time in drama." We may take issue with this sweeping pronouncement, but we must admit the truth of his observation that:

Once the idea of point of view becomes established, once it becomes a tool, the playwright will experiment with its possibilities. The objectivity of the scientist, however highly touted as an ideal by Ibsen, Zola, and Chekhov, places unnatural restrictions on the creative artist.12

What the development of an objective as opposed to an omniscient point of view did was to make clear to those playwrights operating in a more subjective tradition the major outlines of their own structural problem and to emphasize for them the inadequacy of the old well-made play omniscience as a probable method of solution. They were thus forced to begin not with a return to the older approach, whose weakness as a relativistic tool Ibsen had amply demonstrated, but with the newer realistic form as a basis for experimentation. Therefore, instead of rejecting the objective point of view, they were to develop it, carrying it into the realms of total subjectivity and relativity. In short, Ibsen created modern realism by a concerted effort to do away with the principle omniscient devices of the older drama. Actually, he begged the question of their inherent weakness, and ignored rather than

12Alan Downer, op. cit., p. 315.
reformed the aside and the soliloquy. A second, more or less anti-
realistic, school of modern drama fashioned its forms by taking realism
as a base and actually developing and extending that very aspect of it
which seemed least flexible, the concept of point of view.

This second direction of modern drama has been described above
as "subjective" and more or less antirealistic. Now while these terms
serve well in general discussion, they are somewhat misleading when an
attempt is made to study the movement in more detail. They have three
major shortcomings: first, they are too vague to suggest the diverse
and often contradictory practices which they embrace. Second, they
bring to mind an antithesis with realism, rather than a development out
of realism and out of a common background shared with realism; and,
third, they encourage those who accept the realism-antirealism dichot-
omy to follow this division to its logical conclusion and elaborate a
realism-romanticism dichotomy. Wholehearted acceptance of the latter
two connotations can be confusing and may lead to unfortunate critical
errors. Thus, it seems imperative, before going any further, to settle
upon a pair of terms which will suggest that the two directions of
modern drama without rigidly establishing any categories or fixing any
sharp lines of division. None of the terms in current critical use
seem fitted for these requirements.

The first popular term which comes to mind is neo-Romanticism,
but this raises more problems than it solves. It is true that the
subjective writers were principally romantics, but neo-Romanticism
seems to indicate that realism was not romantic. Nothing could be
farther from the truth. As has been demonstrated earlier, Ibsen was
following closely the lead of the popular Franch romantics, and even
when his work was compounded with that of the more radical Naturalism,
the result still remained within the romantic tradition. Zola might
have been crying out for a break with the "patent-leather" palaver of
his day, but in doing so he was, in a sense, calling for a return to
an earlier tradition, such a tradition as was reflected in the poems
of Robert Burns or outlined by Wordsworth in the Preface to the
Lyrical Ballads as the choosing of "incidents and situations from
common life" and the describing of these incidents "throughout, as far
as possible, in a selection of language really used by men." Zola
might have scorned Wordsworth's additional purpose of throwing over
men and language a certain "coloring of the imagination," but he did
retain a most essential element of Romanticism--the emphasis on the
individual common man and on his basic emotions. In fact, in many
ways, Zola's Naturalism is merely Romanticism transplanted from the
avenues to the back alleys.

Perhaps it would be stretching a point to attempt to place
either modern realism or Naturalism within the escapist school of 19th-
century stage romanticism, but this is unnecessary, for the former's
emphasis on the bourgeois and the latter's interest in the lower classes clearly demonstrate their essential romantic tendencies. Consequently, since both directions of modern drama share a common romantic background, the term neo-Romanticism suggests a dichotomy which simply does not exist.

The phrase "drama of the individual" comes closer to being apt, but the difficulty with the expression as used by Nicoll is that it can apply equally well to both directions of modern play writing. *Hedda Gabler*, for instance, granting that it is a transitional play between the two directions, still serves to demonstrate that the realists could and did concentrate solely on the individual.

The Nietzschean terms Apollonian and Dionysian also have their limitations in this regard. They are useful to a degree when contrasting Romanticism with Classicism, but when applied to two equally romantic phenomena, they are rather confusing. There might be a certain divine madness in the works of many of the nonrealists, but structurally speaking *The Weavers* is even more formless, and hence even more Dionysian, than *The Spook Sonata*. Another aspect of this same difficulty arises when the terms Realistic and Non-Realistic are utilized. While it is true that a certain semblence of reality is found in the works of Ibsen and the Ibsenites, the Non-Realists cannot be denied their point when they argue with Edschmidt that "apparent
reality is after all not essentially real, that observed reality is not the essence of the object."

Actually, it seems best to discard most of the popular critical terms and to search out new ones which relate directly to the major difference between the two schools. Since the basis of the difference seems to be the objective viewpoint, it would seem that the most apt term for those dramatists who took their cue from the social dramas of Ibsen would be writers of the "external or objective drama." Objectivism and Externalism correspond closely enough with the terms Naturalism and Realism in the broad sense, but they have the advantage over the latter two terms in that they suggest method without implying judgment.

With Objectivism as one label, the immediate temptation is to select Subjectivism as an opposing term. But this, unfortunately, forces the two schools into a qualitative-quantitative relationship which is far from correct. Moreover, by itself, Subjectivism lays far too much stress on the difference between the two schools and far too little on the development of the one out of the other. More important, Subjectivism implies again the old romantic-realistic dichotomy. Despite all this, Subjectivism does come close to connoting the major

---

area of difference between the two types of dramaturgy, and, therefore, it seems best to select some term which would incorporate its meaning while playing down its unhappy connotations. The most suitable generalization seems to be one invented by the playwright Andriev, "pan-psychic drama."

As has been stated earlier, the external and pan-psychic dramas are interrelated rather than parallel but opposing forces. The roots of both lie in the total Romantic Revolution, and both are children of the modern sciences and the general philosophic shift from absolutism to relativism. Both can probably be traced back to the Storm and Stress Movement in Germany and to the somewhat later romantic triumph which Victor Hugo helped to bring about on the French stage.

Moreover both grew out of a need of the late 19th-century playwrights to reject the decadence of mid-19th-century theatre. After Hugo, the subsequent history of 19th-century drama had not been the exciting story of a contest between romantic freedom and classical restraint, but the sad tale of the gradual degeneration of romantic drama into unstageable closet dramas on the one hand and shallow melodramas on the other. What at the beginning of the century had been a vigorous if phrenetic movement had been transformed by victory into a smug and decaying institution.

It was this condition that Ibsen set out to remedy; his manner
of reform has already been discussed. It was chiefly structural--that of introducing an objective viewpoint into the dramatic illusion--and it was carried into acceptance with the aid of Zola's naturalistic theories, which appeared concurrently with Ibsen's early realistic efforts. It must be remembered, however, that the drama of externals was basically romantic. The emphasis on emotion rather than reason was very much in evidence. As Zola said of his dramatization of Therese Raquin, his aim was to study the wife and her lover in order "to see nothing but the beast, to throw them into violent drama and note scrupulously the sensations and acts of these creatures."14

Now while many playwrights were following Ibsen and Zola in noting scrupulously the sensations and acts of man, just as many more were active in interpreting unscrupulously those same acts and sensations. The intriguing thing about each group was that while they seemingly differed so greatly in approach and ideals, they were much more compatible than a casual perusal would indicate. The fact that the writers of the pan-psychic drama were, like Hauptmann and Strindberg, to begin their careers as externalistic playwrights testifies to the closeness of the two schools. Also, the interest of the externalists in private and primitive emotions was the same interest which

14MacGowan and Melnitz, op. cit., p. 359.
brought the pan-psychic playwright to a presentation of the total "soul-complex." Moreover, both schools laid claim to the support of 19th-century science. Externalism, as the earlier development, tended as a whole to follow Naturalism in looking towards the already highly developed physical sciences, and the externalists cultivated an individual-centered, materialistic and pessimistic, philosophy based upon popular Darwinism. Pan-psychism, as the slightly younger school, began with this philosophy as a base, but soon turned to the discoveries of the new psychology, and, as might be expected, formulated a modern mysticism based upon the more profound secrets of the private ego. In point of fact, the pan-psychic playwrights and the students of the new psychology might well have been mutually indebted, for as Lionel Trilling points out, "psychoanalysis is one of the culminations of the Romanticist literature of the nineteenth century." To support his contention, Trilling quotes Freud's protest when hailed as the discoverer of the unconscious: "The poets and the philosophers before me discovered the unconscious....What I discovered was the scientific method by which the unconscious may be studied." 

---


16 ibid., p. 31.
But whatever its relation to science, and despite its close
kinship with Externalism, the pan-psychic drama has a separate
literary history, the beginnings of which are buried in the "fate
dramas" of young Germany, and early examples of its later symbolic
tendencies may be found in the works of the French playwright de
Musset. It was not, however, until the late 19th-century that Pan-
psychism began to take its modern form. Chief among those who may be
called its major forerunners is Richard Wagner, whose theories of the
music drama were elaborated in support of his claim to the writing of
modern Greek tragedies. But whatever Wagner's stated theories and
aims, his purpose was much more to artistically render "the logic of
human passions" than to recreate classical tragedy. As Baudelaire
said of Tristan and Isolde, it is Greek tragedy "at the bottom of a
cave, magnificent it is true, but lit by fires which are not those of
Phoebus." In like manner, Francis Fergusson observes that Tristan
"owes its significance partly to the fact that it is the most perfect
instance of drama as 'the expression of emotion': the doctrine that
identifies action with passion."18

17 Francis Fergusson, The Idea of a Theatre (Garden City, New

18 Ibid., p. 94.
Whether Tristan is a "most perfect" anything is doubtful, but the opera did serve, along with the other works of Wagner, to foster the development of the theatre of the private and essentially irrational ego, the theatre growing out of the "cult of the ego." Moreover, Tristan inspired the man who was to give an early and articulate philosophy to the total modern theatrical movement—Fredrick Nietzsche.

In his Birth of Tragedy, written under the spell of Tristan, Nietzsche inquires into the nature of art and arrives at the following decision: art in essence is the combination of two elements—the Apollonian and the Dionysian. The one is the form creating element, the other the passionate, the inspiring element. Of the two, Nietzsche gives the greater importance to the Dionysian, the divine madness. It is vital and basic; the Apollonian is always at its service. To Nietzsche, the Dionysian is "the eternal and original artistic force," the Apollonian is only a means of presenting this force.

If we could conceive of an incarnation of dissonance—and what else is man?—then, that it might live, this dissonance would need a glorious illusion to cover its features with a veil of beauty. This is the true function of Apollo...

Nietzsche’s emphasis on the Dionysian and his concept of man as an incarnation of dissonance is strongly reminiscent of the "beast" in

---

the people of Zola, and such a similarity testifies to the joint philosophy shared by both. Actually, the point of division between the followers of Zola and the more Nietzschean pan-psychics is found in the fact that while both saw action in terms of passion, the pan-psychic playwrights were to believe with Nietzsche that the truest and most important human passions sprang from the deep and irrational subject and that this truth could be rendered but poorly by approaching it through the object. Thus, we should not look to surface phenomena, but behind them.

After Nietzsche, then, the structural problem of the more introspective drama was not whether man was to be presented as essentially Dionysian, nor whether the emphasis should be placed on the relative position of the individual subject as opposed to the more universal object, the problem was the selection of a method by which the playwright could gain access to those areas of human individuation and dissonance which hide behind the surface phenomena. As a solution to this problem in ego-centered relativity, the omniscient melodrama of the old piece bien faite was obviously useless, but while the strict objectivity of the new Ibsenism seemed equally binding, it proved, nevertheless, as mentioned earlier, to be a happy development, for it carried within itself the seeds of expansion and development.

Strangely enough, among the first of the dramatists who experi-
mented with breaking down and refashioning the objective point of view was the man most responsible for its initial adoption. Ibsen, after laboring so assiduously to create complete dramatic objectivity, apparently realized the restrictions which externalistic technique imposed upon a relativistic thinker, and he searched for conventions which would provide him with more freedom. Obviously the monologue and the aside, the two conventions which he held in such high contempt, would not be among the devices considered. But in the period when he did use these conventions—i.e., the period of his early romantic plays in verse—i.e., the period of his early romantic plays in verse—Ibsen also flirted with a device which had since become extremely popular in late 19th-century prose and poetry—the symbol as a communicative agent. Thus it was that, never quite fully developed in Brand and Peer Gynt, never often rising above the level of allegory, symbolism of a much deeper and more complicated nature was to reappear in Ibsen's 1884 work, The Wild Duck. Of course, throughout his middle period the symbol as a dramatic force never quite disappeared from Ibsen's plays, for it is evident in all his work from Pillars of Society to Ghosts, but its function remained minor and its development relatively crude as long as Ibsen was wrestling with the problem of creating an illusion of reality. Once some sort of armistice had been achieved with external reality, however, he turned to address the difficulty of reopening those areas of psychic activity
which externality had sealed off. As Ibsen came face to face with the problem of gaining access to the inner being, it is probable that he was already armed with a growing awareness of the increasing importance of the symbol in contemporary literature. Possibly he felt that it was high time that the dramatist experimented with a device already granted such a significant place in the other literary arts. At any rate, in 1884 Ibsen wrote to his publisher:

This new play occupies in a way a place by itself in my dramatic production; the method diverges in various aspects from my former practice. However, I will make no further pronouncements on that score....At the same time, I hope that The Wild Duck perhaps may induce some of our younger playwrights to venture out in a new direction, and I would consider this desirable.\footnote{P.F.D. Tennant, Ibsen's Dramatic Technique (Cambridge: Bowes & Bowes, 1948), p. 56.}

There is no need here to develop in detail the increasingly symbolic trend of Ibsen's later work, the trend which began with The Wild Duck and ended only with When We Dead Awaken. The more important point is that this trend demonstrated that Ibsen himself had turned away from pure Externalism, had joined forces with the pan-psycho playwrights, and had abandoned Ibsenism to the Ibsenites. Perhaps this had been his bent from the beginning, perhaps the externalistic plays were only a step in the total process, a step which developed into a long digression, so long that it took him most of a creative lifetime.
to return to the point. But no matter whether Ibsen came to his new
method by accident or personality, there is no denying that The Wild
Duck signals the entrance of the most important figure of modern drama
into the school of Pan-psychism. Tennant justifies this observation
in his remarks on The Wild Duck:

Ibsen here breaks with his problem play-writing and
occupies himself exclusively with human psychology. The
break marks a new departure in his technique of charac­
terization, abandoning moral for psychological motivation.21

Ibsen did not, however, despair all at once and forever of the
fecundity of the external drama. After all, the better portion of his
creative life had been spent in perfecting it. As might be expected,
he attempted at first to work within the restrictions of surface-
realism, while using the symbol as a means of rendering the external
illusion more transluscent. As Northam indicates, when Ibsen "found
himself" he realized that surface-realism "could be manipulated so
delicately that the illusion of reality remained while the depths of
the personality were explored."

Thereafter, each play was a struggle to reconcile the two
kinds of reality, a struggle that became harder as Ibsen's
insight into human nature grew deeper. Perhaps the

21Ibid., p. 56.
tension was highest and the reconciliation most triumphant in *Hedda Gabler*.  

As Northam says, *Hedda Gabler* probably furnishes the best example of Ibsen's new "psychological method." Although the superficial outlines of Externalism are maintained, the breakdown of objectivity is everywhere apparent. The entire progress of the action can be traced on two levels— that of the external action and that of the symbolic action. Moreover, it seems evident that the major statement of the play is much more closely related to the symbolic action. In the best third-person tradition, Hedda explicitly states certain of her motives. To Brack, for instance, she says that she acts the way she does "because I'm bored I tell you." To Mrs. Elvsted she explains that "I want for once in my life to mould a human destiny"; to Lovborg she confesses that she was interested in him because a young girl, when it was possible, "should be glad to have a peep, now and then, into a world which she is forbidden to know anything about." These overtly stated motives are part truth, but mostly excuse. They mask the more significant motives found only in the symbolism, found in such things as General Gabler's pistols with their suggestions of power and masculinity, of destruction and the death wish, of martial...

---

and sexual romance. Or again, Hedda's motives can be traced to the constant application of the cock and satyr images to Brack and Lovborg, or to Hedda's identification of her child with Lovborg's manuscript and Mrs. Elvsted's hair with that young lady's power over Lovborg. The play is shot through with these and other recurrent symbols which vary both in meaning and importance according to their relation to a given situation in the play. In addition, it is interesting to note that most of them, like Hedda's vision of Lovborg with "vine leaves in his hair," testify to the interest which Ibsen shared with Nietzsche in the Dionysian aspects of human nature.

But even more interesting than the appearance of symbolism in Hedda Gabler is the particular manner in which it is used. One would suppose that the symbol, like the monologue, would be used to unlock the psychic processes of more than one character, and, indeed, it did function in this manner in The Wild Duck. But by the time Hedda was written, Ibsen had long ago fallen into line with the more extreme doctrines of the new relativism, the new and total emphasis on the subject. He was, in fact, doing much the same thing in Hedda that Henry James had done in Portrait of a Lady. He was retaining the general framework of the third-person narrator, but by extremely close and sympathetic narration, he was placing the "weight" into Hedda's scale, "into her relation with herself," and he was proportionately
removing the weight from the scales of her satellites. Thus, the really important element of the play, the symbolism, relates primarily to Hedda in the sense that it either originates with her or refers to her. It is this aspect of Ibsen's use of symbolism which gives such depth to Hedda, and its use only in terms of her makes the other characters seem flat and stereotyped. Brack, Mrs. Elvsted, Lovborg, and Tesman are purposely allowed to remained unrealized because the emphasis is not on the total situation, but only on Hedda's relation to it, and Ibsen's special use of symbolism points to this fact.

Raymond Williams recognizes Ibsen's special approach to Hedda when he says that the play is not satisfying because it is like "a powerful dramatization of a novel."\(^{23}\) In an attempt to put his finger on Ibsen's new and disturbing method, he assigns it to the category of "savage farce," a special classification which T.S. Eliot has manufactured for The Jew of Malta and Volpone. Williams seems to have missed the point. Hedda is not farce at all, though it has caused many an audience to laugh at the wrong places because directors and actors have mistaken it for pure Externalism and have played Hedda's satellites as fully realized, surface-realism characters. The resulting overstatements cannot help but be funny. And, of course, when

\[23\] Williams, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 83 f.
these characters become funny, they also become, in their way, sympathetic. Consequently, many an audience leaves the theatre feeling that Hedda got what she deserved. This is rather unfortunate, for the play is not about morals, but about the psychological constitution of a particular Victorian woman. If the audience is to understand the play at all, they must be patient and sympathetic with Hedda alone. Thus, the play should be presented so that all characters and situations, and above all, all symbols point toward achieving this sympathy and patience.

What some critics fail to comprehend is that Ibsen is moving behind external reality in not one but two ways, first, through symbols, but more importantly through a change in point of view. Unfortunately, he is not totally successful in either attempt. His failure can probably be traced to his reluctance to drop completely the objectivity which he had labored so hard to establish. This ambiguous posture was to become more marked in the plays of his declining years, but his tendency was always more and more toward symbolism, more and more toward the pan-psy chic drama.

To sum up, Ibsen's plays from The Wild Duck onwards move first in the direction of opening the inner thoughts of all characters, and then in the direction of concentrating on the psychic flux of a single
character. In this final phase, the plays seriously undercut third-person objectivity and in doing so project the major structural problem of the pan-psychic school, the presentation of a first-person subjective point of view. Therefore, we may say that Ibsen serves as a pivotal figure in modern drama. On the one hand, he perfected and popularized a dramatic structure which had as its cornerstone an objectivity of viewpoint. But on the other hand, once he realized the subjective basis of his relativism, his interest passed from a study of what people actually did to a study of what actually made them do what they did. It was to comment on the latter phenomenon that Ibsen sought for new structural devices. The ones which he ultimately settled upon—symbolism and through symbolism a presentation of a more personalized point of view—he passed on to the pan-psychic playwrights for further development.

Nor can we say that the subjective playwrights were ones to look a gift horse in the mouth. They took what they received from Ibsen and went immediately to work. Ibsen's wish that The Wild Duck "may perhaps induce some of our younger playwrights to venture out in a new direction" was, within ten years, more than gratified. One such group of younger playwrights were the symbolists, who, though they claimed direct lineage from Villiers de l'Isle Adam, could not help but regard Ibsen as a pioneer and master. Led by Maeterlinck and
Claudel, the symbolists were highly influential throughout the nineties, and, as their name implies, the most distinguishing feature of their work was symbolism. Unfortunately, what began as legitimate interest in a new technique soon became an overwhelming passion. Ultimately, the symbolists came to regard the symbol as an end rather than as a means and began to pursue it too often for its own sake. They ended by losing sight entirely of the function of the symbol in Ibsen's work, and their own plays tended to become little better than "grown-up fairy tales." Thus, for one group of younger playwrights, the "new direction" which began so vigorously with The Wild Duck was to end rather limply with The Blue Bird.

But the symbolists were only one minor group, and Ibsen's influence did not stop with them. His introduction of symbolism into such plays as Hedda Gabler secured for the device a respectable if minor function in the works of latter day externalists like G.B. Shaw, and made the symbol an important element in the dramas of such eclectic playwrights as Chekhov and Hauptmann. Nor was Ibsen's influence confined only to playwrights. However strongly Edel may believe that O'Neill was influenced by Joyce, William Tindall is equally strong in his feeling that Joyce found in The Master Builder one of his great
examples for *Finnegan's Wake*.\(^{24}\)

But among all the writers of pan-psychic literature who followed Ibsen's example, perhaps the most important of the dramatists was his younger contemporary August Strindberg. Strindberg seems to have finally recognized what Ibsen only vaguely apprehended, that the major problem of modern pan-psychic drama was the projection of the total dramatic illusion through some aspect of the first-person subjective point of view. He was probably greatly aided in this recognition by the increasing popularity of Freudian psychology, but his experiments with mysterious mental processes in such externalist plays as *The Father* and *Miss Julia* certainly demonstrate that he owed no primary debt to the science of psychoanalysis. However, the question of what Strindberg owed to psychology, or even what psychology might have owed to Strindberg, is beside the point; obviously they were both products of the total *Zeitgeist*. The more germane matter is that since Strindberg was the first to take up the problem uncompromisingly, any detailed study of point of view in modern drama must begin with the Swedish playwright. Once Strindberg had joined issue with the problem of dramatizing the subjective perspective, however, it was not long

before a considerable group of playwrights from many nations followed his lead in exploring and exploiting it, and a lengthy period of structural experimentation began, experimentation which has continued to the present day.

The remainder of this study will be devoted to a detailed investigation of this experimentation as found in eight examples of aspects of point of view in modern drama. Beginning with Strindberg, the playwrights studied will include Evreinov, Kaiser, Pirandello, O'Neill, Giraudoux, Miller, and Anouilh. Their works have been selected for various reasons, the most important being that each of the works represents a different aspect of the problem of point of view. Only a little less important is the fact that each work is considered a modern play of some merit, and thus each will serve to keep this study within the mainstream of modern drama, while at the same time each will stand as evidence for the contention that the issue of point of view is perhaps one of the most significant structural questions in modern dramatic literature. Moreover the eight dramatists represent an international group, and, therefore, prove that interest in the new method was not limited by geography or culture. Finally, the playwrights fall into a rough chronological pattern, thus serving as examples of the approximate growth of the problem and of the direction it took as it evolved within the total contemporary framework.
There is no doubt that it would have been possible to select other plays and other playwrights. German Expressionism, for example, teems with point-of-view studies, and Kaiser's play could have been replaced by one of Toller's or any other of a large number of expressionists. The same is true of American drama, which, in such works as Rice's *Adding Machine* and Kaufman and Connelly's *Beggar on Horseback*, offered interesting if somewhat clumsy examples of the manipulation of subjective point of view. In the cases mentioned above, however, the playwrights are either inferior to the dramatists chosen for study, or else represent a later or less original solution to the problem. In short, the eight playwrights to be studied are among the writers considered as the leading dramatists of our times, and their works, therefore, seem to stand as the best examples of the possibilities and difficulties of point of view as a structural element.

In fine, then, the eight playwrights presented in this study are the end products of a century and a half of romanticist thinking. They stand as individual manifestations of the pan-psychic tendencies of modern drama, tendencies so widespread as to touch even the work of such part-time and reactionary playwrights as T.S. Eliot and W.B. Yeats. The germs of these tendencies are buried somewhere in the drama of high Romance which dominated the early 19th-century stage, but their uniquely modern character can first be seen taking shape
during the last quarter of the 19th-century. At that time two more or less distinct currents developed in drama, Externalism and Pan-Psychism. Had it not been for Ibsen, it is difficult to say what the ultimate relationship of these two forces may have been. Ibsen's work, however, forced a schism between the two and set for each its separate goals.

It must be kept in mind, however, that no matter how diametrically opposed the two directions might appear to the casual observer, they are, in essence, of the closest kinship. They both share the common background of subjectively based, irrational relativism, and the more subjective direction is, in truth, the child of the more objective. This relationship is best demonstrated by Ibsen, who is a key figure in both movements. First, by rescuing the well-made play from the decadence of the French theatre and by imposing on it a new third-person objectivity, he set the pattern for the 20th-century externalists. Then, by becoming restive under the restrictions of his surface-realism method and by attempting to pierce the hard shell of objectivity through symbolism and a new attitude toward individualized point of view, he created the goals for the latter day pan-psychic playwrights. It only remained for his younger contemporary, August Strindberg, to make those goals clearer by completely rejecting the third-person objective point of view.
CHAPTER THREE

THE DREAM AND THE MONODRAMA

STRINDBERG AND EVREINOV STATE THE PROBLEM

I

Strindberg: The Dream Play

Just before the turn of the century, a particularly interesting vogue gained popularity among European artists and intellectuals. At that time it became fashionable—indeed, it became almost mandatory—to go quite mad. The names of those artists and thinkers who were victims of some sort of mental disorder would make a rather long list and would include such well known figures as Nietzsche, Van Gogh and Henrik Ibsen. Always sensitive to the intellectual currents of his times, August Strindberg, not surprisingly, was to be counted among those who most passionately embraced the new fashion. Strindberg referred to his own mental collapse, which followed close upon the heels of that of his friend Fredrick Nietzsche, as his "inferno" period, a rather lengthy time during which he harrowed the Swedenborgian hell, practiced alchemy, and engaged in certain types of black magic. Somehow, without extensive medical treatment, he managed to regain sufficient control to marry for a third time, establish his own theatre, and resume his writing. But much had happened to him during the long hiatus, and the work
which he produced after the "inferno" was often of a strangely
different quality. While it is true that he continued to write
naturalistic plays up until the very end, his attitude and tech­
niques even in these externalistic dramas were different enough to
justify the contention that from 1897 until his death Strindberg's
chief concern was developing the pan-psychic drama. But this
proposition need not be argued from the externalistic plays, for
its main support comes from Strindberg's experiments in a unique
and surprisingly contemporary dramatic form--the dream play. These
experiments include the To Damascus series, The Ghost Sonata, and,
of course, The Dream Play itself.

That Strindberg should ultimately settle upon the dream as
a dramatic form seems, in retrospect, something less than unusual.
Considering the man and the times, it seems, in fact, almost
inevitable. Strindberg, a moody and introspective boy, was the
unwanted child of an extremely large family. The son of a poverty-
stricken aristocrat and a woman of the lower classes, Strindberg
contained within himself a microcosmic reflection of the larger
struggle between the upper and lower classes which was then being
waged in Europe. He was to spend much of his adult life attempting
to reconcile this personal conflict. As if this problem were not
enough, the sensitive boy was soon aware that he was rejected by
both mother and father, and that, after his mother's death, he was
openly hated by his stepmother.¹

Strindberg's problems at home drove the boy to seek solace in Pietism, a popular Lutheran sect with strong Puritanical and Calvinistic leanings. Like the New England Puritans, the Pietists held as their basic precept the doctrine of election, with its correspondent emphasis on restraint, prayer, and soul-searching. The effect such a religion might have on an already introverted boy can easily be imagined. Thus, it is safe to say that before he left home to attend the university, Strindberg's intensely personal world view had already been established. What was basic in the boy was to remain basic in the man, and it is now a truism to say that Strindberg's work is always highly autobiographical.

To support this contention, it is necessary only to note that every precept of Strindberg's philosophy can be traced to one or another of his childhood experiences. His ambivalent attitude towards women, for instance, was probably rooted in his constant longing for a mother love he never received, and in his later inability to reconcile this longing with the mature sexual demands made by his wives. Or again, the strict teachings of Pietism and the conflict of loyalties caused by the differing origins of his mother and father were probably responsible for his continuing

¹For those who set store in such things, Strindberg's unhappy relationship with his mother has caused him to be considered a classic example of the Oedipus Complex. For a thorough discussion of this and other matters in Strindberg's life see V. J. McGill, August Strindberg, The Bedeviled Viking (London: Noel Douglas, 1930).
iconoclasm, which was consistent only in being always present in some form. Moreover, Pietism was in all likelihood the activity which prepared his soul for his later Swedenborgian ecstasies and for his ultimate conversion to a Christianity which was a compromise between the teachings of Swedenborg and those of Roman Catholicism. All in all, Strindberg's background and personality certainly equipped him to be a pan-psychic playwright of note, and, if the times were right, perhaps a truly important innovator. As it so happens, the times could not have been more auspicious. All Strindberg had to do was to be alive to their signs, and this he certainly was.

As Otto Heller notes in his essay on Strindberg, the playwright was aware of every new intellectual current, and, at one time or another, supported each of them:

He reversed his judgment with a temerity and swiftness that greatly offended the feeling and perplexed the intelligence of his followers for the time being and justified the question whether Strindberg had any principles at all. In politics he was by quick turns Anarchist and Socialist, Radical and Conservative, Republican and Aristocrat, Communist and Egoist; in religion, Pietist, Protestant, Deist, Atheist, Occultist and Roman Catholic.²

With such an erratic intellectual pattern, it is not strange that when Strindberg came to playwrighting, he first tried his hand at the historical romances then in vogue, and, when the fashion

changed, abandoned these for the new Externalism. In the latter mode he became a master. But even as Strindberg was producing his naturalistic masterpieces, Henrik Ibsen, the playwright whom Strindberg refused to recognize as master, was quietly moving beyond the frontiers of objectivity. However much Strindberg may have believed that Ibsen found Hedda's prototypes in *The Father* and *Miss Julia*, it was ultimately the younger man who was to be beholden to the older. Three years before the appearance of *The Father*, Ibsen had already presented a new subjectivity in *The Wild Duck*, and by the nineties Ibsen had almost broken through the barrier of objectivity in such plays as *Hedda Gabler*. Had it not been for Strindberg's passionate disagreement with Ibsen over the "woman problem" it is very possible that Strindberg would have realized and acknowledged his debt. After all, the Swedish playwright could hardly have found fault with the subject-focused conclusions of Ibsen's relativism, for the homage which Strindberg paid to Nietzsche and Swedenborg was obviously based on his early and continuing reverence for Buckle, author of *History of Civilization in England*, whose total view was naturalistic determinism, but whose basic premise was that all truth was relative to the individual, to his situation and presuppositions.\(^3\)

Thus, even while Strindberg was damning Ibsen as the "Norwegian blue stocking," he was preparing to follow him by becoming a convert to Buckle's relativism. As if Buckle's beliefs were

\(^3\)McGill, *op. cit.*, p. 105.
not enough, Strindberg also fell under the influence of Nietzsche and carried on a lengthy correspondence with that philosopher.\(^4\) Nietzsche's amorality and his stress on the individual ego must surely have heightened Strindberg's growing annoyance with the objectivity of Externalism, for McGill records that in 1892, in a famous drinking resort in Berlin, Strindberg made a vehement attack on Naturalism which, in its violence, surprised and hurt his friend, the poet Dehmel.\(^5\) Why Strindberg did not follow the lead of Ibsen at this time is an open conjecture. Happily he did not, for if he had, it is probable that he would have given his allegiance to the symbolists, whose work he admired sufficiently to write *Swanwhite* in direct imitation of Maeterlinck. Had Strindberg committed himself wholeheartedly to the symbolists at this time, it is likely that he would have been lost to us but as a writer of fairy tales.

Strindberg's "symbolist period" was to come, however, and when it did, he was to see what Maeterlinck was blind to, and he was to take the decisive step into complete subjectivity. Before he was equipped to do this, however, one more philosophic ingredient was necessary. The times had already conspired that he should be aware of the relativism of Buckle, the ego-cult of Nietzsche, and the new

---

\(^4\)For more information on the Nietzsche-Strindberg correspondence see Herman Scheffauer, "A Correspondence Between Nietzsche and Strindberg," *North American Review*, 198 (1913), 197-205.

techniques of Ibsen as popularized by the symbolists. He had now only to descend into his "inferno" and be converted to the mysticism of Swedenborg. When he emerged from this final trial, he was ready to write the drama, not about himself, but of himself.

Thus Strindberg, before the turn of the century, was prepared to tell the truth. This truth was the truth in the Buckleian sense, the world as seen from Strindberg's point of view. It was also the truth in the Nietzschean sense, the truth of the individual will, in its Dionysian as well as its Apollonian form, transcending and reshaping the world. It was, finally, the truth in the Swedenborgian sense, the truth of the inner not the outer existence of man. To tell this special kind of truth, Strindberg needed a new structural method. The objectivity of Externalism might, if properly manipulated, very well have met the demands of Buckle and Nietzsche, but its very nature was the antithesis of Swedenborgianism. There was, of course, the symbolism of Maeterlinck, but a symbol is not total structural solution, except in the metaphorical sense that all structural solutions are ultimately symbolic. Moreover, the symbolist playwrights had tended more and more towards the fairy tale, thus reducing their symbolism to the function of anti-realism as opposed to inner-realism. Whether realistic or fanciful, their basic structure still postulated either the objective or omniscient approach. Thus The Blue Bird may be fantasy, but within the fantastic framework, its method of presentation is still that of Externalism. Strindberg then could make use of various superficial techniques
of the symbolists, but he had to search out a fundamentally different overall approach through which to present his new trifold philosophy.

That new method, consciously or not, followed the lead of Ibsen's experiments with point of view in his post-\textit{Hedda Gabler} period, but it took Ibsen's techniques one step farther. Strindberg completely discarded any pretense of objectivity and established instead a first-person subjective point of view. Now while this step was prompted by a need to represent the inner reality according to Swedenborg, its immediate inspiration was, in all likelihood, the experiences which Strindberg had undergone during his mental collapse. Throughout this time hallucinations were frequent occurrence in the life of the playwright. He was attacked by electric currents; he saw white hands lifted in prayer. The man with whom he shared a room turned out to be the Doppelgänger of the American faith healer, Francis Schlotter. At another time a Roman knight appeared to him and offered him the formula for transforming iron into gold.\textsuperscript{6} These and other waking dreams probably suggested to Strindberg the fragility of the relationship between the subject and the object, between the inner and the outer reality. He no doubt realized how much the stability of the latter depends upon state of will of the former, upon whims of its

\textsuperscript{6}For a full account of this period see Strindberg's autobiographical work, \textit{Inferno}, Claude Field, Trans. (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1913).
ordering consciousness. Or, inversely, he recognized how quickly the apparent order of outer reality can be disturbed by the refusal of the metaconscious to allow the consciousness to admit that order's existence. When a decision had to be made between the two, Strindberg, true to the dictates of Swedenborg, came to place his trust in inner reality, even, and especially, when it disagreed with the outer. As his experiences had shown him, this disagreement often took the form of a waking dream; hence, it is little wonder that when Strindberg cast about for a new structural approach, he finally came to select the individual dream as an artistic form.

His first experiments with the new convention were in the To Damascus trilogy, written between 1897 and 1904. At first his technique is inconsistent, for like Ibsen before him Strindberg was reluctant to relinquish entirely the externalistic form. This reluctance, however, is not apparent in his two most consummate experiments with his new dream structure--The Ghost Sonata and The Dream Play. These two plays, the latter written in 1901-02 and the former in 1907, still stand as two of the most striking and original literary works of the early 20th-century. While both were written after the publication of Freud's theory of dream interpretation, there is no evidence to indicate that Strindberg had ever read Freud. What he had read were the more important signs of his time, and, moreover, he had read and acted on them sometime before the celebrated subjective experiments of Proust and James Joyce. Just what Strindberg read in those signs and just
how he translated what he read into a dramatic statement can best be discovered by a detailed analysis of his new method. Since *The Dream Play* is the earliest and the best complete example of the new technique, it has been selected to serve as a basis for this analysis.

It must be granted at the outset that *The Dream Play* is not new in its dreaminess, for dream works in the Maeterlinck tradition were then quite popular in Europe. They had, for that matter, always been popular. As Strindberg correctly observed, *The Tempest* is a dream play. But prior dream plays, like *The Tempest*, had been fairy tales. That is, though their atmosphere was fantastical, their psychology, no matter how naive, conformed to the psychology of accepted reality. Moreover, even the elements of fantasy were standardized. We expect Ariels and Calibans to appear, even demand that they do. The same is true of such elements as enchanted islands, handsome princes, and lovely princesses. It is the received dream world of high romance and conforms to certain universal principles. In a play like *The Tempest*, once we know it for fantasy, the emphasis is on the dream, and its pleasant divergences from reality. The audience has dreamed this same dream many times, and what they expect to see is not a new dream but a new variation of the old one. Both the audience and the playwright agree that the world depicted is a familiar but alien one whose charm derives from everyone's awareness that it is an improbable one.

Strindberg's *Dream Play* differs from this concept in that the emphasis is on the dreamer, and the world presented is reality, a
world actually occurring for the dreamer, and the fact that it is a
world possible only for the dreamer does not at all detract from
its reality. What the audience is invited to do is to share this
world with the dreamer by dreaming along with him, by forgetting,
for the moment all other worlds. As Strindberg says in the preface
to The Dream Play:

The characters are split, double and multiply, they
evaporate, crystallise, scatter and converge. But a
single consciousness holds sway over them all—that of
the dreamer. For him there are no secrets, no incon­
gruities, no scruples, no law. He neither condemns nor
aquits, only relates...7

In other words, what happens in The Tempest may be referred to
the audience's sense of external reality, and the divergences between
universal dream and universal reality may be duly noted and enjoyed.
What happens in The Dream Play may be referred only to the dreamer.
The audience is prohibited from considering the points of diver­
gence from objective reality because the focus is not on commonly
shared experiences but on the uniqueness of the dreamer's vision.
Briefly, the audience sees Shakespeare's world through their own
eyes; Strindberg's world they see only through the eyes of the
dreamer. Shakespeare injects fantasy into the universal object;
Strindberg begins with externality and quickly passes into the
variations it produces in the private ego.

...on a slight groundwork of reality, imagination spins
and weaves new patterns made up of memories, experiences,

7Elizabeth Sprigge, Trans., August Strindberg, Six Plays of
Strindberg (Garden City, New York: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1956),
p. 193.
unfettered fancies, absurdities and improvisations.

Strindberg demands that his audience forget all concepts of fantasy and reality, of morals and actions, of human relationships on and off the stage, and observe instead the flux and counterflux of a single mind as it reacts to an unknown stimulus from the outer world. In short, we have in The Dream Play the workings of a mind observed in no larger sphere of action than the mind itself. It is on this basis that one must accept or reject the play.

Moreover, by an unfortunate accident, the mind happens to be the mind of August Strindberg, a mind not yet fully recovered from a severe mental illness, a mind fascinated by all manner of Eastern and Western mysticism, and, consequently, a mind that could hardly hope to call forth the empathic response which is the very sine quo non of an understanding of the dream form. Realizing this, Strindberg has made certain concessions. After the play was completed, he added the prologue in which Indra's Daughter descends from heaven in order to experience first hand the life of man. By thus casting over the play an aura of Eastern mystery, Strindberg greatly tempered its distortions. In addition, the playwright added a short preface which he had printed in the program for the first production of The Dream Play. Along with the other ideas already cited, the preface stresses the dreaming as opposed to the waking quality of the play. This is sop to the simple-minded. That the play is nightmarish there is no doubt, but despite the implication of the preface, there is evidence in the play itself that the events are part of a waking dream. More to the
point, the playwright implies that there is no basic difference
between the two, as the following scene between the Poet and Indra's
Daughter indicates.

POET. I seem to have lived through this before.
DAUGHTER. I too.
POET. Perhaps I dreamt it.
DAUGHTER. Or made a poem of it.
POET. Or made a poem.
DAUGHTER. You know then what poetry is.
POET. I know what dreaming is.
DAUGHTER. I feel that once before, somewhere else, we
said these words.
POET. Then soon you will know what reality is.
DAUGHTER. Or dreaming.
POET. Or poetry.

On the basis of this conversation, the play may be considered
a dream, a memory, a bit of external reality, or a poem, or even a
dream within a dream. The label is unimportant; call it by the more
modern name of stream of consciousness, it still remains that the
playwright is recording the play of mysterious images on the stage
of his consciousness, images that have been called up from some meta-
conscious level of human existence. For centuries, the traditional
procedure—broken only here or there by such painters as Hieronymus
van Bosch—had been for the artist to so arrange and translate
these images into the common tongue that a universally stated analogue
to them existed in a painting, poem, or play. In other words, the
assumption had been that these spectres from the preconscious were
essentially incoherent, and that in order to make them communicable,
it was necessary to bring to bear on them the ordering logic of the
consciousness. As Nietzsche puts it, the Dionysian needs the logic
of the Apollonian. In The Dream Play, Strindberg directly challenges
this assumption. To him the Dionysian is meaningful in and of itself. As he says in the preface to The Dream Play,

In this dream play, as in his former dream play To Damascus, the Author has sought to reproduce the disconnected but apparently logical form of a dream.

Thus, before the play begins, Strindberg announces that he is studying a new form of logic, the basic logic of the individual out of which all universal inference ultimately grows. This rationale of the individual is best reflected in the "dream work," and therefore the meaning of the play will be found in Strindberg's comments on and presentation of the "apparently logical form of a dream." In other words, the meaning of Strindberg's dream will be found in the assumptions upon which it rests and in its own form of coherence, its own structural patterns. What then, first of all, are the assumptions of dream logic?

To begin with, as Strindberg says, "time and space do not exist." Just how original this notion was in 1901 is difficult for us now to realize, for we have had the advantage of seeing an Albert Einstein scientifically explode our traditional concepts of space and time. Indeed, some of us are even now somewhat astounded at the idea, although every "stream of consciousness" novelist from Proust onward has toyed with and worried the notion to death. In The Dream Play Strindberg pauses to take up the concept in some detail.

OFFICER. Then how long shall I have to stay here?
SCHOOL MASTER. How long? Here? You believe that time and space exist? Assuming that time does exist, you ought to be able to say what time is. What is time?
OFFICER. Time...I can't say, although I know what it is. Ergo, I may know what twice two is without being able to say it. Can you yourself say what time is?
SCHOOL MASTER. Certainly I can.
OFFICER. Tell us then!
SCHOOL MASTER. Time?...Let me see. While we speak time flies. Consequently, time is something which flies while I am speaking.
BOY. (rising) You're speaking now, sir, and while you're speaking, I fly. Consequently, I'm time. (He flies)
SCHOOL MASTER. That is also quite correct according to the laws of logic, although it is absurd.
OFFICER. Then logic is absurd.
SCHOOL MASTER. It really looks like it. But if logic is absurd the whole world is absurd....

As the scene above suggests, when time and space cease to exist, so also does popular logic whose casual foundations rest on spatial-temporal reality. Having discarded the received time-space sequence, the Officer and the School Master are justified in playing Alice in Wonderland with rationality.

OFFICER. Yes, that's so, one must mature...Twice two--is two, and this I will demonstrate by analogy, the highest form of proof. Listen! Once one is one, therefore twice two is two. For that which applies to the one must apply to the other.
SCHOOL MASTER. The proof is perfectly in accord with the laws of logic, but the answer is wrong.
OFFICER. What is in accord with the laws of logic cannot be wrong. Let us put it to the test. One goes into one once, therefore two goes into two twice.

If time, space, and popular ideals of logic do not exist, then there is little reason to assume that probability and possibility exist either. As Strindberg tells us, "Anything can happen; everything is possible and probable." Thus in one sweep, the entire structural assumptions of all previous dramatic literature are cast aside. And yet, Strindberg promises us that on the basis of this new
assumptions he will present us with a drama of "apparent logic," a new logic which will give the key to the whole meaning of the "inner life" of the ego.

This strange new Strindbergian logic is symbolized in The Dream Play by the secret hidden behind the door with the clover leaf design, and one of the major concerns of the play is the unlocking of that door. When near the end, the door is finally unlocked, the secret turns out to be nothing. This has two meanings. To the Dean of Theology, the secret is nothing because out of nothing God created heaven and earth. Now this meaning has been generally passed from critic to critic, and pawned off on readers and audience as the meaning of the play. What these critics fail to realize is that they are the very ones whom Strindberg is satirizing, for they have failed to take into account that the statement is made by the Dean of Theology who probably represents the accepted not the Strindbergian world view. Actually, Indra's Daughter, a few lines later, gives us what must be taken as Strindberg's meaning. Earlier she has told the Dean of Theology that what he said was true but that he has misunderstood. Now she tells the Poet.

DAUGHTER. ...In the dawn of time, before your sun gave light, Brahma, the divine primal force let himself be seduced by Maya, the World Mother, that he might propagate. This mingling of the divine element and the earthly was the Fall from heaven. This world, its life and its inhabitants are therefore only a mirage, a reflection, a dream image.

POET. My dream!

DAUGHTER. A true dream. But, in order to be freed from the earthly element, the descendants of Brahma sought renunciation and suffering. And so you have suffering as the deliverer. But this
yearning for suffering comes into conflict with the longing for joy, for love. Now you understand what love is; supreme joy in the greatest suffering, the sweetest is the most bitter. Do you understand now what woman is? Woman, through whom sin and death entered into life.

POET. I understand. And the outcome?
DAUGHTER. What you yourself know. Conflict between the pain of joy and the joy of pain, between the anguish of the penitent and the pleasure of the sensual.
POET. And the conflict?
DAUGHTER. The conflict of opposites generates power, as fire and water generate the force of steam.

Thus there is nothing behind the door because the world is nothing. It is but the reflection of the individual dreamer and its substance changes with each dreamer and each dream. Or, again, there is nothing behind the door because it is opened at the end of the play; had it been opened in the third scene, one could have seen, in simultaneous montage, the entire remainder of the play. Hence, Strindberg's new basic logic is the dreamer's logic, which is, as Indra's Daughter suggests, the logic of opposites. In its preformal state, the mind proceeds by contraries. In proof that this is the basic comment of the play, let us examine its structural patterns.

In terms of overall structure, the play may be divided into two more or less equal halves. The first half culminates in the scene at Foulstrand. The second half begins with the scenes in Fairhaven and gradually repeats in reverse most of the happenings of part one. This is not to say that there is a formal repetition, for that would argue for a rationalistic world. The order of repetition is not consistent, and there are individual scenes in both halves that
have no counterparts. On the whole, however, the repetition of contraries is quite obvious.

The play begins and ends with the "growing castle." In the first scene it is a prison, a place to escape from. In the last, it is a gateway to heaven, a burning bier of deliverance. In this same manner, the very short third, fourth, and fifth scenes at the opera are balanced by the rather long second to last scene of the play which is also set at the opera. For the most part, however, the balance is more asymmetrical. Thus, the antepenultimate scene finds its counterpart in the grotto scene, scene eight of part one; and the graduation scene, a late scene in the first half, is reflected in the early second half scene at the grammar school. What episodes are not completely mirrored are at least brought up in part two. Thus, though there is no return to the Lawyer's office; there is a reappearance of the Lawyer and much allusion to the earlier scene.

In all, the play's special pattern is highly reminiscent of music, and we may say that Strindberg was among the first of the early modern dramatists to forsake the role of the architect for that of the composer. Thus the first half of the play introduces the motif of the painful and dreary lot of human existence. This theme is built up and varied until it reaches something of a crescendo in the scene of domestic strife between the Lawyer and Indra's Daughter. There follows an interlude in Foulstrand itself, which serves to summarize what has happened and to introduce the major instrument of the second movement, the Poet. The second movement
takes up the "joys" of life in Fairhaven, and this portion of the play reaches its climax in the lyric ecstasy of the Daughter, who in her rapture delivers herself of a prophetic vision of ultimate salvation in God. Thereafter, Strindberg returns to the backstage alley of the opera and combines the motifs of both parts into a larger orchestration which gains steadily in both complexity and intensity until Indra's Daughter is consumed in the flames of the growing castle as the bud on the roof bursts into a giant flower.

So much for larger patterns. Within this framework of thesis and antithesis are found minor themes and situations which mirror the overall structure. Without enumerating them all, we might indicate one or two that point to the first movement's constant variations on the theme of desperate hope. The Officer, for instance, waits throughout his life in the vain hope of seeing the woman of his dreams. In like manner, the Lawyer, having failed to receive his degree, marries nevertheless, taking this unwise step on the basis of a hopeless hope that he will somehow be able to support a wife and family. So also does Indra's Daughter—despite the disillusioning experience of one marital failure—elope with the Officer who promises to take her to Fairhaven but who loses his way and brings them instead to Foulstrand.

In the second movement, these motifs are played in reverse, and the theme becomes one of hopeless desperation. Once the object of hope has been acquired, it cannot be enjoyed. Edith is invited to a dance only to find that no one wishes to dance with her. The Officer finds that his degree is not enough; he must return to school
to mature. The Mediterranean paradise of the Daughter and the Lawyer is marred by their awareness of the unhappy lot of those who are less fortunate.

**DAUGHTER.** This is paradise.

**1ST COAL HEAVER.** This is hell.

**2ND COAL HEAVER.** A hundred and twenty in the shade.

Thus the only thing constant about human life is its contradictions. Hope and despair exchange places with one another according to the shift in perspective, but in some mixture pain and joy are always present. Strindberg's belief in the oneness of these two contraries is perhaps most strongly stated in the scene between the Officer, his lost love Victoria, and her new husband.

**OFFICER.** And Victoria whom I loved, for whom I desired the greatest happiness on earth, she has her happiness now, the greatest happiness she can know, while I suffer, suffer, suffer.

**VICTORIA.** Do you think I can be happy, seeing your suffering? How can you believe that? Perhaps it comforts you to know that I shall be a prisoner here for forty days and forty nights. Tell me, does that comfort you?

**OFFICER.** Yes and no. I cannot have pleasure while you have pain.

**HE.** And do you think that my happiness can be built on your agony?

**OFFICER.** We are all to be pitied—all of us.

Before dispensing with it completely, one final aspect of Strindbergian dream logic must be considered. In terms of larger concepts, dream logic is the logic of contradictions, but what of the relation of its parts one to the other? Does this involve a cohesive process? The answer to this, of course, depends upon our definition of cohesive. But if we can assume for cohesive such a synonym as sequential, we may say that the playwright gives his world of
contradictions unity by moving from one contrary to another through the sequential process popularized by Freudian psychoanalysis under the rather confusing label of the "logic of free association."

Without passing a value judgment on this manner of logic, let us observe its operation in the play.

Scene one finds the Officer complaining of life's injustices. This, by association, brings up the question of injustices suffered as a child, and on this note the scene shifts to the Officer's childhood home. This is not to say that scene one lays careful preparation for scene two in the manner in which this might be done in a well-made play. What happens in scene two does not in any manner rest architecturally on scene one. The only link between the two is a mention by the Officer of injustice. This same sort of association is found between scenes two and three. As scene two draws to a close, Indra's Daughter is moved to comment, "Life is hard. But love conquers everything. Come and see." With this invitation the scene shifts to the backstage alley of the opera, and the Officer appears as a faithful suitor waiting for his true love. As the play progresses, the linking of one episode to another through free associations becomes more and more involved. Thus a casual mention of some idea or element from an earlier scene is enough to recall that scene in whole or in part. The Kyrie of a children's choir, for instance, is used as a transition into the first Grotto scene, while in the much later second Grotto scene it reappears as a hymn sung by the sailor's on a doomed ship. By the end of the play, the single thin strands of association are so
thickly webbed that a strong impression of tangible unity is achieved, the same effect of unity that is later to be found in *Remembrance of Things Past*, for it was the same type of associative logic, the same special kind of sequential development and cohesion used in *The Dream Play*, that was later to form one of the basic problems of Proust's monumental work.

A second means of gaining unity, a means closely related to the logic of free association, was that of repetition of key symbols. In much the same manner that earlier playwrights had gained unity through central character, Strindberg centered his work about major symbols. In all likelihood, Strindberg learned this particular technique from Maeterlinck, but he took the technique a good many steps farther into complexity, and the two major symbols of *The Dream Play*, the growing castle and the forbidden door, stand as much richer complexes than do the pale allegories of Maeterlinck. The castle, for instance, is first of all a prison, suggesting the solipsistic nature of the individual existence. It is not, however, an ordinary prison. Like the bud on its roof and the flowers around it, the Castle grows away from the earth, and as it grows, it adds new windows, new views of the earth and the heavens. Thus Strindberg manages to make an involved religious and intellectual statement with his symbol. He adds to the significance of this statement by having the Glazier who adds the new windows to the Castle also perform the task of opening the forbidden door. The meaning becomes even richer when we realize that the Glazier is also the earthly father of Indra's Daughter. As a final function of the symbol, the Castle serves as a
funeral bier for Indra's Daughter, and as it burns, the bud on its roof bursts into full bloom, signifying the completion of its earthly mission.

The significance of the forbidden door has already been discussed, but a second aspect of it will serve as an example of the advantages which the dream form offers to one who wishes to obtain unity of central symbol. Throughout the play, the door is not only discussed but makes an almost continual appearance. First, it is the door of the Officer's kitchen cabinet, then the door in the backstage alley, then the door to the Lawyer's legal files. Such a repetition of the same property in so many different functions is only possible within the dream form, which progresses by contradictions and which dismisses time and space and probability in favor of the imaginative liberty of free association.

Over the whole work, in all its diverse structural manifestations, stands the unifying vision of the dreamer, the intensely personal outlook of Strindberg himself. There are no characters in the play; there is only the action of the dreamer. The forms which pass as characters are able to "split, double and multiply, evaporate, crystallize, scatter and converge" because they are not external characters at all. They are merely different aspects of the same personality, or at best projections of that personality into external forms. In short, The Dream Play is a play of introspection, and what character is present is revealed not developed. Moreover, the character revealed is always that of the dreamer. Thus Indra's Daughter is the deepest mystical essence of the soul, which is not
uncommonly represented as female. The Lawyer, the Officer, and the Poet are each a separate aspect of the Dreamer's more conscious personality, and each attempts his own sort of communion with the soul, while at the same time making his own manner of compromise with the material problems of the flesh. To each aspect this communion and this compromise grows out of his nature, his private viewpoint. The Lawyer sees his problems through the eyes of a liberal idealist, the Officer through those of a sentimental romantic. All three aspects pull against one another, and all three try to capture Indra's Daughter, the soul, for himself alone. It is the Poet who succeeds best in this struggle because he is the farthest removed from externality. But even he is not totally successful, and he is condemned forever to compete with the other two for the Daughter's love. It is this passionate desire for ultimate mystical communion with the deepest essence of the soul which keeps the three aspects from disassociating completely. Thus, the dreamer's personality, like all life, is forced to live in continual conflict, a conflict which gains its unity from the very inseparability of its contradictions. Such an unfortunate condition is truly a basis for the Daughter's constant refrain: "Life is cruel. Men are to be pitied."

To sum up, the dream form was, as Strindberg boasted, a completely new dramatic mode which he himself invented. It differed from previous dream works in that its elements of fantasy were to be considered as significant, realizable reality, and in that the focus was shifted from the world of jointly shared experiences to the closed and subjective world of the private ego. The action of the
dream was the action of the individual interacting within himself, and, by this involution of action, viewing reality from his own standards not those of the audience. These standards included a rejection of space, time and probability, an acceptance of the free association of ideas as a cognitive process, an apposition of contraries as a general framework for thought, and a reliance on the unity provided by the evolving meanings of major symbols. As an ultimate goal, the dream form aimed at presenting the action of a given soul in reference to itself alone.

It is true, of course, that some sort of stimulus from external reality was assumed, and, as Martin Lamm informs us, "a good many of the scenes are day dreams inspired by what Strindberg saw from his study window while he was composing the play."8 Moreover, anyone sufficiently familiar with Strindberg's life can see many of Strindberg's own experiences reflected in The Dream Play. But these things are unimportant, for Strindberg was studying the reaction, not the stimulus. Despite countless autobiographical references, the play is not biography in the received sense. It is, as it were, pre-autobiographical. It is a study of the soul spewing forth those ideas and episodes which will only later be organized into a logical autobiography. And thus it is, above all, the first truly modern projection of the dramatic illusion through the subjective viewpoint of the dramatic character himself.

---

8Lamm, op. cit., p. 145.
In terms of the latter aspect, the dream method has several advantages. By dispensing with space, time, and popular logic, it escapes the restraints of objectivity and eliminates the need for carefully architectured intrigue. It permits the use of symbols without any regard to the justification of their presence in strange contexts, and, above all, it provides the dramatist with unlimited opportunities for romantic irony, which can be achieved so rapidly in the dream form. Since the dramatist is bound only by the highly elastic logic of free association, he may, when he feels the need to reinforce his scene or theme through ironic action or statement, simply introduce a character or situation out of nowhere, make his point, and then return again to the episode at hand. Thus, a pensioner appears just as the Officer is discussing the dreary lot of life on a pension, and so too the blind man with his speech of doom just as the pleasure ship sets sail.

Against these advantages stand certain disadvantages. The easy access to ironical situations may prove too great a temptation, and the device may be used so frequently that it becomes emasculated. Passionate romantic that he was, Strindberg was guilty of this very error. Another disadvantage of the dream form is the difficulty of creating the proper atmosphere. To establish the play's general somnambulistic quality and still maintain a sense of seriousness, the playwright must walk a fine line between the grotesque and the precious. Moreover, incidental atmospheric distortions must be clearly differentiated from the more important symbols. We must, for instance, be able to decide quickly whether the disappearance of the
Officer's father through a wall has any special meaning or whether it simply exists as part of the total dream framework. Problems of this nature are, of course, tied up with and complicated by the subject through whom the playwright projects the vision of the dream. In a play in which all referents are more relative than universal, there is a strong possibility that some members of the audience will see meanings in every action no matter how inconsequential, while others will become so confused that they see nothing but chaos. To ease this problem, the playwright should attempt to select a subject whose mind and, consequently, whose dream will bear certain resemblances to the minds and dreams of his audience. Strindberg seems little interested in solving this problem, for the subject he selected was himself, a man whose precariously balanced mind made subjective communication a veritable impossibility.

Not only does the strange mind of August Strindberg cause communication difficulties, it also gives to his dream the harrowing quality of the worst kind of nightmare. This, of course, was an accident; nightmarishness is not inherent in the dream structure as such. Still the danger is there, and it tended to manifest itself in the Expressionist Movement, which, in taking its cue from Strindberg, often attempted to pawn off much meaningless and pretentious grotesquity as legitimate theatrical subject matter.

But the greatest disadvantage of the dream method lay in none of these things. It lay, instead, in the dream's overall elusiveness, a quality not easily captured in a meaningful artistic structure.
Without losing the essential fluidity, and, more important, the essential irrationality of the dream, the playwright must somehow fix it in a playable dramatic pattern. To meet this problem, Strindberg, like so many other moderns, turned to music for his answer. Now there is nothing inherently wrong in borrowing ideas from another art, but there is a grave potential danger, and Strindberg seems to have been unable to avoid that danger. Again, like so many moderns, Strindberg seems to have confused music with his own particular art, and instead of adapting music to dramatic needs, he adapted drama to the needs of music. He may, perhaps, be excused for this, for it was his friend and guide Nietzsche who saw music as the basis of all arts, but whether Strindberg is excused or not, the fact of failure remains. Metaphors aside, a cathedral is not a frozen hymn and a play is not a sonata. When it tries to be, it is likely to have, as does The Dream Play, a strange, monotonous quality throughout. Hence, though each scene has a quality which is immediate, intense, and, at times, even hysterical, the work as a whole seems strangely unpointed, even flat. Together with other causes, this flatness is the ultimate result of the forsaking of motivations through character and action in favor of motivations through rhythm, that is, the basic logic of the play is musical not dramatic logic.

Whatever his successes or failures, Strindberg had created a new outlook for the modern playwright, and henceforth the pan-psychic dramatist was to busy himself with the presentation of some variation of the individual as opposed to the universal point of view.
II

Evrelnov: The Theatre of the Soul

Just before his death, Strindberg was contemplating a new
dramatic mode. He planned to write a "monodrama" in which there
would be only one character on stage. This actor would carry on
dialogue with various off-stage voices. Strindberg died before he
could realize his new form, but within four years of the first pro­
duction of The Dream Play, a young Russian playwright was actually
discussing and writing a slightly different type of monodrama.

The first theorist and writer of the monodrama was Nicolai
Evrelnov, a brilliant lawyer who at the age of eighteen had read and
been deeply influenced by Nietzsche. In this respect, he was also
akin to Strindberg. Evrelnov was already on his way to a career
in the Ministry of Ways and Communications, when he developed an
interest in the theatre, an interest which was to increase until it
led Evrelnov into a theatrical career as a playwright, director,
dramatic theorist, and the theatrical scholar and historian of the
first rank. Always an experimenter, Evrelnov even gained some
repute for his experiments with the nude as a theatrical element.
Such avant-garde concepts led to his first professional position,
that of the regisseur of the Kommissarzhevskaya Theatre.

It is significant that Evrelnov's immediate predecessor
at the Kommissarzhevskaya Theatre was Vsevolod Meyerhold, for it was
Meyerhold's theatrical theories and his attacks on the production
methods of the externalists of the Moscow Art Theatre that inspired,
in all likelihood, Evrelnov's unique experiments with the dramatic
illusion. In Meyerhold's opinion, the theatre had lost its vigor because its two cooperating halves, the stage and the audience, had been completely divorced from one another by the "fourth wall" of the externalists. Meyerhold felt that truly great theatre could come to the West once more only when a successful method was found to tear down the "fourth wall." As Freedley and Reeves point out, what appealed to Meyerhold was the idea of bringing "the spectators into active participation, making them a vital force in the performance." When Evreinov replaced Meyerhold as director of the Kommissarzheskaya Theatre, he continued the search for a solution to the problem of reuniting audience and stage. His answer to this problem came in 1908, at which time he presented his theory of monodrama to the Moscow Literary and Artistic Circle in an article entitled *An Introduction to the Monodrama*.

From its inception in this article, Evreinov's concept of the monodrama was to undergo many changes and elaborations until it finally evolved into a theory which embraced all living experiences and which required, for its final elucidation, a three volume work, *The Theatre of Oneself*, published 1915-17. Even allowing for Russian tendencies to wordiness and length, the three volumes indicate that the theory is of considerable scope and magnitude; and, indeed, it is. In essence, it is based on the proposition that to be human is to be theatrical. To Evreinov, the instinct for dramatization is a basic one.

---

and must be included with such drives as sex and self-preservation. As Sayler explains, Evreinov felt that "the satisfaction of this instinct is one of the eudynamic stages, so far as human happiness is understood to be one of the needs of the soul."¹⁰

Fundamentally, this theory of the "theatrical instinct" as advanced by Evreinov is a restatement of the standard apology for drama as an art form. But Evreinov's theory is this apology and something more. To him, not only do we have a basic drive to dramatize, but, more important, this drive is the one which is ultimately responsible for the meaning which we attach to our emotions and thoughts. According to the final doctrine of the Russian playwright, "man is touched to the quick only by what he can dramatize."¹¹ In other words, the only emotions we are capable of realizing fully and the only thoughts which we can completely understand are those which we can dramatize for ourselves.¹² Thus, in our own way, each of us is an actor on the stage of our psyche, just as each of us is an actor in the larger theatre of life. Moreover, since each of us may play several different roles in life, there is reason to suspect that we may also play several different roles in our own soul. In

¹¹Ibid., p. 227.
¹²For a more recent discussion touching upon something of the same matter, see Kenneth Burke's consideration of the "dramatistic" function of language in his A Grammar of Motives (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1945).
its entirety, Evreinov's theory of the soul as theatre and the personality as one or more actors is an elaboration and extension of the individual entity as seen by Strindberg in *The Dream Play*. To Evreinov as to Strindberg, the personality may "split, double and multiply."  

As previously stated, in terms of the art of the theatre, Evreinov saw the monodrama as a solution to the Meyerholdian problem of bridging the gap between the stage and the audience. As Evreinov says in his *Introduction to the Monodrama*:

> The task of the monodrama is to carry the spectator to the very stage so that he will feel he is acting himself.... 'I' (the acting character) is a bridge from the auditorium to the stage.

In terms of specific practice, the monodrama carried the spectator to the stage by exploiting his basic theatrical instinct. Once the true nature of the drive to theatre is recognized, nothing could be more natural than for the playwright to use the art form which grows out of this instinct as a means of studying the instinct itself. Thus, the informed playwright will not write plays about several characters interacting in a common exterior world, he will write the more fundamentally theatrical plays about one character acting within himself, performing, so to speak, those very motions by which he dramatizes his view of the external world. In brief, the

---

13 Something of the same kind of reasoning may lie behind Eliot's having Prufrock say to himself: "Let us go then you and I."

playwright will write a monodrama. Evreinov puts it thus:

The real object of dramatic presentation ought to be some living experience, and with this, for the purpose of facilitating receptivity, the living experience of one soul instead of several. Hence the necessity for preferring one 'really acting' protagonist to several 'equally acting,'--in other words, the logic of the demand for such an acting character, 'in whom as a focus should be concentrated the whole drama and therefore the living experience of the other acting characters....I call monodrama the kind of dramatic representation which endeavors with the greatest fullness to communicate to the spectator the soul state of the acting character, and presents on the stage the world surrounding him as he conceives it at any moment in his stage experience.\(^{15}\)

In other words, Evreinov wishes to develop a drama which restricts itself to presenting only the point of view of the central character. A drama of this sort, he feels, would be a truer drama because it would be a more realistic, more basic drama. Moreover, it would have the advantage of forcing the spectator to identify completely with the central character, since a failure to do this would render the drama incomprehensible to the spectator.

Monodrama forces everyone of the spectators to enter the situation of the acting character, to live his life, that is to say, to feel as he does and through illusion to think as he does.\(^{16}\)

When the spectator does identify, he will attain "fusion" with the "main acting character," and, as if happening to find himself on stage, that is in the very place of the action, he will "lose sight of the footlights. They will remain behind him, in other words, they

\(^{15}\text{Ibid.}, \text{ p. 232.}\)

\(^{16}\text{Ibid.}, \text{ p. 235.}\)
will destroy themselves."¹⁷

Therefore, for Evreinov, the monodrama is the "most perfect form of drama" for two reasons: it is the truest expression of the basic instinct for self-dramatization, and it is the best solution to "one of the most burning problems of contemporary art, the problem of chilling and paralyzing the distracting influence of the footlights."

To support his new approach to point of view, Evreinov calls upon justification from the psychologist who knows "it is elemental that the world surrounding us, thanks to the sense impressions, inevitably undergoes changes."

The idea that the object has in it inherently that which in reality it borrows from the impressionable subject is not some exceptional psychological phenomenon. All our sense activity is subject to the processes of the projection of purely subjective changes upon the outside object.¹⁸

In accordance with this principle, the task of the monodramatist is to present the "exterior spectacle in terms of the internal spectacle." All action and characters should be seen "through the prism of the soul of the acting character." Only through this prism, only through the central character's point of view, should we "perceive the world surrounding him, the people surrounding him."

Evreinov's theory, then, both embraces and extends the practices of Strindberg. As The Dream Play testifies, Strindberg

¹⁷Ibid., p. 243.
¹⁸Ibid., p. 237.
saw the action of the private ego as sufficient dramatic matter in and of itself, and he felt no need to relate the external spectacle directly to the internal. Moreover, Strindberg was interested only in his own soul, and made no effort to extend his studies to the souls of others. Perhaps he was unequipped to do so. Whatever the reason, Strindberg's dream was his own. Evreinov differs from Strindberg in both instances. First, he assumes an external spectacle on which the central character can bring to bear his private viewpoint. Second, he does not feel that the monodrama demands that the central character be identified with the playwright himself. Consequently, in the play under study, The Theatre of the Soul, the central or "acting character" is that of a professor.

So much for Evreinov's theory, but what of its practical results? The answer to this question can be found by turning to The Theatre of the Soul. This interesting little one act play opens with a prologue, which, like the prologue to The Dream Play, is obviously intended to prepare the audience for the play's departure from conventional dramatic modes. A Professor appears and explains to the audience that they are going to witness a different kind of play, but withal, one which is a "genuinely scientific work, in every respect abreast with the latest developments in psychophysiology." The play is to be based on the principle that the "human soul is not indivisible, but on the contrary is composed of several selves, the natures of which are different." This is a principle which the "researches of Wundt, Freud, Theophile Ribot and others have proved in the most conclusive way." The Professor then
goes on to explain that the play will present three of these selves: 
M-1, or the rational self; M-2, or the emotional self; and M-3, the 
psychical or subconscious self. This modern trinity will act out 
one of the many daily dramas of the soul. The total action of this 
thought-drama will need no more than half a second to be accomplished. 
The argument having been presented, the Professor then informs the 
audience that it will soon see a theatrical approximation of the 
human soul, represented as a huge heart with paper streamers for 
nerves and blood vessels and a telephone as a substitute for the 
system of synaptic communication. With this description of the 
setting, the Professor concludes his speech and retires. 

In a more explicit fashion, the prologue presents much the 
same concepts that are found in the preface and prologue to The 
Dream Play, with one important difference. Strindberg, a somewhat 
humorless man, presents his ideas of the splitting personality and 
the invalidity for the subject of the ordinary space-time continuum 
with a Byronic earnestness, while from the start it is apparent 
that Evreinov comes to the matter with a certain amount of play­ 
fulness. This tongue-in-check attitude of Evreinov's is continued 
throughout the play, which contains more than its share of precious 
comedy. The use of the telephone as a device for communicating 
messages to the brain is perhaps the best example of Evreinov's sense 
of whimsy, but there are many others. There is, for instance, M-2's 
habit of rubbing the nerves to produce a jangling sound. 

Evreinov's sense of humor and Strindberg's lack of same are 
responsible for other noticeable differences between the two plays.
Thus, *The Dream Play* becomes a nightmare, whereas *The Theatre of the Soul* leans in the direction of the harlequinade, a form into which Evreinov was to cast several of his best works. Moreover, as might be expected, Evreinov's comic sense acts as a tempering agent which prevents the playwright from indulging in excessive distortion. This is important, for it aids the dramatist in keeping open all possible avenues of traditional theatrical comment which do not directly conflict with the faithful rendering of the point of view of the central character. This taking advantage of every opportunity to relate the point of view of individual character to the more universal outlook of the audience must have been important to Evreinov, for with his philosophy of complete empathic identification with the action on stage, he must have wished at all costs to avoid the confusion growing out of willful distortion carried to the point of complete obscurity.

In fact, it would not be far from wrong to say that while the problem of adjusting the audience to the subjective viewpoint of a single individual was of minor importance to Strindberg, it was to Evreinov the prime issue of the monodramatic form. The fact that the Russian dramatist felt the need to write several volumes of theoretical explanation of the monodrama is evidence enough of his awareness of the communication difficulties inherent in the new form. In terms of *The Theatre of the Soul* specifically, Evreinov first addresses the problem in his very explicit prologue. Apparently not satisfied with the adequacy of the prologue, he chose as the external reality of his play a situation which his audience was not likely to
miseremstand, that is, the standard love triangle so popular in the comedies and melodramas of the period. Moreover, he was careful not to disturb the basic ingredients of that triangle. There is the same good mother, the same father with a weakness for drink, the same "other woman," wild and undomesticated, a cafe dancer at best, but very possibly a prostitute. To keep the formula intact, Evreinov even rounds it off with a suicide, a denouement which was almost a ritual in the more pretentious thesis plays. Still uncertain about the audience's ability to follow his new method, Evreinov went to great pains to clearly delineate each of the various aspects of the soul. M-1 is a carefully groomed man in a frock coat; M-2 an artist with untidy hair and full, red lips; M-3 a sombre figure in a black mask who sits sleeping in the foreground. As might be suspected, this extreme concern with clarity robs the play of any possibility of subtlety and gives to the whole piece the air of a medieval allegory rather than that of a modern psychological study. It is this unhappy over explicitness which has caused many critics to agree with H. W. L. Dana's observation that in The Theatre of the Soul Evreinov "carried his ideal of the monodrama almost to a reductio ad absurdum."19

19 Una Ellis-Fermor, op. cit., has remarked on this aspect of the play, but her observation that this therefore disqualifies it as a dramatic work is rash and unfounded. If nothing else, the play is effective in the theatre, and this can hardly be said of some of the closet dramas, such as Hardy's Dynasts, which that critic holds up as important contributions to dramatic literature.

20 Clark and Freedley, op. cit., p. 443.
Despite its crudities, *The Theatre of the Soul* stands as a tribute to the vision of its author. Evreinov was as important an innovator as Strindberg in that he not only presented his version of the Strindbergian dream, but also raised that dream to the level of the conscious thought and emotion. Among other reasons, he probably took this step because it afforded him a good means of studying the ramifications of the presence of multiple points of view within a single individual, for the play is not a presentation of the central character's point of view of a possible affair; it is more exactly a statement about the central character's points of view. The rational self contemplates adultery with the dancer and she appears on stage as a mean and mercenary woman. When the emotional self thinks of the dancer, however, she changes into a wild, romantic beauty. This same variability is found in the wife, who, in each case, appears as the opposite of the dancer. Both the rational self and the emotional self maintain that the women as they see them are the women as they really exist. This quarrel between M-1 and M-2 constitutes the matter of the play, and the audience has no way of telling which is correct. To this argument the subconscious self contributes nothing, but when the Professor is finally driven to suicide, the subconscious self awakes, yawns, picks up his bag and departs from the stage as if from a train.

Since, as the action of the subconscious demonstrates, the play is the Strindbergian dream placed on the level of the organizing consciousness, Evreinov is forced to introduce objective reality, since it is with external reality that the conscious self deals. In fact,
the presentation of the various mutations of the object as the subject exercises on it different methods of observation and organization was a key feature of Evreinov's method. But in rendering this relationship between the consciousness and external reality, Evreinov had to assume the presence of the subconscious, just as Strindberg, in presenting the sub- and semi-conscious, had to assume the existence of the consciousness and of the reality beyond it. But while Strindberg begged the whole question of the importance of the object, Evreinov in ranging out as far as the object still was careful to place his ultimate stress on the value of the metaconscious. Consequently, the subconscious self sits always in the foreground of the soul. In placing the subconscious where he does, Evreinov suggests that the whole thing is, after all, only M-3's dream. In his own, less obtrusive way, M-3, the dreamer, "holds sway over all." He awakes only with the suicide, and his single comment on the whole affair is a weary stretch and a series of yawns.

The Theatre of the Soul is M-3's dream just as life is, in the final analysis, nothing except the dreams of each of us. When death awakens M-3, he provides the final ironic comment on the meaning of it all, a yawn. Thus, whether seen through the subject or the object, life is a farce, and so Evreinov presents it. It may be that Evreinov is too clumsy in his presentation of psychological subtleties, or that he over-sweetens his work with coy humor, but to call his play a reductio ad absurdum of his method is to both see the point and to misunderstand it. Evreinov was a comedian, and he depended heavily on comic exaggeration to make his point. The external world is an
endless comedy of errors, and this is so, says Evreinov, because it
depends for its coherence upon the individual, who compounds the
farce by being unable to maintain a consistent viewpoint even within
himself. Played with too much expressionistic seriousness, it is
likely that The Theatre of the Soul might become pretentious and
absurd, but played for the serio-comic statement it is obviously
attempting to make, it should be a reasonably effective theatre
piece.

If The Theatre of the Soul is not the reductio ad absurdum of
an ideal, neither is it, as Bakshy sees it, a fatal contradiction
in terms. According to Bakshy, the shortcoming of the monodrama
lies in the fact that "whilst invoking the spectator's power of
imagination, in which sense it is subjective, it is compelled to
base itself mainly on realistic scenic effects." Such a criticism
leaves one baffled, for it can be leveled against all arts. In
terms of Evreinov's work in particular, what such a view fails to
take into consideration is the subjectification of scenic effects
which Meyerhold had already achieved before the monodrama was postu-
lated. While it is true that it is basic to the art of theatre to
translate all human experience into tangibles, it is not true that

21 Bakshy, op. cit., p. 79.
22 All arts must objectify nontangible realities. Even music
must make its statement in terms of sounds, which are, after all,
objective—i.e., sensible—realities. This problem has been taken up
and discussed in Chapter One, see page 2 f.
these tangibles must be realistic. Just as Strindberg when he was writing *Miss Julia* could envision a setting that did not have painted pots and pans on the wall, so Evreinov could write a monodrama that did not postulate a box set.

The points of Dana and Bakshy are not well taken, but still the weaknesses which we have already noted in *The Theatre of the Soul* do exist. These weaknesses, however, are no more excessive in their own sphere than are the humorless distortions and heavy-handed irony of *The Dream Play*. After a journey through the tortured soul of Strindberg, the whimsy of Evreinov is rather refreshing. This is not to imply a favorable comparison between the two plays, for *The Theatre of the Soul* is a much slighter and far less impressive dramaturgic effort.

When placed side by side both plays appear as overstatements, a condition which is probably to be expected in any new romantic form. Strindberg's work is too diffused, Evreinov's too simplified. Strindberg could not avoid the nightmare; Evreinov came dangerously close to simple fantasy. But the weaknesses of the two playwrights aside, they had, by 1912, presented the new structural problem of the pan-psychic dramatists. In doing this, Strindberg proved to be the better artist, Evreinov the better theorist, but each in his own way saw that the pan-psychic playwright must abandon intrigue for a concern with the point of view of the individual if he were to successfully investigate the human soul. This change in approach to point of view also indicated that it might be necessary to change traditional concepts of time, space, probability and possibility, formal
logic and objective reality. All of these things rest ultimately on the individual viewpoint and hence should be altered as that viewpoint changes. Just how they were altered would be the clue to the meaning of the individual and of the play. Both playwrights, though not in equal degree, realized that a structural approach based upon a private subjective viewpoint introduces new problems of communication with the audience. Evreinov's solution to these problems was to entice the spectator into the center of the action by striking as many notes of similarity with older dramatic approaches as was possible without losing total structural integrity. On the other hand, Strindberg depended entirely upon the hints offered by a short program note and a brief prologue, and was inclined, for the most part, to let the audience seek its own avenues of understanding. All in all, both playwrights were presenting what was up until that time the most immediate and intense statements of the new relativistic world view. Their world was a world of unity in conflict, a world in which there was a continual disagreement between the subject and the object and between one and another aspect of the same subject. It was a universe best summed up in the line uttered by the Officer in The Dream Play: "What a strange world of contradictions!"

To call the two men dramatic eccentrics or to say as does Eric Bentley that Evreinov represents "the furthest departure from orthodoxy" is to assume that the problem of point of view is an undramatic one. To a relativist, it is the very essence of drama, and once stated by Evreinov and Strindberg, the issue of the presentation of first-person viewpoints becomes one of the major concerns of the giants of
modern drama. To understand how quickly and surely both Strindberg and Evreinov had put their fingers on modern trends in methodology, we need only note the close resemblance between the nightmarishness of The Dream Play and the similar scenes which appeared some twenty years later in the "night town" section of Ulysses. If this is not enough, it might be interesting to some to compare Evreinov's theory of spectator-acting character identification with these lines, written some forty years later, about the unique achievement of the modern psychological novelist:

In the old novels...the omniscient author was nearly always present and nearly always addressing an audience...Perhaps, for the purposes of fiction, we can put it another way: in the old novels we are nearly always seated face to face with the author; it is he who is looking out the window and telling us the story of what he sees.

This is the way in which Edel describes the omniscient method. Retaining the same figure, he applies it to the modern point-of-view novel in the following manner:

In the psychological novel the author is nowhere in sight. Suddenly we are seated at the window. Somewhere above, behind, below, out beyond the window the author is busy being a stage manager and an actor, arranging what we shall see. He tries to give us the illusion constantly that we are experiencing what is happening there; and in the process he asks us to look at all sorts of extraneous things, strange things, as if we were in one of our own dreams in which impossible and implausible events occur; magical transformations, returns of episodes and people out of the forgotten past...a veritable mental cinema of flashing images often confused and incoherent, often sharply focused, so that, as before, we forget ourselves and have crossed over the window sill and are
ourselves out there amid the confusion, living all that has been arranged for us. From being listeners once removed from the scene, we have become actual participants.\textsuperscript{23}

\textsuperscript{23}Edel, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 208 f.
CHAPTER FOUR

THE EROSION AND THE DISSOLUTION OF THE INDIVIDUAL VIEWPOINT
KAISER AND PIRANDELLO SEE THE EGO AS A PHENOMENON
ON THE WAY TO DESTRUCTION

I

Kaiser:  From Morn to Midnight

Strindberg's experiments with the dream form and Evreinov's and Meyerhold's relentless attacks on the "fourth wall" were to provide the precedents for a number of avant-garde theatrical movements, chief among which were the Russian and Italian Futurists, the French Surrealists, and the German Expressionists. By 1920, that is, by the time these movements had gained sufficient vigor and personality to be separated and distinctly labeled, the European drama was in such a state of ferment, borrowing and exchanging of ideas had become so free and rapid, that it is almost impossible to untangle the maze of influences and counter-influences which the several movements exercised on one another. Nicoll, for instance, feels that many of the important attitudes of Expressionism can be traced to the early Italian Futurists. ¹ But Futurism, on the other hand, must surely be related to the Constructivism of Meyerhold, since the two

styles so closely resemble each other and since Marinetti, the founder of Futurism, preached his gospel in St. Petersburg and Moscow long before he came to Italy, Constructivism, in turn, is indebted to the techniques of the French Symbolists. Which brings the wheel back full turn, for Nicoll defines Expressionism as "diametrically opposed... to the subjective impressionist." Despite this confusion, seeking out the origins of the more important modern "ism's" is a far less difficult task than is the defining of the essential characteristics of each of the movements. Moreover, of all the modern schools, German Expressionism—the one which forms the basis of our immediate interest in this chapter—is the school which yields least easily to close definition.

For example, most critics will agree that, contributory influences aside, the mainstream of German Expressionism flows in a direct line from Strindberg through Wedekind and Hauptmann to the young playwrights of the twenties, but few of these critics will agree on just what the mainstream is. Tucker, for example, says that Expressionism is an art form whose "general characteristics are plain enough."

It starts by taking its material from real life... but it aims to distill the very essence of reality and to present it in terms of the universal. Naturally, then,

---


it is not concerned with phenomena but with ideas and springs of conduct.\(^4\)

Sheldon Cheney, on the other hand, sees in Expressionism a trend

Toward the emotional-crisis play as against the thought play, toward intensity of feeling as against likeness to outward life and truth of detail, toward looseness of technique as against formulas.\(^5\)

To Samuel and Thomas, "the basis of Expressionistic drama is Activistic," that is, it springs from the beliefs of a group of social reformers known as Activists.

It proclaims an idea, that of the New Man and of a New Humanity, which is to be no longer subjected to the limitation of State and nation, of society and traditional laws, and which is to be transformed into a community of love, goodness and peace.\(^6\)

If these conflicting definitions of Expressionism are somewhat puzzling, one is always "free to seek comfort in the concise definition given to Carpenter by a German professor, "Expressionism is intellectual vomiting." Or one may prefer Mordecai Gorelik's theatre-oriented conception of the movement as an art form which finds its basis in the desire to do away with the picture frame stage in favor of the open platform.\(^8\) It is possible, of course,

---


\(^7\)Carpenter, *op. cit.*, p. 196.

to go on endlessly presenting conflicting definitions of Expressionism, and it is equally impossible to state flatly that any one of these concepts is more correct than the other, for all have their element of truth. The best one can do is to seek out a study which seems to be more thorough and more comprehensive than the others. Such a study is Dahlstrom's carefully presented work, Strindberg's Dramatic Expressionism.

In his investigation of the general features of Expressionism, Dahlstrom lists seven important features of the movement. First and foremost, there was a concern with Ausstrahlungen des Ich, or the radiation, expansion and unfolding of the ego. Dahlstrom feels that this concept can be partly "explained by the phrase 'stream of consciousness' which is current in our English terminology."9 Along with an interest in the radiation of the ego, the expressionist was also interested in the unconscious, in artistic intuition, and in the inner experience of man. "For the expressionist objective experience is merely the stimulus for inner experience."10 Expressionistic philosophy also included the concept of Welt als Einheit: all things as one.

The expressionist is an idealistic monist! Soul and body, material and immaterial, subject and object, these are the anti-poles for the concept of reality but are not endowed with separate existence; they are antithesis from which reality must be wrested.11

---

9Dahlstrom, op. cit., p. 49.
10Ibid., p. 52.
11Ibid., p. 53.
In addition to the above ideas, the expressionist was interested in the relationship between the mind and the soul, between Seele and Geist. "Seele feels the chaos; whereas Geist thinks the cosmos. Seele tends toward dynamic, formless feeling; Geist, on the other hand, is an ordering element."¹² As might be suspected from the emphasis on intuition, on the unconscious, and on the inner experience, there is to be found in Expressionism a great deal more concern with Seele than with Geist. In summing up the movement, Dahlstrom notes that to the list of its major characteristics must also be added a tendency to imitate musical form, a general sense of the importance and worth of man, and a certain primitive, Christian religiosity.

Summing up, then, German Expressionism was a striking, if not very homogeneous, school which can, in general, be included within the modern pan-psyche movement. Critics have found it difficult to give an exact rendering of the tendencies of the movement, probably because of the diverse influences which shaped it, but also because critics have been unable to isolate it in historical and artistic terms. To some authorities, Expressionism is limited to Germany in the period from 1910 to 1925; to others Expressionism is a term to be applied to any divergence from Naturalism.¹³ Just where the exact truth lies is unimportant to this study. What is more to the point here is that as one might suspect any modern movement which

¹²Ibid, p. 54.

placed great importance on such matters as inner experience, the antithesis between inner and outer reality, the role of the unconscious and of artistic intuition, and the radiation and unfolding of the ego, would also be interested in artistically rendering the point of view of the individual man. Such is exactly the case, and Expressionism includes a great number of works that are, in whole or in part, point-of-view studies. Toller’s Masse-Mensch, for instance, contains three "dream scenes" which obviously take place in the mind of Sonia Irene L. Probably the most widely known point-of-view experiment to come out of the Expressionistic movement was the famous film, The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari, a presentation of the world as seen through the eyes of a lunatic and a work which bequeathed to the commercial cinema many of its standard "horror" techniques. In all likelihood, however, the best example of expressionistic experimentation with the point of view came from the pen of Georg Kaiser, the playwright whom most critics consider, in the phrase of Eric Bentley, "the prince of Expressionism."14

A writer of a large variety of plays in many different modes, it was in 1916 that Georg Kaiser, as Nicoll puts it, "startled his contemporaries by the boldness of his Von Morgens bis Mitternacht,"15 a drama which has since come to be considered as the very archetype of Expressionism. In essence the play is a point-of-view study, but

---

15 Nicoll, op. cit., p. 797.
it is so very different from those of Strindberg or those of Evreinov that it deserves consideration as a special genre. Like so much of Kaiser's work, *From Morn to Midnight* defies criticism. It is a strange play. At the present time it still occupies a position of some respect in the total body of modern drama. It is not, however, a great play. It may well be that it will be considered a very bad play by future generations. Only one thing about it seems certain: *From Morn to Midnight* will never be considered a mediocre play. Freedley and Reeves have called it a "moving drama"; Gassner has brushed it off as little "more than manic." Chandler, on the other hand, sees the play as "one of the best of its kind in its simplicity and universality."

Probably the main reason for such widely varying evaluations of the play's quality lies in the fact that *From Morn to Midnight*, more than any other single work in his fifty odd play corpus, presents a more or less complete statement of Kaiser's total worldview, a philosophy which in itself has provoked conflicting critical comments. William Drake, for instance, feels that "Georg Kaiser is exclusively a dramatist of ideas, and a strenuous crusader for these

---

16 Freedley and Reeves, *op. cit.*, p. 523.


ideas." Mordecai Gorelik, on the other hand, sees the key to Kaiser's plays in "vehemence more than logical thesis." Considering the general tenets of the movement of which Kaiser was the leading playwright, it seems likely that Gorelick's position is more defendable than is Drake's. After all, a school which stresses the life of the unconscious, the ur-ishness of the Seele over the civilizing influences of the Geist, may certainly be indicted as being at the least unintellectual and very probably anti-intellectual. Moreover, the expressionist group as a whole aside, Kaiser's personal philosophy is hardly one of a man who would write plays of "the most precise intellectual type."21

The follower of Nietzsche and Schopenhauer, Kaiser reflects the anti-intellectual views of his masters in his own belief that the fundamental force of all life is "energy."

Energy is the driving force of the world. Without energy there is nothing. Sentiment, pity, romance are only the refuge of the weak, who must inevitably go down. The unfortunate are hindrances. Go out into the world and see what men really are. They are brutal, self-seeking, egotistical, heartless, energetic. It is only through will-power that injustice and stupidity can be done away with.23

All living creatures are endowed with energy in some degree, but "man

20 Gorelik, op. cit., p. 248.
21 Clark and Freedley, op. cit., p. 102.
22 Shaw, op. cit., p. 34.
23 Gorelik, op. cit., p. 250.
represents the most intensive form of energy."

This fact takes on added importance when we consider Kaiser's commitment to the ideal that the individual is created "perfect from the beginning."

He is, so to speak, a finished product from the very moment of his birth. The limitations to which he finally succumbs are not part of his inner nature, but are imposed on him from without, as a result of the distorted forms to which his destiny is subjected.

The "distorted forms" of which Kaiser speaks, in other words, those ways in which the individual misuses or misappropriates his divine energy, are the forms forced on man by a negative and imperfect social system. Thus, in Kaiser's view, man is created possessed of the mystical power of energy, the power which is "the eternal miracle in man," but its possession does him little good. The individual is born not only as a vessel for divine energy, but also as a member of society, and consequently is doomed to have the potential of his energy drained from him by the meanness, indifference, or evilness of his social order. By being party to society, the individual contracts the malignant disease of the group: the disintegration of his energy, his personality, his innate perfection. Shaw points out that this theory "cleanses the individual of his guilt in his own destiny and puts the responsibility on the imperfect social

24 Drake, op. cit., p. 94.


26 Drake, op. cit., p. 94 f.
organization which forces him from his perfection."

The tragedy of the man designed by nature to live a harmonious life lies in the fact that he is thrown off his course. Since he is unable to find himself again, he is condemned to slow and relentless disintegration of his soul, and to living without hope for personal happiness.27

Kaiser, thus, saw life as a struggle between the perfect individual and the imperfect society. The struggle was an unequal one "between the world's social system, which is without feelings for humanity, and the individual with his feeble cries."28 For most men, this struggle could only result in the total destruction of their egos. Indeed, for the great majority of people, the disintegration of their personality by society is a process of which they are only vaguely aware. At infrequent intervals, however, there appears an individual who has intuitively grasped the nature and extent of the struggle of which he is the protagonist. Perhaps he even acts on his knowledge. When this occurs, we have an example of the Kaiserian hero, the modern New Man. Depending on the purity of his remaining energy, on what still survives of his personality, the New Man may follow one of three lines: If he is in a relatively pure state, he may follow the urges of primitive instinct, of unadulterated Seele. If his personality has eroded past the redeemable point, he may be forced into taking the decadent romantic

27 Shaw, op. cit., p. 37.

28 Ibid., p. 37.
solution of escape. If he is blessed with both a strong integrity of ego and the luck to be born into a society ready for change, he may take the best of the three possible courses—social reform. But despite the possibilities of success in the latter course, it also promises the greatest danger if attempted in a society not yet amenable to reform. Such a danger is amply demonstrated in *Gats*.  

Considering the complete Kaiserian system, we may say that in its practical application it becomes a philosophy of social reformation. As such it may even show manifestations of interest in immediate political and economic problems, such interest as is found in the *Gas* trilogy or in *Gats*. It may, on the other hand, deal with such domestic questions as whether a wife is justified in infidelity if that transgression saves the life of her husband. Just such a problem is presented and answered affirmatively in *The Woman's Sacrifice*. These investigations of what may be considered practical problems do not spring from any pretention of rationality on the part of the playwright, but they may be responsible for some critics' seeing in Kaiser a bent toward "intellectual dramas." These problems, that is, are similar enough to the problems presented in such "dramas of ideas" as Ibsen's social plays to cause some critics to confuse the essential qualities of the two playwrights. Actually, Ibsen's problem plays sprang from a somewhat different impulse. The social

---

29For a complete discussion of Kaiser's concept of the New Man, see William Harlan Shaw's *German Expressionism; 1915-1920, The Plays of Georg Kaiser*, op. cit.
reform he called for was based on ethics. Kaiser's social reform is rooted in a religious impulse, and, though intellectual on the surface, is prompted by beliefs which are far more mystical than intellectual. For Kaiser, good social order must, in the long run, emanate from the private individual. Ultimately, Kaiser felt that "society is a collective body of individuals, the whole cannot transcend its units of composition." But the individual who would bring about Kaiser's reform was not, at root, intellectual; he was the incarnation of sacred energy, a miracle that "has been converted into the blood out of which he creates, creating even himself." Hence, beneath Kaiser's intellectual facade lay a basic philosophy of anti-intellectualism, a belief in a perfect society that grew not out of human reason but out of the primitive, perfect energy of man. Kaiser put his faith in pure Seele; Geist was only the imperfect means of presenting this faith. Kaiser's views, then, were Nietzschean and Dionysian, borrowing of the Apollonian only when necessary. The playwright's mysticism and his debt to Nietzsche's own anti-intellectualism can be summed up by the final stage direction of From Morn to Midnight, a direction which can be only imperfectly realized on the stage.

The CASHIER has fallen back with arms outstretched against the Cross on the back wall. His husky gasp is like an ECCE, his heavy sign is like a HOMO. One second later all the lamps explode with a loud report.

30 Fruchter, op. cit., p. 9.
31 Drake, op. cit., p. 94.
To put his mysticism into dramatic form, to display some aspect of the individual's spiritual emaciation at the hands of society, it was necessary for Kaiser to take the structural approach suggested by Strindberg and Evreinov. In other words, a perfectly workable definition of Kaiser's concept of the New Man would be a man who has acquired a viewpoint which differs from that of society in general, for only the man with a unique point of view would be able to recognize that his personality was in the process of being destroyed by the social system.

With this definition in mind, we may say that Kaiser's sense of tragedy is concerned with a particular type of insight, the insight of the New Man who recognizes, often simultaneously with the acquisition of an individualized viewpoint, that his personality is inevitably doomed to destruction by the greater force of society. His struggle to retain as long as possible the integrity of his own vision provides the tragic conflict of Kaiser's plays. One of two catastrophes are possible: the New Man may die as the result of the struggle or he may wearily succumb to a fusion of his private vision with that of the general, de-spiritualized point of view of society.

*From Morn to Midnight* stands as a fine example of Kaiser's manipulation of point of view to present his modern tragedy. In the opening scene we are offered a portrait of a man, the Cashier of a small bank, who exists as little more than an automaton, a gear in the social machine. Into the bank comes a mysterious Italian beauty, and the Cashier is suddenly prompted by her presence into acquiring an
individuality, a new and totally different point of view. That is, he yields to an impulse, a spark of energy from the Seele, the primitive energy of sexual desire. His instinct, to be sure, is not pure. It is sufficiently distorted by the erosions which his personality has already undergone to take at face value the implications of the bank manager and the executive of the Building Society that the lady is an adventurer who is willing to gratify any desire for a large enough price. But however distorted the Cashier's sex instinct may be, it is still pure and vital enough to jolt him into becoming a New Man, a man who sees things differently from his fellows. With the acquisition of a private point of view comes also the Cashier's realization of the malice which society holds toward him. At once the Cashier sets off to escape the doom which the social system has in store for him, that is, the destruction of his Newness.

So corrupted has the Cashier's personality become in the years before his new vision, that he believes that money can provide him with a means of escape. He, therefore, robs the bank and rushes off in pursuit of the Italian woman. Upon her rejection of him, the Cashier sets off on a wild spending spree which takes him to a bicycle race, to a cabaret and, finally, to a Salvation Army Hall. There he declares in favor of pure energy, pure Seele, which does not even need money. Too late, however, he realizes that he has been tricked into a confession by society. Having, in a fit of quasi-religious fervor, given into the demands of society, the Cashier recognizes the futility of his attempt at escape. He bows to the inevitability of the destruction in store for him and commits suicide.
To capture the Cashier's struggle with society, the struggle between the personal and the universal point of view, required that Kaiser revise somewhat the structural methods of Strindberg and Evreinov. The former had been interested exclusively in the inner life of a single individual without reference to externality; the latter had seen externality only as a reflection of the conflicts within the individual. Kaiser, on the contrary, was to see external reality existing as a sort of no man's land in a war of viewpoints, the one universal and the other individualized. Thus, while Strindberg and Evreinov can remain within a consistent framework, while they can refer all back to the individual, Kaiser was forced to alternate his emphasis between the viewpoint of the group and that of the individual. Therefore, scenes one and two of From Morn to Midnight may be called "objective," not perhaps in the sense of pure externalism, but sufficiently close to traditional objective drama to give the audience the impression that they were witnessing some variation of the "fourth wall" theatre. The first hint that the point of view will ultimately shift comes with the stage direction which indicates that while the Cashier helps the Italian woman to reclasp her bracelet, he "stares at her as if mesmerized."

His spectacles, bright points of light, seem almost to be swallowed up in the cavity of his wide-open eyes.

The basic objectivity of the first scene is maintained, however, through scene two, which brings the Cashier to the hotel room of the Italian woman. The audience already knows, before the Cashier's entrance, the disappointment which is in store for him. Having
stolen money in order to elope with her, the Cashier is shocked to find that the Italian beauty is wealthy, respectable, and totally uninterested in him. With this shock comes his complete awakening to his new relationship to society.

Now that the New Man is created as a functioning entity, the playwright, having in the first two scenes presented society's viewpoint, shifts the focus in scene three to the viewpoint of the Cashier. In violation of the most sacred precepts of Externalism, scene three consists of nothing but a very long monologue, disjointed and often hardly comprehensible, at times not even rising above the level of a shriek issuing from the murky depths of the soul. In fact, it would not be unjust to characterize the Cashier's monologue as the verbalization of the same sort of images which were objectified in Strindberg's *Dream Play*. It can hardly be denied that the thought sequence of the whole speech is much more closely related to the free association of Strindberg than to the highly structured thought of a Shakespearian soliloquy.

It is in scene three that the Cashier makes his first overt declaration of his new individuality. The monologue begins in this manner:

How wonderful a toy is every man! The mechanism runs silently in his joints. Suddenly the faculties are touched and transformed into gesture. What gave animation to these hands of mine? A moment ago they were straining to heave the masses that the drifting snow flakes had strewn! My footprints across the field are blotted out. With my own hands I have created nothingness.

In other words, with the yielding to an impulse, the Cashier has become transformed. He has become a New Man by his act of theft, and his
former place in society, his old function as part of the social machine, has been destroyed just as his footprints have disappeared from the snow. This theme is repeated once again in his comments as he throws away his soiled shirt cuffs.

Soiled. There they lie. Missing in the wash. The mourners will cry through the kitchen: A pair of cuffs are lost! A catastrophe in the boiler! A world in chaos!

The Cashier is exultant at his new discovery of individuality. "Today's experience opens the road," he cries. "With one leap I'm at the heart of the universe, the focus of unimagined brightness."

But his joy is soon dampened by the vision of a skeleton in a tree, the first sign of the doom which awaits his new personality. However, he refuses at this time to take the omen too seriously. He feels that he can still escape. After all, as he says, "with this load in my pocket I'm paying cash—cash down for everything."

Scene four strikes a compromise between the point of view of the Cashier and that of society. While it does not have the objective quality of scenes one and two, scene four is not as completely subjective as scene three. There is, however, even before the Cashier enters the scene a strong sense that the action of the scene reflects the Cashier's new awareness of the total lack of personality found in the members of society. For example, just before the Cashier enters the following pointless and mechanical dialogue takes place.

WIFE. Today we have mutton chops for dinner.
MOTHER. Have you begun grilling them?
WIFE. Plenty of time. It's not twelve o'clock yet.
DAUGHTER. Not nearly twelve, mamma.
WIFE. No, not nearly twelve.
MOTHER. When he comes, it will be twelve.
WIFE. He's not due yet.
DAUGHTER. When Father comes, it will be twelve o'clock.
WIFE. Yes.

This is the basic unit of society, the family as the Cashier now sees it with new eyes. A short time after his entrance into the family circle, he comments on its ability to deaden and erode the soul.


This speech is delivered to no one on stage; it is, in fact, pure radiation of the ego, a segment of the Cashier's stream of consciousness. There is, as it were a direct reeling off of the words as they trace themselves across his brain. At this moment, all syntactic and rhetorical relationships are dismissed. When, however, the Cashier turns to speak to his wife directly, then these same ideas are coordinated into something resembling the received speech pattern. In other words, the playwright shifts out of the stream of consciousness into the stream of communication, that is, from a subjective to an objective point of view.

Warm and cozy this nest of yours; I won't deny its good points; but it doesn't stand the final test. No! The answer is clear. This is not a halting place, but a signpost; the road leads further on.

The road leads, in fact, to the bicycle races of scene five, a scene in which Kaiser again contrasts the point of view of the New
Man with that of society. The Cashier offers a large prize to the winner of the race, and, as the race progresses, the Cashier watches the crowd, while the race officials, who represent society, watch only the race.

2ND GENTLEMAN. But you must keep your eye on the track, and watch the varying course of the race.

CASHIER. Childish this sport. One rider must win because the others must lose—Look up, I say! It's there, among the crowd, that the magic works. The wine ferments in this vast barrel of spectators.

What the Cashier sees in the crowd is his first complete vision of the tremendous energy inherent in humanity. It is basic, primitive and frightening, but above all it is democratic and exhilarating.

2ND GENTLEMAN. The German was leading, but—

CASHIER. Never mind that, if you please. Up there you have the staggering fact. Watch the supreme effort, the last dizzy height of accomplishment. From stalls to gallery one seething flux, dissolving the individual, recreating passion! Differences melt away, veils of nakedness are stripped; passion rules!...No restraint, no modesty, no motherhood, no childhood—nothing but passion! That's the real thing. That's worth the search. That justifies the price!

But even this energy, distorted as it is, is but fleeting.

Even this "unclean but free" passion is quickly subdued and surpressed by the entrance of the king. All heads are bowed, all free instincts are subjugated by the sudden appearance of the royal presence; not even the Cashier's offer of a huge cash prize can buy back the lost natural state of the crowd. Disillusioned by this turn of events, and not willing to give money to a "society of hunchbacks," the Cashier, seeing what the others do not, violently crushes the race official's silk hat down upon his shoulders and exists.
Scene six is a wild bizarre episode which reflects in quality the growing desperation of the Cashier, who senses the hopelessness of his battle to retain individuality. For his new locale the playwright selects a cabaret at which some sort of costume party is in progress. In this manner Kaiser is able to present a world distorted by the Cashier's point of view while at the same time he retains access to the more objective viewpoint of society. The cabaret scene presents the Cashier's attempts to buy life's primal energy, love. Into his private dining room he brings four masked women from the costume ball. There is about these women an aura of hidden and mysterious beauty, but when, in return for a sum of money, two of the women lift their masks, they turn out to be "monsters." The third flees without removing her mask, while the fourth woman is discovered to have a wooden leg. The realization that each of these women is deformed in some way, that each has a physical manifestation of her spiritual corruption, is too much for the Cashier. With the grimest of humor, he seizes the champagne cooler and pours its contents over the fourth woman's wooden leg, crying out as he does so, "I'll water it for you! We'll make the buds sprout!"

The scene then returns to a more realistic statement; three gentlemen appear, and the playwright uses them to contrast the calm but evil viewpoint of society with the desperate frenzy of the Cashier. To the three gentlemen, the Cashier is the corrupter of their girls. "He entices them away, stuffs them with caviare, drenches them in champagne, and then insults them." Having pronounced their judgment upon the hapless Cashier, the three respectable men
then quietly steal the money which the Cashier has left as payment for his bill. As they leave, they pause a moment to accuse the waiter of running a common swindler's den. The scene closes on the wails of the waiter who cannot afford to lose the money which the Cashier owed him.

The final scene of the play finds the Cashier in a Salvation Army Hall. With him is the Salvation Army Lass who has haunted him like a conscience throughout the last three scenes of the play. This scene is projected almost totally through the point of view of the Cashier, just as the first scene was an almost totally objective statement. Briefly, the scene consists largely of a series of confessions which slowly wear down the Cashier's resistance to conventional morality. Finally, whipped into a frenzy of accepted morality by what he takes to be the sincere testimony of two professional cyclists, two prostitutes, two men who have lost their souls in the contentment of their cozy homes, and, lastly, a thief who has found peace by going to prison, the Cashier mounts the platform to confess his own sin and to receive forgiveness. Irony then follows irony as he realizes too late that society has managed to weaken his personal vision just long enough to force him into final destruction. His stolen money, which the Cashier, taking his cue from the preceding confessions, felt the group would regard as an object to be "torn and stamped under foot," is the cause of a riot as each member of the audience tries to get as much money as he possibly can. The Cashier then turns to the Salvation Army Lass, who had earlier stated that she would "stand by him," only to discover that she has
turned police informer in order to obtain the reward money. It is
then that he recognizes his defeat, his destruction by society.
He sees once again the vision of the skeleton, the sign of his
complete destruction.

This morning, among the snowy boughs, I mocked at you.
Now, in that tangled wire, you are welcomed as an old
friend! I salute you! The road is behind me. The
last steep curves climb upward—to you. My forces
are spent. I've spared myself nothing! I've made the
path hard where it might have been easy...Why did I
take the road? Where does it lead me now? From first
to last you sit there naked as a bone. From morning
to midnight I run raging in a circle—and now your
beckoning arm shows me the way—whither?

The Cashier shoots the answer into his breast. All the lights
explode at once, and the policeman provides society's final judgment
on the struggles of the New Man: "There must be a short circuit in
the main."

As a projection of the Cashier's point of view, scene seven
is one of the most powerful scenes in all expressionistic literature.
It probably finds its original model in Strindberg's handling of
the final scene in The Dream Play, but where the latter is forced and
clumsy, the final scene in From Morn to Midnight has flow, ease and
a mounting rhythm of intensity. Following Strindberg's example,
Kaiser repeats in the confessions of the various sinners each of the
previous episodes of the play, just as Strindberg had each of his
characters reappear before the burning castle. Kaiser, however, shows
superior artistry, for while Strindberg must simply bring his charac-
ters in, unannounced and unexcused, and parade them across the stage
after the manner of a role call, Kaiser selects a setting—a Salvation
Army Hall—which will serve as a logical excuse for confessions.
Moreover, Kaiser makes no attempt to make those giving "testimony" coincide with earlier characters. A similarity of experience serves his purpose sufficiently and does not make unnecessary demands upon our credulity.

Because Kaiser holds himself to a single point of view, scene seven gains greatly in unity of impression. Throughout the interior scenes of the play, the dramatist's approach has been inconsistent. In scenes three through six there is a constant shifting from the objective to the subjective point of view. This, of course, was in keeping with the playwright's theme of the conflict between society and the individual. As such, it had more than a modicum of justification, but the shifting is confusing, especially when it occurs several times within a given scene, as in scenes four and five. However, as the play progresses, the shifting becomes less and less frequent, the tendency being to hold more and more only to the point of view of the Cashier. This is not done because the Cashier is winning his struggle for identity, but, rather, because he is losing it. Since the gap between the New Man and society is rapidly closing, there is less need for a sharp contrast between the universal and the individual post of observation, and more need for a concentration on the individual in order to explore carefully the desperation attendant upon the final stages of surrender. There is, for example, a need in such a scene as that at the bicycle races to have contrasting points of view. There must be, in order to demonstrate the contrast between the emancipation of the New
Man and the subjugation of society, a group who can see only the races, while the New Man sees only the spectators. Both points of view, since they are so complementary, can share almost equal emphasis. But when the personality of the New Man has eroded past a certain point, when it has reached that stage at which it diverges very slightly from that of society in general, that very little divergence must be emphasized so that it will not escape unnoticed. Consequently, since both the gentleman friends of the masked women and the Cashier see the women as corrupted and corrupting, it is important to emphasize the Cashier's unique view of their corruption in order that its differences from that of the three representatives of society can be stressed. Therefore, the scene in the cabaret is given over in great part exclusively to the viewpoint of the Cashier. In short, the scene demonstrates the increasing hopelessness of the Cashier's attempt at escape by rendering, in reference to himself alone, his desperate struggle to maintain a continually diminishing individuation of viewpoint.

Kaiser's problem in the final scene is somewhat simplified. Since the purpose of the scene is to dramatize the final defeat of the personality, he need not seek contrasts between that personality and society. In fact, he cannot, for contrasts no longer exist. What was in scene three and four a matter of a difference in kind becomes in scene seven no more than a slight and continually diminishing difference in degree. In view of this, Kaiser holds, until the last few speeches, entirely to the viewpoint of the central character. The quality of the scene is the quality of the Cashier's soul, which
grows ever more intensely desperate as he enters more and more into the society which he had left so abruptly. Gradually, the action of the scene becomes more formal and rhythmic as the New Man loses his individuality in the oneness of the group.

The increasing sense of oneness is handled in a masterly way by Kaiser. At first, the various members of the audience appear as individuals.

VOICE. Move up closer. Be careful, Bill! Ha, ha! Move up there!
WORKMAN. What are you after?
OFFICER. I've got a question to ask you all.
OTHERS. Speech—None of your jaw! Music! The band!
VOICE. Begin!
VOICE. Stop!

But after the third confession, many members of the audience have been welded into a more homogenous unit which rises to cry in unison:
"What's my sin? I want to know my sin! Tell me my sin!" By the time the final confession has been delivered, all the members of the audience have been built into single universal human machine which surges up to roar out: "Nobody's sin! That's nobody's sin! I want to hear mine! My sin! My sin! My sin!" By this time, the Cashier can resist no longer. He also rises, shouting as he does so, "My sin!"

The growing sense of unity in the audience and the Cashier's ultimate identification with them is prompted by the confessions of seven sinners, among whom are cyclists, prostitutes, overly smug husbands, and, finally, a reformed thief. Each of these recalls an incident in the Cashier's day, and each weakens his defenses and increases the power of society. The final confession, that of the
thief, brings the Cashier face to face with his greatest sin against the mores of the group. It is too much for him. He loses his individuality completely, accepts once more the moral order of the group, and is led to the platform to make his confession.

Each of the stages in the Cashier's final defeat is marked not only by an increase of unity in the audience and by a sinner's confession, but also by a series of duets between the Cashier and the Salvation Army Lass, who has come to symbolize the Cashier's old sense of moral duty. The duets begin just after the first sinner's confession. In the first exchange, the Cashier is firm, though his petulance indicates that all is not well.

SALVATION LASS. Do you hear him?
CASHIER. Let me alone.

After the second confession, the Cashier shows signs of weakening.

SALVATION LASS. Do you see him?
CASHIER. The cycle races.
SALVATION LASS. What are you muttering about?
CASHIER. That's my affair. My affair.
SALVATION LASS. Are you ready?
CASHIER. Hold your tongue.

Again, the confessions of the prostitutes make apparent the weakness of the Cashier's defenses, but he remains stubborn.

SALVATION LASS. Do you hear all?
CASHIER. That's my affair. My affair.
SALVATION LASS. What are you muttering?
CASHIER. The wooden leg.
SALVATION LASS. Are you ready?
CASHIER. Not yet. Not yet.

The end is in sight as the confessions continue.

SALVATION LASS. Do you see him?
SALVATION LASS. What do you keep mumbling in your beard?
CASHIER. My affair. My affair.

One more confession, however, and the Cashier succumbs. The crowd leaps up as one to call out: "My sin! My sin!" And the Cashier rises with them.

SALVATION LASS. What are you shouting?
CASHIER. The bank. The money.
SALVATION LASS. Are you ready?
CASHIER. Yes, now I'm ready.

Once the Cashier has begun to commit himself to society's position, the scene begins a rapid shift back toward a more objective viewpoint. Taking the attitude expressed by the audience in the Salvation Army Hall to be sincere, the Cashier confesses his crime and throws away his stolen money. The greedy audience riots, but still refusing to recognize his defeat, the Cashier turns to the Salvation Army Lass for help. But she too is a fraud. Disillusioned, the Cashier commits suicide.

Kaiser, then, begins his play as an objective statement. As the play moves forward, he shifts from third to first-person—sometimes objective, sometimes subjective—point of view. Throughout there is a growing tendency to hew more and more to the subjective viewpoint of the Cashier himself. Accordingly, the final scene is projected almost entirely through the perception of the central character. In terms of the coordination of two points of view, Kaiser's skill is nowhere better demonstrated than in his ability to present to us from the opening curtain a view of society which the Cashier will be able to achieve only in his moments of greatest insight. In other words, even though the first two scenes are
presented objectively, we are seeing in them, in a sense, the world as it will ultimately appear through the viewpoint of the Cashier, though at the time neither he nor we in the audience may realize this fact. Thus, the insidious malice of society, its power to warp and distort natural harmony, is displayed to us as early as the conversation between the fat officer of the Building Society and the manager of the bank.

The larger framework of From Morn to Midnight, that is, the form which Kaiser employs to encompass and contain his investigation of varying viewpoints, has often been referred to as "station drama." In essence, the form bears a marked resemblance to that of the medieval cycle dramas. A series of short scenes are juxtaposed one against the other with no regard for sequence, no regard for place, and little regard for anything but the grossest concept of time. Like the medieval cycles, the unity of the play is gained through unity of theme, character and conflict. Wherever the Cashier finds himself, and he may find himself anywhere from a snow-covered field to a cabaret, there is always present his never-ending conflict with society. Moreover, at each "station" his position in the struggle becomes more and more hopeless. As Kaiser wrings variation after variation from his central instrument and theme, his "station drama" draws closer and closer to musical form, never, however, quite approaching Strindberg's total surrender to purely musical structure.

All in all, Kaiser's method of stating his tragic view of the slow erosion of the individual ego at war with a malevolent society is not at all ineffective. There are, of course, certain weaknesses
in *From Morn to Midnight*. The "station drama" framework gives to the play a quality of looseness and the frequent inconsistencies of viewpoint lend to the work a general air of confusion. This confusion, however, is more than counterbalanced by the almost musical development of the theme, always present in sharp focus and always gaining in richness by continual variation. Kaiser's handling of his theme gives to the piece a strong sense of rhythmic unity, a unity that is increased by the emphasis placed on the major instrument, the ever-present Cashier. This unity, may, like the unity of Strindberg, be highly reminiscent of musical form, but it remains as more effective than the Strindbergian method primarily because it stops short of crossing the boundary between music and drama. Kaiser's logic is always the logic of character and action, not that of sound and rhythm alone. Throughout the play the Cashier is clearly, perhaps too obviously, motivated by the needs of his own personality, not by purely formal considerations.

II

*Pirandello: Six Characters in Search of an Author*

Just as "the prince of Expressionism" was concerned with the destruction of the individual ego, so also was his royal counterpart in Italy, Luigi Pirandello, busily pursuing another aspect of the same problem. Like Kaiser, Pirandello's art and philosophy were the end result of certain *avant-garde* movements of the times. In Pirandello's case these movements were Futurism and the *Teatro Grotesco*. While they were not identical, the basic fact of these two movements was
the rejection of Externalism, which the young Italians felt had developed into a new academy whose restrictions were just as pointless and just as stifling as the older 19th-century traditions. What was needed was a new, modern drama, a drama that in the words of the leading Futurist, F. T. Marinetti, would "return to primitive, instinctive, almost prehuman sensory impulses." The new drama should "abolish tradition, artistic and moral, in favor of more modern things,"

It proposed, instead of elaborating the virtues and accomplishments of humanity in the past, to sing, henceforth, of contemporary life, speed, noise, the automobile, the airplane, the smoking factory chimney, war and destruction.

In practice, Marinetti's drama was to be a drama of few or no words, a drama of the most theatrical theatre. His own plays sometimes made use only of hands and feet, sometimes of all the gross and vulgar elements of the circus. Although the aims of Futurists like Marinetti were never quite realized on the stage, they did serve as an inspiration to a second, slightly younger group of playwrights who ultimately became known as the grotteschi. Not quite so violently anti-literary as the Futurists, the grotteschi set out to study "the secret impulses of the soul," and any device which seemed to promise access to the individual soul was taken up and

---

33 Ibid., p. 134.
34 Ibid., p. 137.
used by the writers of the *Teatro Grotesco*. Moreover, these young men were not restricted in their playwrighting by any philosophic devotion to a positive ideal. Essentially, they were just as nihilistic as the Futurists.

The writers of the *grotteschi*, convinced as they were that men are illogical, capricious, that life is meaningless, tried to find a formula by which they could put this illogicality, caprice, and lack of meaning on the stage. They felt that new and different technical means were necessary and resorted to all kinds of tricks to convey their ideas. Their plays were no longer comedy, tragedy, or farce, but 'grottesco,' 'myth,' 'fable,' 'colored adventure,' 'island night,' 'vision.' They people the stage with skeletons, with Pierrots, with ghosts, with 'the black men from the sulphur pit,' with puppets; their plots are often impossible—a man magically gets his life to live over; a 'time machine' sets us into the future or the past; Death takes a holiday and visits earth; a man pretends to die for the pleasure of surviving himself. By such devices these playwrights tried to dramatize the new philosophic nihilism of their epoch.35

The *grotteschi*, like the Futurists, sprang out of a confused and unhappy Italy. A nation that had only lately shaken off its sleepy agricultural economy and had joined the 19th-century movements toward industrialism and nationalism, Italy had, by the speed at which it attempted to bring itself abreast of the European industrial giants, caused much confusion and hardship among its populace. In addition, hardly had Italy recovered from its own war of independence when the new nation was suddenly engaged in an even mightier struggle, a struggle during which Italy was to be devastated, defeated, and robbed of much of its newly acquired national dignity. Thus, in the

---

quarter century between 1915 and 1940, Italian intellectuals, "more profoundly than in France, England, or America," expressed themselves in terms of deep pessimism and scepticism. Italy's unfortunate condition caused her intellectuals to lose "faith in science, in the intellect, and, logically enough, in our very humanity itself." It was to this pessimism and scepticism that both the grotteschi and the Futurists attempted to give expression. Neither group was totally successful, but they prepared the way for a playwright who would be eminently so—Luigi Pirandello.

Pirandello's personal life, as well as the life and thought of the times, admirably equipped the dramatist for his role as Italy's leading pessimist. The son of a wealthy owner of Sicilian sulphur mines, young Luigi was forced into a marriage with a girl whom he had never seen. Through this marriage, Stefano Pirandello increased his business holdings and Luigi acquired a wife with an extremely handsome dowry. At first the young couple enjoyed a few years of happiness. What with his wife's dowry and the more than ample allowance which his father sent to him, Pirandello prospered well in his new home in Rome. Unfortunately, it was not long before both his wife's and his father's fortunes were wiped out by floods in Sicily. The young couple was reduced to poverty, and Pirandello was only too happy to accept a position as a teacher in a girls high school. The loss of the family fortune was too much for Pirandello's wife, and her mind broke. She

---

36 Ibid., p. 128.
became obsessed with a belief that her husband was being unfaithful to her. Nothing Pirandello could do would convince her to the contrary. He went out as little as possible; he turned over his salary to her, but nothing would avail. Her fits of jealous rage became more frequent and more violent. There was no longer any doubt that she was insane. A doctor was consulted and he advised that the best hope for cure was to keep her home rather than send her to a sanitarium. Thus, Pirandello lived out the better portion of his life with a mad woman. He secluded himself from the world and developed an infinite patience, always hoping for a cure, always waiting for a recovery which never came. "It was in this closed torment that was born, at least in germ, the drama of Luigi Pirandello."

He suffered everything in silence, and through his mind flashed irrational thoughts while in his heart surged a feeling of powerless revolt. When he wrote he gave vent to that tormented inner life by envying madmen who could shout whatever they wanted, who could reveal their strangest thoughts and queerest emotions with impunity. He must have written agonizing pages while his wife pounded at the door of his studio, accusing him and threatening him.37

Granting this sort of personal tragedy, it is easy to understand how a writer of Pirandello's ability would be ready, even eager, to devote his talent to the Grotesque and Futuristic theatres. And what a service Pirandello rendered these two movements. He took their generalized and hazy negativism and gave it form, direction and popularity. Through Pirandello the Italian theatre and the

resolve this conflict. Normally, in order to bring the two concepts of reality and illusion closer together, we assume some sort of mask, or, as is often the case, the mask is forced upon us from outside. In either case, the struggle between reality and illusion becomes a specific struggle between the face and the mask. In its simplest form, this conflict is summed up in the words of Alfredo Cantoni, a writer whom Pirandello greatly admired; "Smiling in appearance, grieving in reality." 41

Pirandello, however, sees the interaction between the face and the mask as oft times far more complicated than is indicated by this simple aphorism. In Henry IV, for instance, a young man on the way to a costume ball is thrown from his horse and strikes his head upon a stone. The blow causes him to lose his sanity and actually to believe that he is Henry IV, the king whose costume he is wearing. Having once assumed this mask, the man lives out his life as the ancient king. He is surrounded by courtiers in proper livery, and he discusses only the affairs of Henry IV's time. He alone possesses the secret that his insanity has long ago been cured and that he no longer believes himself to be a royal personage. The world, however, has passed him by, and his mask seems much more comfortable than his face. Just as he is showing signs of wearilying of his game, he is forced into a murder, and he realizes that what was once a mask, then a face, and now a mask again, must in the future continue to be his

41Ibid., p. 90.
gloomy pessimism of the modern Italian mind gained world-wide recognition.

What exactly was the philosophy which Pirandello made so popular? To begin with, it grew out of a basic relativism. As MacClintock points out, the very title of one of Pirandello's most famous plays, Right You Are! (If You Think You Are), "reads like a sentence from William James." Pirandello's relativism, however, was to take a unique turn. While Lamm's statement that Pirandello "himself knew that the notion that truth varies with the eye of the beholder was as old as philosophy itself," cannot be denied, Lamm does not go on to indicate that Pirandello was to take that old notion to its most devastatingly nihilistic conclusion. The Italian playwright had had a lifetime to study the various subjective distortions which reality, as he knew it, underwent in the deranged mind of his wife. It seems little wonder then that his relativism postulated a constant interplay, a constant confusion between reality and illusion. In Vittorini's phrase, Pirandello was concerned with the "drama of being and seeming." On its most basic level, Pirandello's "drama of being and seeming" presents a conflict between reality as we wish it and reality as it is. Among the more intelligent and complicated members of the human community, various solutions are attempted to

---

38 MacClintock, op. cit., p. 185.
40 Vittorini, op. cit., p. 89.
face for the world.

The consequences of Pirandello's view of humanity as the sum of the conflict between the face and the mask has led the playwright into a conclusion which closely resembles that of Kaiser's, that is, the human ego, caught and confused by a veritable web of faces and masks, is doomed to destruction. The two dramatists, however, disagree significantly on the process of destruction. To Kaiser, the ego is a solid entity which is eroded and reduced to nothingness by society; to Pirandello the ego is never a very certain phenomenon which begins by dividing, and subdividing and sub-subdividing until it can no longer distinguish the whole from the parts, the real from the imaginary. It thus, through weariness and perplexity, dissolves itself of its own accord. Pirandello's is the process which Joseph Wood Krutch calls the "dissolution of the ego."^42

I have already remarked on the fact that the tendency which Pirandello carries to a logical or illogical extreme is not unique to him and that, as a matter of fact, this tendency to "dissolve the ego" has been sometimes regarded as one highly characteristic of our times.43

Krutch sees the dissolving process as occurring in the following manner:

The 'I' itself, the thing which perceives appearances and becomes the victim of illusions, disintegrates—if, at least, one means by the 'I' any continuous, persisting, relatively stable thing. Every 'I' is not merely all the things which at various times it seems

^42Kurtch, op. cit., p. 84.

^43Ibid., p. 83.
to be or all the things which at various times it seems to various people to be. It is all the different things which at different times it has been. There are 'I's' of yesterday, today, and tomorrow, as well as what every observer has taken them to be. What, Pirandello seems to ask, can a 'self' be except what it is being from moment to moment.\textsuperscript{44}

To Pirandello, the ego begins to dissolve the moment it assumes a mask. This is not to say that all people assume masks. There are those few "good and simple people" who possess "spontaneity of life," but these people are but little removed from plants and animals.\textsuperscript{45} The more civilized man must assume a mask. The taking on of a mask usually occurs after the civilized man succumbs to an instinct which makes him act against his moral code.

The element that contributes most in building the gloomy structure of Pirandello's pessimism is instinct. Man is compelled to yield to it even when he is perfectly aware of the dire consequences that it will entail. Pirandello considers instinct an acid which corrodes the best that life possesses.\textsuperscript{46}

Once man has succumbed to an instinct, he must recognize it henceforth as a part of his real ego, his face. This is ugly, and in order to hide his ugliness, he assumes a mask of dignity, a mask which hides his instincts. Immediately the confusion begins. To him the mask has one meaning, to his friends another. In this confusion of masks, the face becomes increasingly elusive. Presently its outlines begin to soften; eventually, they disappear completely.

\textsuperscript{44}Ibid., p. 82 f.

\textsuperscript{45}Vittorini, op. cit., p. 90.

\textsuperscript{46}Ibid., p. 32.
"Over-intellectual people" are particularly susceptible to the malady of the "dissolving ego," for they are the ones who, in enlarging the boundary and scope of their lives, "fall prey to intellectual complications and to artificiality."

Their inner life is a place that fears light, since terrible shames are hidden there. Since they are compelled to go among men and they want to appear decent and even heroic, they hide themselves behind a fictitious personality that expresses itself with exalted gestures and idealistic words.47

Presently the "fictitious personality" becomes confused with the real. All universal solids disappear, and we are faced with not one but many personalities, all equally true, all equally false.

With eager earnestness and passionate conviction he (Pirandello) points out that we grow up in the belief that we are one, a definite individual, with a clear-cut contour, with definite qualities, with a personality. Life proves that we are not, that in reality this subjectiveness of man's perceptions create in us as many-faceted persons as are individuals who look at or know us. Closed in his subjectiveness, man interprets the acts of others according to his own ideas of human behavior. The result is an incommunicability.48

In fine then, Pirandello sees all truth as relative, with "as many aspects as there are thinking beings,"49 but this very relativity of truth forces us to assume masks of our own devising, masks that will bring us closer to the truth as we wish to see it. Moreover, it also compels us to take on masks which have been projected by the

47Ibid., p. 91.
48Ibid., p. 30.
49Ibid., p. 34.
truth as seen by other individuals. In this process of masking and remasking, what personality we might have had is first splintered and then obscured entirely. Ultimately, we are faced with the following impasse: truth is relative to the individual, but the individual is not likely to exist at all. Hence truth is but an illusion, and reality consists of nothing but the continuum of illusions. Man and the world he lives in are nothingness.

Pirandello has often been referred to, as has Kaiser, as a dramatist of ideas, an intellectual playwright. In view of his philosophy these labels seem strangely incongruous. Like other pan-psychic playwrights, Pirandello's thinking may be involved but it is essentially irrational. In fact, it is difficult to disagree with Vittorini's judgment in this matter.

It is strange that Pirandello should have been called an abstruse and cerebral author. Ultimately, there is a strong anti-intellectual trend in his thought.50

As would be expected from his relativism and from his concern with the face and the mask, Pirandello's primary dramatic problem was devising some means of presenting and contrasting points of view. Actually, aside from his early naturalistic plays, almost all his plays address themselves to the rendering of one or more viewpoints of a central "reality." His many experiments with point of view include a great variety of approaches. In Henry IV Pirandello uses a technique reminiscent of Kaiser. Interestingly enough, the

50 Clark and Freedley, op. cit., p. 366.
structural pattern is actually reversed. We enter the play from the viewpoint of Henry IV and only gradually do we come to realize that the play is not an historical romance. Once the playwright has made us aware of the existence of other viewpoints, he proceeds to blend and contrast these points of view until the spectator has some difficulty in determining which way lies sanity and which madness. This is exactly Pirandello's point and his reversal of Kaiser's structure emphasizes the previously discussed philosophic difference between the two playwrights. To Kaiser there are always two possible points of view—that of society and that of the individual. Whichever one a given man possesses, he has, at any rate, something relatively tangible. To Pirandello there are, in the final analysis, no points of view. At best, man can only be aware of his existence in the ever-changing present. At worse, he can even lose this awareness by thinking too deeply on the matter, for even his immediate perception as an illusion compounded of a maze of masks and faces. Any close consideration of his existence will cause the whole complicated edifice of illusions to disintegrate, thus leaving the individual ego-less. Pirandello cannot but begin with a given point of view and end with nothingness. To reverse this pattern, to use a structure like Kaiser's, would argue for man's ability to build a solid point of view, a real face for himself.

Another variation of Pirandello's concern with conflicting viewpoints which ultimately rest only on illusion is the play Right You Are! (If You Think You Are). In this little comedy the opposing
points of view of a young clerk and his mother-in-law are presented to a group of townspeople as to a jury. The clerk claims that his mother-in-law is insane, for she believes that his present wife is her daughter, while in reality her daughter has died and the clerk's present wife is his second wife. The mother-in-law tells a different tale. The clerk is insane, for he believes that his wife is his second wife, whereas she is actually his first wife but recently returned to him after a long illness. Son-in-law, mother-in-law, and wife are finally brought together in an obligatory scene. When asked whom she truly is, the wife replies:

The truth? Simply this: I am the daughter of Signora Flora...and the second wife of Signor Ponza...and, for myself, I am nobody!...I am she whom you believe me to be.

Right You Are is a play about points of view, not a rendering of points of view. In its general trappings it is, to all extents and purposes, an Externalistic drama. There is no attempt to directly present inner thoughts or "soul states," and all information comes to the audience through objective dialogue and action. Only at the very end of the play is any sort of symbolism introduced, and when the symbol does appear—the veiled figure of the wife—it is direct and straight-forward. Throughout the play there is a sense that the little mystery will be solved, but the unusual twist waiting at the end is as carefully prepared for as any resolution in Ibsen. From the beginning, Laudisi, acting as the author's agent, reiterates again and again the point of the play: all truth is relative to the viewer and his viewpoint. When the wife appears in her heavy veils,
the audience should have little trouble in anticipating what she will eventually say.

Perhaps the most famous of Pirandello's experiments with point of view is *Six Characters in Search of an Author*. It is in this piece that he first attempts the structural method which was to make him famous--the mixture of a play on stage with life beyond the proscenium. In his play-as-life; life-as-play form, Pirandello was to make his most perfect statement of his own relativism and to solve to his satisfaction the problem of presenting points of view. In all, Pirandello was to write three plays which made use of what he called the "theatre in the theatre" structure. *Six Characters* appeared in 1921, *Each in His Own Way* in 1924, *Tonight We Improvise* in 1930. Of the trilogy, *Six Characters* is the first and certainly the most striking.

In terms of simple plot, *Six Characters* has at once one of the slightest and the most confusing plots in dramatic literature. A group of actors who are rehearsing a play are surprised by the appearance of six unusual people who claim to be dramatic characters in search of an author to write their story. They persuade the director of the company to act as author and they agree to present their story for him. The story, in its entirety, never gets told. There is, instead, a great deal of discussion of the actual roles of each of the characters, and in the process of this discussion, the audience gathers enough information to piece together a lurid tale of adultery and incest. It is obvious, however, that the story of the six
characters is not the important point of the play. As Pirandello himself said in the preface to *Six Characters*, he rejected the six people not for themselves "but for their drama, which doubtless is what interests them above all but which did not interest me." What does interest Pirandello is the interplay of viewpoints, the interplay of viewpoints between one imaginary character and another, and the interplay of viewpoints between the imaginary characters and the flesh and blood actors. Thus the story of the six characters serves only as a factor which draws out and demonstrates various points of view. As the play progresses and the facts of the story are discussed and argued, the playwright takes advantage of this opportunity to compare received reality with a known illusion, the illusion of a work of dramatic art. Thus the discussions between character and character, between director and character, between director and actor, and between actor and fictitious character bring one always closer and closer to the ultimate question of the work: who can truly be said to have an actual point of view, who has a truer reality—the fictitious character or the living person?

To present this question and to trace out its many implications, Pirandello must first establish the existence of the six characters. This he does in Act One in the most ingenious way. When the Director scoffs at the Father because he claims to be a living character, the Father turns the Director's own profession into a telling argument.

---

FATHER. I marvel at your incredulity, gentlemen. Are you not accustomed to see the creatures created by an author spring to life in yourselves and face each other? Just because there is no 'book' which contains us, you refuse to believe....

DAUGHTER. Believe me, we are really six most interesting characters, sir; side-tracked, however.

FATHER. Yes! That is the word! In that sense, that is, that the author who created us alive no longer wished, or was no longer able, materially to put us into a work of art. And this was a real crime, sir, because he who has had the luck to be born a character can even laugh at death. He cannot die. The man, the writer, the instrument of the creation will die, but his creation will not. And to live forever, it does not need to have extraordinary gifts to be able to work wonders. Who was Sancho Panza? Who was Don Abbondie? Yet they live eternally because--live germs that they were--they had the fortune to find a fecundating matrix, a fantasy which would raise and nourish them: make them live forever.

MANAGER. That is quite all right. But what do you want here, all of you?

FATHER. We want to live.

MANAGER. For eternity?

FATHER. No, sir, only for a moment...in you.

Persuading the Director that they do exist and that, through the medium of the stage it is possible for them "to live," the characters begin to tell him their story. Almost at once they have difficulty presenting a coherent account, since each begins quarrelling with the other about the true nature of the facts. Confusion mounts, and presently it is apparent that there are as many stories as there are characters. Two points of view--those of the Step-Daughter and the Father--are, however, presented more forcefully than the others.

The Step-Daughter maintains that all the woes of the family are to be charged to the Father. His original sin was the sending of his wife to another man, the father of the Step-Daughter. This act of the Father's began a chain of events which ultimately reduced the
Step-Daughter to prostitution. It was while she was pursuing this profession that she very nearly committed incest with the Father. According to her point of view, the near-incestuous act was the inevitable result of the Father's original rejection of the Mother. In this manner she disclaims all guilt, and she feels that the Father's incest is a revenge to which she is justly due.

On the other hand, the Father argues that what happened between him and the Step-Daughter was an accident. It grew out of an unfortunate moral lapse during which he yielded to the impulses of his "miserable flesh." In doing so, he was not to be particularly blamed, for he was acting no differently from any other man who "knows what unconfessable things pass within the secrecy of his own heart."

One gives way to temptation, only to rise from it again, afterwards, with a great eagerness to re-establish one's dignity....Everybody's in the same case. Some folks haven't the courage to say certain things, that's all.

But, argues the Father, this lapse of the flesh had nothing to do with his relation with the girl or her mother. To begin with, he did not know that she was his step-daughter. Moreover, it was her father, not he, who did not provide her with better financial support. As for her mother, he meant "to do good to" her by sending her away. She was in love with his secretary, and when the young man was sent away, she drifted "forlornly about the house like an animal without a master." Thus, to relieve both him and her, he sent his wife to her young lover.

When the Daughter takes issue with the Father's view of the facts, the older man retaliates with these words:
But don't you see that the whole trouble lies here. In words, words. Each of us has in him a whole world of things, each man his own special world, and how can we ever come to an understanding if I put in the words I utter the sense and value of things as I see them; while you who listen to me must inevitably translate them according to the conception of things each of you has within himself. We think we understand each other, but we never really do.

With this argument, the Father sums up the position of the six characters. They exist because an author has conceived them, but since he has placed them in no story, given them no definite role, they have no actual life. As yet they are but creatures of one another's point of view. Moreover, none of them is actually pleased with the role which the others expect him to play. This situation is crystallized in the persons of the Father and the Step-Daughter. Both feel that they have a certain reality which the other will not grant them. In addition both resent the mask, the external reality, which the one wishes the other to wear. As the Father puts it: "the drama lies all in this—to the conscience that I have, that each one of us has."

We believe this conscience to be a single thing, but is many sided. There is one for this person, and another for that. Diverse consciences. So we have this illusion of being one person for all, of having a personality that is unique in all our acts. But it isn't true. We perceive then when, tragically perhaps, in something we do, we are as it were, suspended, caught up in the air on a kind of hook. Then we perceive that all of us was not in the act, and that it would be an atrocious injustice to judge us by that action alone, as if all our existence were summed up in one deed. Now do you understand the perfidy of this girl? She surprised me in a place, where she ought not to have known me, just as I could not exist for her; and now she seeks to attach me to a reality such as I could never suppose I should have to assume for her in a shameful and fleeting moment of my life.
The Step-Daughter will have none of this philosophizing, whereas the Son contemptuously refers to the whole matter as "Literature! Literature!" But the Father understands the situation better than the Son. "Literature indeed! This is life, this is passion!"

Considering the position of the six characters at this moment, the Father is quite right. In their present situation, without the support of a story, a form which stands fixed beyond space and time, they are no different from the actors and the Director. The characters are but the baseless fabric of internal and external illusion. As they now exist, they are, at core, mutable and meaningless. In short, they are living. This fact seems to contradict their earlier plea for "life," but little reflection is needed to recognize that Pirandello is making a cruel pun. For to live as the six characters wish to live is to exist not as a human being, but as a fixed and immutable ego. What they ask is life in the biblical sense, eternal and unchangeable. To have life in a story would be to have, as Pirandello sees it, a "raison d'être," the very thing which "living" humans lack.

Every creature of fantasy and art, in order to exist, must have his drama, that is, a drama in which he may be a character and for which he is a character. This drama is the character's raison d'être, his vital function, necessary for his existence.52

In short, every character in a drama has life because he has a fixed point of view and a fixed world within which to exercise that point of view. The viewpoint may be simple or complex, but it is, nevertheless, always rounded and complete.

---

52Ibid., p. 368.
This then is the situation as the first act ends. The six characters exist but they do not "live." Until their story is set they are no different from any other human being. In the second act, the manager allows the Father and the Step-Daughter to act out their much discussed scene, thereby giving them "life" and ending forever any discussion of the matter. It is during the course of Act Two that the differences between art and human life are presented and discussed thoroughly. Throughout Act One, the emphasis was on living as human's live, on life in space and time, on life with its many points of view, its many faces and masks. Act Two begins to weave a pattern of contrast between temporal life and the life of art. Throughout, the question of reality and illusion is presented through the art-life paradox.

To begin with, both the Father and the Daughter find that the actors who have their parts are not giving a true rendering of themselves. The Father wishes to see in the actors "our temperaments, our souls." To this the Director replies, "your soul, or whatever you call it takes shape here. The actors give the body and form to it, voice and gesture." In other words, to achieve reality in an art form, the character must lose his reality as a human, for his soul is no longer the subjective elusive human spirit. It is to be henceforth fixed and objectified, not by means of its own chosing, but by the factors of the art form.

The Step-Daughter also shares her Step-Father's reservations about entering the realm of art. She insists on "truth." She wishes the actress to remove her frock.
MANAGER. Great! Just what we want, to make a riot in the theatre!
DAUGHTER. But it's the truth!
MANAGER. What does that matter? Acting is our business here. Truth up to a certain point, but no further.

But beyond the physical truth, the Step-Daughter wants above all else not to allow the Father to turn the play into his own "cerebral drama." She wants to be a character in the scene as she sees it, not a character in the scene as projected through the Father's point of view. Passionately she cries out that she wants "to act my part, my part!" The Director, however, is quick to point out that "there are other parts than yours." Her part alone may be life, but it is not art. As the Manager says:

I am aware of the fact that everyone has his own interior life which he wants very much to put forward. But the difficulty lies in this fact: to set out just as much as is necessary for the stage, taking the other characters into consideration, and at the same time hint at the unrevealed interior life of each. I am willing to admit, my dear young lady, that from your point of view it would be a fine idea if each character could tell the public all his troubles in a nice monologue or a regular one hour lecture.

With this little speech of the Director's, Pirandello manages to say three things. First he points out the differences between life and art. Second, he indicates the difficulties attendant upon presenting points of view in the play form, and, third, he pokes fun at the very device which he himself has chosen to use. After all, by allowing the characters to argue with one another about their different views of the same story, he has given each an opportunity to tell his troubles in several nice little monologues.

When the playwright feels that, for the time, enough has been
said about the art-life paradox, he allows the Father and the Step-
Daughter to act out their much discussed scene. The two are thus
given a share of life and the act comes to an end.

Act Three is a summary and a demonstration. It begins on the
same note as the previous act ended. The Step-Daughter again opens
up the problem of art and life by objecting to the place selected for
the remaining action of the story.

DAUGHTER. I'm not going to talk anymore now. But I must
tell you this: you can't have the whole action take
place in the garden, as you suggest. It isn't
possible.
MANAGER. Why not?
DAUGHTER. Because he (indicates the SON) is always shut up
in his room. And then there's all the part of that
poor dazed-looking boy there which takes place indoors.
MANAGER. Maybe! On the other hand, you will understand--
we can't change scenes three or four times in one act.

This argument brings up the matter of dramatic illusion, but at the
very mention of the word, the Father becomes irritated.

FATHER. The illusion! For heaven's sake don't say
illusion. Please don't use that word, which is
particularly painful to us.
MANAGER. Why, if you please?
FATHER. It's painful, cruel, really cruel; you ought
to understand that.
MANAGER. But why! What ought we to say then? The
illusion, I tell you, sir, which we've got to
create for the audience...
LEADING MAN. With our acting.
MANAGER. The illusion of reality.

Here Pirandello has at last come to the point of his argument;
all that has gone before has led to the major question of the play:
Who has the truer reality, the living man or the dramatic character
within his drama? The Father proceeds to answer the question in the
following manner.
A character, sir, may always ask a man who he is. Because a character has really a life of his own, marked with his special characteristics; for which reason he is always 'somebody.' But a man—I'm not speaking of you now—may very well be 'nobody'... If we have no reality beyond illusion, you must not count over much on your own reality as you feel it today, since, like that of yesterday, it may prove an illusion to you tomorrow... Our reality doesn't change; it can't change! It cannot be other than what it is, because it is already fixed forever. It's terrible. Ours is an immutable reality which should make you shudder when you approach us if you are really conscious of the fact that your reality is a mere transitory and fleeting illusion, taking this form today and that tomorrow, according to the conditions to your will, your sentiments, which in turn are controlled by an intellect that shows them to you today in one manner and tomorrow... who knows how?

Thus Pirandello completes his study of points of view, in art and in reality, and thus he sums up the points made in the first two acts. The remainder of the third act is perorative demonstration. The characters continue to act out their story. At a certain point in the tale, the baby daughter is drowned in a paper mache pond and the young Step-Son commits suicide with a prop pistol. The actors run to him as he falls, some crying that he is really dead, others that it is only pretense. At this point, the Father looses a "terrible cry: "Pretense? Reality, sir, reality!" As the curtain falls, the Director provides the final comment. "Pretense? Reality? To hell with it all!"

And so ends Pirandello's first experiment with the "theatre in the theatre" structure, a method that is at the same time a very old and a very new device, for in a manner of speaking, Pirandello is simply giving a new twist to the ancient technique of a play within a play. But Pirandello's twist is undeniably different. Prior usage
of the convention was usually confined to making the inner play serve as additional emphasis for the outer. It may be used to review a previous reality, as in Hamlet's play to catch the conscience of the King, or it may be used to make further comment on an existing reality, as in the dumb shows which introduce the acts of Corbudy. \(^{53}\) Pirandello, however, was to use it to confound and reject reality. Beginning as an illusion in contrast to the reality of the actors, the play of the six characters finally becomes "truer and more real" than the actors themselves. Life is then a mutable illusion; dramatic illusion is immutable reality.

In yet a second way can Pirandello's new form be considered both old and new. Rehearsal comedies were a great favorite with the playwrights of the Restoration and Shakespeare gives the form a delightful treatment in the Pyramus and Thisbe episode of Midsummer Night's Dream. But, at the risk of oversimplifying somewhat, we may say that the humor of previous rehearsal comedies was drawn from the actors or the playwright. Pirandello's uniqueness lies in the humor being drawn principally from the interaction of actors with imaginary characters who refuse not to exist. And, while it is true that the previous rehearsal comedies often invited comparisons between drama and life, it was usually drama not life that suffered from the comparison.

\(^{53}\)An interesting discussion of the various ends to which the device of the play within the play can be put is found in Robert J. Nelson's Play Within a Play (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1958.)
Finally, Pirandello's form is both unusual and traditional in that it is both a point-of-view study and an Externalistic drama. Throughout the play the objectivity of the third-person narrative is rigidly adhered to. There is nowhere in the play any attempt to seek out a conventional means of rendering inner or unspoken thought. What can't be told in external dialogue or action is just not told. There are, however, two important exceptions to traditional Externalistic technique. These are the two grotesqueries: the six characters actually exist and a seventh, Madame Pace, is made to come to life simply by creating her proper setting. But the author is at great pains in the first act to make the existence of the six fictitious characters as acceptable as possible to the audience. This, of course, is important, since their very living will ultimately become the point of the play.

But it must be granted that Pirandello was not so careful in preparing for or explaining away the sudden appearance of Madame Pace, and he recognized that her appearance represented something of a lapse in his dramaturgy. In his preface to *Six Characters*, he offers the following apology.

Madame Pace is born among the six characters and seems a miracle, even a trick, realistically portrayed upon the stage. It is no trick. The birth is real. The new character is alive not because she was alive already but because she is now happily born as is required by the fact of her being a character--she is obliged to be as she is. There is a break here, a sudden change in the level of reality of the scene, because a character can be born in this way only in the poet's fancy and not on the boards of the stage. Without anyone's noticing it, I have all of a sudden changed the scene: I
have gathered it up again into my own fantasy without removing it from the spectator's eyes. That is, I have shown them, instead of the stage, my own fantasy in the act of creating—my own fantasy in the form of this same stage.54

How much like Strindberg's concept of the dreamer! But one wonders if Pirandello is actually successful in thus briefly rendering a view of his own creative consciousness? In a sense, of course, the whole play is a presentation of the author's creative process, but only in the most abstractly symbolic sense that all plays are the objectification of their creator's fancy.

In using the methods of Externalistic dramaturgy, Pirandello again does so with a new purpose. His ultimate aim is not to represent reality but to refute it. This he does by cleverly turning the principles of objective drama against objective drama itself. By becoming ultrarealistic, that is, by setting the scene not on the dressed by the undressed stage, by going behind the dramatic illusion and presenting the actors preparing to create it, he achieves the best possible contrast between life and the dramatic art. In addition, he provides himself with the opportunity to discuss illusion in the process of being created. Then too, he also tricks the audience into accepting the play as the most basic realism, far removed from fantasy. Finally, he proceeds to confuse and distort the whole realistic-illusionistic continuum by introducing into this very naturalistic situation a group of seven characters who are not real at all. Thus, by using the approach of Externalism, he gains.

54Bentley, Naked Masks, p. 373.
not only sharp contrasts, but also, ultimately, considerable ambiguity. Moreover, he saw to it that his objectivity did not interfere with his presentation of various points of view by carefully conserving the facts of his internal play until each of the imaginary characters had had an opportunity to tell the story as it appeared to him. This purely objective and yet basically subjective structural pattern gained for Pirandello the best possible statement of his philosophical paradox.

And here is the universal meaning at first vainly sought in the six characters... without wanting to, without knowing it, in the strife of their bedeviled souls, each of them, defending himself against the accusations of the others, expresses as his own living passion and torment the passion and torment which for so many years have been the pangs of my spirit: the deceit of mutual understanding founded on the empty abstraction of the words, the multiple personality of everyone corresponding to the possibilities of being to be found in each of us, and finally the inherent tragic conflict of life (which is always moving and changing) and form (which fixes it, immutable). 55

Pirandello's selection of the "theatre in the theatre" form is a clear demonstration of his superiority as a playwright, for it is, in fact, the only structural organization which would completely state his total philosophy. Such purely Externalistic plays as Right You Are can only be plays about point of view. As Raymond Williams indicates, Right You Are is, at best, "an entertaining trick comedy." In it, Pirandello "does not create so much an authentically complex situation, by which the shallowness of commonplace judgments may be

55 Bentley, Naked Masks, p. 367.
revealed, as a deliberate (and brilliant) theatrical exception.\(^{56}\)

Once Pirandello had constructed his "theatre in the theatre" pattern, however, he had in his possession a tool which enabled him to present rather than relate differing viewpoints. Thus, the story in *Six Characters* is not a mystery to be solved, as in *Right You Are*, or a madness to be cured as in *Henry IV*, but rather the story remains, as the Father says, "in us," in the characters. It is still where it rightfully belongs, in the points of view of each of the participants. Consequently, it can be told only through the differing insights of the characters, and appropriate comparisons and contrasts can be made as the story unfolds. In addition, since the story does not yet exist, the emphasis can be placed not on the factual complications, but on the subjective variations of those who tell it. Finally, when certain portions of the story do exist in a completed form, the playwright is then free to contrast this immutable form, these frozen points of view, with the fugitiveness of life and the uncertainty of human perception. In brief, *Six Characters* is a study in—not about—points of view.

A final achievement of Pirandello's new form was the solution which it offered to another major and related problem of pan-psychic drama, the problem of eliminating the intrusion of the proscenium arch. Evreinov had attempted to neutralize the effect of the proscenium arch by using point of view as a device for bringing the spectator to the stage. Pirandello attacked the problem from the

\(^{56}\)Williams, *op. cit.*, p. 192.
rear. If it were difficult to bring the audience to the stage, why not bring the stage to the audience? This is exactly what he did in *Six Characters*. By placing his action on the bare rehearsal stage, he eliminated all those theatrical trappings which call attention to the difference between the auditorium and the stage. Over and above this initial selection of locale, every attempt is made throughout the play to make the audience feel that they have merely happened in at a rehearsal and that at any time they are free to interrupt the proceedings or to leave if they are bored. As the opening stage direction states, the audience enters to see a bare stage so that "from the beginning they may have the impression of an impromptu performance." The curtain is open as the audience walks in, and the first act ends without a curtain. It is marked simply by the major characters' vacation of the stage in order to arrange a scenario. The second act ends in a curtain which a stagehand lowers by mistake. Thus, the presence of the proscenium is neutralized not because the audience feels that they are on stage, but because they have the impression that since this is a rehearsal no formal barrier has as yet been set up between the stage and the auditorium.

Therefore, the "theatre in the theatre" structure not only provided the playwright with a means of presenting the various points of view of his characters and with a method of intermingling art with life by eliminating the major division between art and life—the proscenium arch, but it also permitted him to demonstrate that art by being the only reality and that life by being only illusion prove
conclusively that the fate of the human ego is to discover that it is but an ever more entangled web of fantasies destined to ultimate destruction, whereas the ego of an imaginary character is a fixed, eternal thing. Pirandello proved this postulate to his own satisfaction by contrasting the viewpoints of the six fictitious characters, viewpoints which will remain until the end of time, with the points of view of the actors, the director, and by implication, the audience, points of view that are ever-changing, ever creating new illusions and destroying the old.

Hence, the problem presented by Strindberg and Evreinov was taken up by both Pirandello and Kaiser. To them the rendering of an individual's point of view meant not only presenting its imminent manifestations but also suggesting its probable end. Both playwrights felt that a relativism which assumed that the truth resided in the individual viewpoint must also assume that the very existence of that viewpoint implied its destruction. To Kaiser, the individual ego was doomed because it was committed to an unequal struggle with the group ego of an evil society. To Pirandello, the private ego carried within itself its own seeds of destruction. The Pirandellian ego, because it did not agree with the viewpoints of others, was forced to assume a mask that brought it closer to external reality and to the viewpoints of others. As these external viewpoints multiplied, so did the masks. Moreover, the original masks were prone to change and become only illusions of masks as alien viewpoints changed. Somewhere in this maze of masks and faces, the
original face (if there ever was one) becomes lost or suffocated. Thus, as the masks dissolve, so also does the total personality, carrying with it to destruction the dead or dying face.

As a container for his point-of-view study, Kaiser made use of the "station drama," a form which juxtaposes several short scenes united only by the consistency of theme and central character. In each scene he contrasted the viewpoint of society with that of the individual, moving always towards complete projection of the action through the eyes of the central character. Pirandello, on the other hand, sought to make his statement in the "theatre in the theatre" form, a structural framework which allowed him to contrast various viewpoints as flesh and blood actors and imaginary characters passed freely from the rehearsal stage to the play with the play. Kaiser's experiments were later to be tried with some success by Eugene O'Neill in such plays as The Hairy Ape; an interesting variation on a pattern similar to Pirandello's is Andre Gide's The Counterfeiters, which contains a novel within a novel, within a novel.

The two playwrights invite one final comparison. Kaiser tended to make strong use of devices which had fallen into ill repute with the externalistic school. In particular, he made frequent use of the monologue as a means of rendering inner thought. Pirandello represents a different trend in the pan-psychic movement. He attempts, whenever possible, to correlate his techniques with those of the Externalists. When he feels the need, he will not hesitate to use grotesque elements, such as the six characters themselves, but his general tendency is to remain with the externalistic framework.
CHAPTER FIVE

ATTACKING THE PROBLEM BY THE REINTRODUCTION OF OLDER TECHNIQUES

O'NEIL AND GIRAUDOUX USE OLD MEANS TO A NEW END

I

O'Neill: Strange Interlude

The new movements in European drama were slow to cross the Atlantic. During the time when Ibsen was producing his new symbolic dramas, when "free theatres" were springing up in London, Paris, Berlin and Moscow, the emotional scope of America was, in the words of Richard Skinner, "almost equivalent to that of a highly developed vegetable." Prior to 1915, the American stage could hardly offer any comparison to that of Europe. Clearly, the realism of Belasco and the efforts of such part-time playwrights as Langdon Mitchell and William Vaughan Moody could not be equated with or judged by the standards used to evaluate the work of Brahm, Antoine, Stanislavski and the host of externalistic and pan-psychic playwrights who were quickly becoming known as masters in their own lifetime. In 1915, however, the tide began to turn. Nineteen-fifteen was, according to MacGowan and Melnitz, "that crucial year," for it was at that time that

the Provincetown Players began to produce the work of Eugene O'Neill.\(^2\) Within ten years, the seed first planted in that tiny playhouse had grown and borne fruit in abundance, and by 1924 O'Neill reigned supreme as the outstanding playwright of the New York stage and America's first dramatic genius. Moreover, by 1924 it was America's turn to be smug. Not only did it have a modern drama, but it also had perhaps the world's greatest practicing dramatist, for by this time the "trend had shifted" and "coincident with the improvement of the American product, the European drama began to fade.\(^3\)

Thus, O'Neill came at the end of a period, and, as might be expected, he could hardly help but be eclectic. Certain of his experiences tended to heighten his eclecticism. He came of a theatre family and had even toured as a bit actor in his father's perennially successful production of *The Count of Monte Cristo*. He had been the victim of a serious physical breakdown, and while recuperating during the winter of 1912-13, he "read just about everything I could get my hands on: the Greeks, the Elizabethans--practically all the classics--and of course all the moderns. Ibsen and Strindberg, especially Strindberg."\(^4\) Like many intellectuals of his time, he also read and


the Provincetown Players began to produce the work of Eugene O'Neill.  
Within ten years, the seed first planted in that tiny playhouse had grown and borne fruit in abundance, and by 1924 O'Neill reigned supreme as the outstanding playwright of the New York stage and America's first dramatic genius. Moreover, by 1924 it was America's turn to be smug. Not only did it have a modern drama, but it also had perhaps the world's greatest practicing dramatist, for by this time the "trend had shifted" and "coincident with the improvement of the American product, the European drama began to fade."

Thus, O'Neill came at the end of a period, and, as might be expected, he could hardly help but be eclectic. Certain of his experiences tended to heighten his eclecticism. He came of a theatre family and had even toured as a bit actor in his father's perennially successful production of The Count of Monte Cristo. He had been the victim of a serious physical breakdown, and while recuperating during the winter of 1912-13, he "read just about everything I could get my hands on: the Greeks, the Elizabethans--practically all the classics--and of course all the moderns. Ibsen and Strindberg, especially Strindberg." Like many intellectuals of his time, he also read and

\[2\text{MacGowan and Melnitz, } \text{op. cit.}, \text{ p. 427.}\]

\[3\text{Edwin A. Engel, } \text{The Haunted Heroes of Eugene O'Neill } \text{(Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1953), p. 301.}\]

respected Nietzsche. Clark describes his going to rehearsal one day with a worn copy of *The Birth of Tragedy* stuffed into his coat pocket. O'Neill had also done his share of thinking about the new psychology and about the theories of Freud and Jung. His attitude toward the latter was one of esteem with reservations. To him Jung was "the only one of the lot which interests me." Some of the psychologist's suggestions were "extraordinarily illuminating" to O'Neill, but in the final analysis Jung was "no deep student of psychoanalysis."\(^\text{6}\)

Hence, O'Neill was heir to a wide range of theatrical, philosophical, and psychological thought and practice, and at one time or another he was to make use of it all. His background led him into an eclecticism which found him by turns a realistic, a symbolic, a naturalistic and an expressionistic playwright. His revolt against the type of romantic drama which had made his father's fortune and ruined his career as an artist caused O'Neill to turn first to Externalism. But the man who felt that Strindberg was "the precursor of modernity in the theatre"\(^\text{7}\) was not long in realizing that his bent lay in Pan-psychism. As Skinner points out, O'Neill has always been the "poet of the individual."

\(^5\)Ibid., p. 4.
\(^6\)Engel, *op. cit.*, p. 81 f.
\(^7\)Ibid., p. 83.
But with O'Neill, the problem of the individual as a soul in distress or torment has been clearly supreme. It is the individual's rebellion against the mass, or his abject surrender to it that counts, rather than the action of the individual as representing the mass.8

Consequently, by 1920, O'Neill had turned from pure Externalism and had completed his first point-of-view study and one of his finest plays, The Emperor Jones. The play probably has its roots in Strindberg's dream form, but its general station drama structure is clearly comparable to Kaiser's From Morn to Midnight. The same observation may be made of The Hairy Ape which was written the following year. Both plays employ not only the station drama form but also the Kaiserian device of shifting from the universal to the individual point of view. O'Neill was aware of the similarity between his work and that of the German playwright, but he vigorously denied having been influenced by Kaiser. Jones was written, he claimed, "long before I had ever heard of Expressionism." The Hairy Ape, "a direct descendant of Jones," was planned before he had read From Morn to Midnight, which was a play he "did not think much of."9 Whether O'Neill was influenced unconsciously by Kaiser, or whether the two playwrights developed along parallel lines, there is no denying that their structural methods mirror one another. One of the most important resemblances was the propensity of both dramatists to use visual elements, scenery, lighting, properties, as a means of suggesting the central

8Skinner, op. cit., p. 9.
9Clark, op. cit., p. 125.
character's point of view. This technique was, of course, strongly championed by Evreinov and Meyerhold, but O'Neill was to develop it and rely on it to a degree hardly hoped for by the Russians.

Throughout the period of his pan-psychic experimentation—that is, from 1920 to 1930—O'Neill continued to try various juxtapositions of the visual and oral elements of the theatre in search of the best means of depicting the point-of-view of a given individual. In 1925, for instance, his continued interest in visual statement led him to reintroduce the mask into the modern theatre. Just how important he felt this innovation to be to the writer of point of view studies can be seen from his statement that the mask was "the freest possible solution to the modern dramatist's problem as to how—with the greatest possible dramatic clarity and economy of means—he can express those profound hidden conflicts of the mind which the probings of psychology continue to disclose to use."  

O'Neill's use of the mask as a dramatic convention reflected not only his originality in terms of dramatic invention, but also an important development in the playwright's underlying philosophy. As we have already noted, O'Neill's masters were Nietzsche and Strindberg, and consequently he was born into the new relativism and the new Dionysianism with certain aspects of his philosophy ready-made. As Winther has observed:

10 Engel, op. cit., p. 93.
In O'Neill's plays the 'good' is never a fixed quantity to which an action can be referred, measured and evaluated. The 'good' is never the same. It changes with changing actions, is relative to each new situation.\(^{11}\)

In addition to this relativism, there is in O'Neill a total "yea-saying to life."

There is in him, as in Nietzsche, an almost savage will to power, a will to live life to its fullest with all its tragedy and sorrow, a will to face it with insult and scorn, scorn and insult flung with vengeance and hate against the brutal tyranny of the past.\(^{12}\)

For a time O'Neill was content to develop and explore the basic ideas of his masters. His relativism was just that. It was sometime before it occurred to O'Neill to draw any conclusions from relativism beyond that of presenting life in terms of individual lives. To the individual who has been cut off by modern thought and science from any universal values, from any sense of spirituality in a universal godhead, O'Neill could offer only the Nietzschean solution of a new paganism, a new Dionysianism founded on the needs and truth of the individual being. However, his sense of naturalistic determinism, which is so sharply exemplified in Brutus Jones's inability to escape the heritage of his race, was sooner or later to force him to reason his relativism through to some sort of conclusion.

His first conclusion is much the same as Kaiser's: the all-important individual ego is doomed to destruction because it is at war


\(^{12}\)Ibid., p. 81.
with overpowering forces over which it has no control. These forces are those of a crass and industrialized society. Thus, Yank can shout and strike at the puppets who walk Fifth Avenue, but in the end it is they who triumph and Yank is destroyed. In this unequal struggle, Kaiser saw hope in the social reformer; O'Neill looked to salvation in a new paganism. But "having sojourned to the Dionysian depths in Desire Under the Elms, O'Neill emerged, never to find his way back again."13

O'Neill, having lost faith in the Nietzschean ideal, began to feel that there was no hope at all for the triumph of the individual because the evil lay more within than without. The source of the trouble lay in man's own romantic imagination. Like the crowds who flocked to see the impossible dream of his father's production of Monte Cristo, each man sought some escape from reality in a world of dreams and ideals. Hence, man's tragedy was grounded in his need for his dream and in his refusal to see that there was nothing he could do to force nature to give his dream reality. Thus, though Ponce de Leon goes in quest of love and fame, Marco Polo of power, and Lazarus of life eternal, all are to be disappointed, not because their dreams are bad but because they are impossible. Just as the crowds at Monte Cristo are not able to buy any more than a few moments of illusion for the price of a theatre ticket, so each man is doomed to discover that no matter how lofty his ideal, it is but a theatrical trick, an

13Engel, op. cit., p. 135.
This discovery comes hard to man, and when the truth does come it is usually too bitter to face. After all, his life has been supported by his dreams just as his dreams have been supported by his life. Hence, to hide his disappointments, man manufactures new illusions which he presents to himself and to the world as a replacement for the old. Such is the way of Dion, the Dreamer of The Great God Brown, who wears a mask of Pan as a shield against the reality of the world as conceived by Brown. In short, man's dream is both his greatness and his weakness. The cheapest escapism and the supreme achievements of humanity grow out of the same romantic ideals, but no matter what form they take, they ultimately divide man against himself, make him confuse illusion with reality, and carry him to destruction. As Dr. Darrell says in Strange Interlude:

Romantic imagination! It has ruined more lives than all the diseases! Other diseases, I should say! It's a form of insanity.

From the foregoing discussion, it is obvious that O'Neill's maturing thought was drawing him closer to the conclusions of Pirandello: man is destroyed because he begins by attempting to adjust reality to his private dream and ends by so compounding dream and reality that his ego is first split and then destroyed. Pirandello wrote plays in which his characters talked about the masks and faces which they elected or were forced to wear; O'Neill, with his strong sense of the theatre-visual, had the characters actually wear masks in The Great God Brown. What had been metaphor to Pirandello became icon for O'Neill.
As O'Neill drew abreast of Pirandello philosophically, he also began to resemble the Italian playwright in other matters besides the use of masks. The tendency towards striking a compromise between realistic and non-realistic elements, a tendency which was observable in Pirandello, becomes a marked characteristic of the later work of O'Neill. In 1926, O'Neill completed the final draft of Lazarus Laughed, the last of his "pageant dramas." In the same year he began work on a far more significant drama, Strange Interlude, a play which marks the end of a long period of pan-psychic experimentation which began with the writing of The Emperor Jones. In two important ways, Strange Interlude is a very Pirandellian work. First, like Six Characters, it is, after a manner, built as a play within a play. The two separate plays are the play which takes place on the external level and that which takes place by virtue of the interaction of the internal thoughts of each of the characters. Secondly, like Pirandello, O'Neill distorts the techniques of Externalism only so far as is necessary to make his point. Hence, the play on the external level is as realistic as any of the social dramas of Ibsen, and, interestingly enough, could, with very little adaptation, make a perfectly coherent and reasonably playable piece in itself. Thus, like Pirandello, O'Neill is not adverse to using every possible dramaturgic device of Externalism. Such resemblances as the two playwrights bear to one another is hardly coincidental; they can be traced to the previously mentioned philosophical similarities. This is not to say that O'Neill's thinking was directly influenced by
Pirandello, for he may well have evolved his conclusions independently. Whatever the process, the American playwright was ultimately to see life in much the same terms as the Italian did. In an article in the American Spectator, O'Neill was to say:

One's outer life passes in a solitude haunted by the masks of others; one's inner life passes in a solitude hounded by the masks of oneself.¹⁴

Thus, both playwrights resorted to some variation of the play within the play in order to present the impossible problem of defining ultimate reality in terms of the private, subjective vision, and both made use of the techniques of Externalism as a means of throwing into sharp relief their presentation of the individual's point of view. With such similarity in both ideals and aims, one wonders why O'Neill did not arrive at a final solution identical to that of Pirandello?

There are several good reasons. First James Joyce's Ulysses had appeared in 1922, the year after Pirandello first formulated his new method. The interior monologue, as presented by Joyce, had by 1927 become popularized in the novels of Waldo Frank, Sherwood Anderson, and Conrad Aiken. Thus, O'Neill had before him the new technique of the novel as a guide towards his own use of asides and soliloquies. The new novel technique, however, must be accorded its influence on O'Neill with some reservation. Although George Jean Nathan characterized Strange Interlude as a "combination of the method of the novel

¹⁴Winther, op. cit., p. 276.
and that of the drama,"\(^{15}\) there is no reason to assume that O'Neill was making dramatic hay in the novel's sunshine. To the contrary, any assumption that O'Neill was imitating Joyce's technique seems rash and unfounded in light of the general developments in modern drama and in view of O'Neill's own theatrical background. As Engel points out, "O'Neill seems to have combined the technique of *Overtones* with that of *The Adding Machine*."\(^{16}\) The first was written in 1913, the second was Elmer Rice's 1923 success. Both plays are examples of the growing American interest in subjective points of view. Whether Engel's observation about O'Neill's immediate dramatic examples is demonstratably true or not is questionable, but it does suggest the important fact that O'Neill's major influences come much more directly from the theatre than from the novel.

And it was O'Neill's theatrical background which provided a second cause for his divergence from the methods of Pirandello. Although O'Neill and Pirandello both began their careers as externalists, they soon began to follow sharply differing dramatic paths. When pure Externalism failed to satisfy him, O'Neill was led into decidedly visual experimentation, a course which Pirandello never followed. It was through his interest in the visual theatre that O'Neill came to have a healthy respect for the so-called "producer's theatre," a theatre visual as well as oral. Pirandello seems to have

\(^{15}\)Engel, *op. cit.* p. 200.

\(^{16}\)Ibid., p. 203.
been an "absolute opponent of the idea." It was the producer's theatre which probably lured O'Neill into experimentation with actual masks, while Pirandello was content with talk. But strangely enough, it was also the concepts of MacGowan, the producer, which probably brought O'Neill to his particular structural solution in Strange Interlude. In The Theatre of Tomorrow, published the year before the appearance of Ulysses, MacGowan had cried out that the "soliloquy will return again as a natural and proper revelation of the mind of the character. Even the aside may redevelop as a deliberate piece of theatricalism."18

Finally, in addition to the ideas of MacGowan, O'Neill had his own early theatrical experiences to guide him, experiences which were not granted to Pirandello. After all, O'Neill had grown up in the shadow of The Count of Monte Cristo, and in young manhood had even appeared on the stage with that august personage. Consequently, he himself had had first hand experience with the effectiveness of the old aside and soliloquy. Always a dramatist of the living not the printed theatre, O'Neill, once he felt that the mask had not made the completest possible statement, not unnaturally returned in Strange Interlude to a device which had worked effectively in the past, was familiar to him, and was being advocated by his close friend and producer, Kenneth MacGowan.

17Williams, op. cit., p. 198.

In addition to their differing theatrical traditions, O'Neill and Pirandello also were at odds concerning ultimate values. To Pirandello, art at least transcended illusion in its immutability; O'Neill was not even willing to grant this premise. Art was but another mask. Thus Marsden flees from reality in his writing, even going so far as to "seduce himself in his novels." But, on the other hand, while Pirandello glorified art, O'Neill was to see life's hope in the very thing which is its greatest despair—the romantic ideal. Hence in Strange Interlude though each character is destroyed by his idealistic dreams, he is also, through these same ideals, raised to a certain level of dignity and triumph. Nina and Marsden, for instance, have the memory of their afternoons and the knowledge that they have created happiness for Sam. Like God, then, the romantic ideal both gives and takes away. This is O'Neill's so-called hopeless-hope, a kind of triumph in defeat that could best be given a subtle treatment only in some sort of contrast between the interior monologue and the external action and dialogue.

In the final analysis, O'Neill is more the Strindbergian than the Pirandellian. More exactly, he is the Strindbergian after Pirandello. Like his master, O'Neill sees art, life, and dreaming all as one, and he sees the romantic ideal as the culmination of all, the focus of the pull of opposites, the dispenser of both good and evil, which gives to life both its joys and its tragedy. Unlike Strindberg, however, O'Neill sees little hope for the individual, who has no Indra to return to, and who, Pirandello-like, will be torn apart
by the pull of anti-poles. Because, then, of his Strindbergian divergences from Pirandello, because of his particular theatrical background, and perhaps because of the trends of the modern novel, O'Neill brought to the pan-psycho drama two old devices in a new disguise—the asides and the soliloquies of *Strange Interlude*.

*Strange Interlude*, as more than one critic has observed, is "the play which gives the most complex statement to the destructive power of the Romantic ideal." Each of the characters stands as living proof of the ravages of one or more aspects of romantic destruction. Darrell and Marsden are destroyed by their romantic devotion to Nina and to their careers, Professor Leeds by his unrealistic Puritan ideals, Nina by the Gordon myth. Their sickness is the modern sickness; they are victims of the romantic imagination, "a form of insanity." Just as each of the characters give expression to O'Neill's theme of the destructiveness of the romantic ideal, so too does the structure of *Strange Interlude*.

As pointed out previously, the romantic ideal creates life in terms of faces and masks; it is responsible for Nina's definition of life as "a long drawn out lie with a sniffling sigh at the end." O'Neill's use of the aside and soliloquy to present various points of view allows his structural patterns to depict for us the processes by which we turn life into a lie. First, he contrasts the characters' interior dialogue with their spoken dialogue to state the most basic lie of life: people say one thing and think another. Hence, Dr.

---

19 Winther, *op. cit.*, p. 32.
Darrell tells Marsden that at the hospital Nina has been kissing and spooning with a number of patients, while to himself he thinks: "Spoonling...rather a mild word for her affairs...but strong enough for this ladylike soul." Recognition of this sort of contradiction in life leads Nina to echo the statement of the Father in *Six Characters*: "I've suddenly seen the lies in the sounds called words." Words to Nina are like the "simple platitudes of truth, those Gospel words we love the sound of but whose meaning we pass on to spooks to live by."

On a second, slightly more complicated level, characters may at rare moments say exactly what they think. By coordinating the asides and the soliloquies with the external dialogue, O'Neill emphasizes this rare occurrence. When characters say exactly what they think, they may not be lying themselves but they often upset the complacent lies of others. So, when Nina in Act One cries out bitterly that she should have--married or unmarried--given herself to Gordon the night before he left for war, her father is appalled. "Nina!" he commands sternly, "This is really going too far." More often than not, however, the shock at seeing another person drop his mask for a moment remains internal. To express this, O'Neill turns again to the aside and the soliloquy. Take, for example, the following short scene.

**NINA.** For playing the silly slut, Charlie. For giving my cool, clean body to men with hot hands and greedy eyes which they called love.
MARSDEN. (thinking with agony) Then she did!...the little filth! (in his flat voice) You mean you--(then pleadingly) But not--Darrell?

NINA. Ned? No, how could I? The war hand't maimed him. There would have been no point in that. But I did with others--oh, four or five or six or seven men, Charlie. I forget--and it doesn't matter. They were all the same. Count them all as one, and that one a ghost of nothing. That is, to me. They were important to themselves, if I remember rightly. But I forget.

MARSDEN. (thinking in agony) But why?...the dirty little trollop...why?

By using the aside in this manner O'Neill is able to study Marsden's shock and anguish, while at the same time freeing himself from the problem of making Marsden externalize his thoughts, an action which would shift the general tide of the scene and greatly change Marsden's relationship with Nina.

O'Neill adds texture to his concept of life as lying by introducing a third and even more complex contradiction into the spoken word-hidden thought relationship, the contradiction brought about by a deliberate misunderstanding or confusion growing out of the personality of the listener. Hence, when in Act Two, the distraught Nina sobbingly tells Marsden, whom she identifies with her late father, that he has always been "so kind and comforting! I've wanted you so," the love-sick writer thinks to himself: "wanted?...wanted?...not that kind of wanted...could she mean?"

To O'Neill, then, these three kinds of deception and confusion, by themselves and in various simple and intricate combinations, are responsible for much of life's bitterness and tragedy. The clashing of viewpoints, and the labors of the intelligent to adjust their
truth to the truth of others, while at the same time championing their own romantic ideals, is the burden and misery of life.

At the root of the difficulty of communicating to one another is the problem of communicating to oneself. Not only is life a lie in terms of our relations with other people, it is also most often a lie in terms of our relations with ourselves. Many are the times when we distort reality because the illusion is comforting and many are the times when we accept a lie through willful or natural ignorance. When, for instance, Professor Leeds says of Nina "in the present state of her mind the real and the unreal become confused," Marsden recognizes this as a common plight. To himself he thinks, "as always in all minds...or how could men live?" O'Neill offers a fine example of the individual's deliberate confusion of the real and the unreal in the scene at the end of Act Four in which Nina seduces Dr. Darrell. Each creates a lie for himself, and each uses that lie to convince the other. To Nina, she is doing what she is doing for love of Sam, to make him happy. To Darrell, he is acting in the cause of science and friendship. At some level each knows the other is lying to himself and to his partner, but they have so managed to confuse reality with ideal that they come to the end of the scene in the masks of a man and woman humble before their joint altruism. In their thoughts, however, they are both crying out: "I shall be happy!" Nina, less realistic than the scientist Darrell, must carry her lie with her to the end; as the curtain falls, her last thoughts are: "I shall make my husband
happy!" Without recourse to the devices of the aside and the soliloquy, O'Neill would have been hard put to present the maze of inner and outer lies which give both complexity and meaning to this scene.

O'Neill, then, by reintroducing the aside and the soliloquy is able, first, to compare and contrast the various masks and faces of reality; second, to reveal inner thought and to study the interaction of inner and outer thought without disturbing the surface of the story; and, third, to tell the same story simultaneously from a number of different points of view. In fine, coming at the end of a long period of experimentation, he does not feel the need to seek out brilliant new technical means. He is at liberty to draw out what he considers to be the best of both the externalistic and the pan-psychic forms. Consequently, he does not, at least in Strange Interlude, overburden his play with intricate and vague symbolism as does Ibsen; nor does he restrict himself to a single point of view as did Evreinov; nor does he, like Strindberg, cast the whole story as a barely conscious dream; nor does he, finally, introduce six or seven ghostly characters to make his point. He returns instead to a much earlier tradition and asks the romantic drama of another age to provide him with devices through which to present his modern concepts.

Asides and soliloquies eliminated, Strange Interlude is structurally in the externalistic tradition. As has been noted earlier, it involves only one set of events which occur in an ordinary spatial-temporal sequence, and the play could be presented totally without the asides and soliloquies. On its externalistic level, it may be con-
sidered as a passable, though slightly "soap-box-opera-ish," example of the Ibsenian version of the well-made play, more exactly, perhaps, as a combination of Ibsenian and Zolaesque naturalism. It is, in brief, the story of the loves of a woman from young womanhood to old age.

Just how important the asides and the soliloquies are to Strange Interlude can be seen from the fact that these conventions give virtually all the meaning to the play. They are made to carry the burden of presenting the shattered ideals of each of the participants. Nina's romantic image of Gordon, for instance, is developed most completely only in her hidden thoughts, just as Marsden's true feelings towards Nina are never voiced in her presence. But in addition to employing the aside and the soliloquy to add complexity to the characters, O'Neill also uses the devices to great effect in telling four simultaneous and virtually contradictory stories with the same set of facts, an accomplishment which makes a telling point in his argument that life is but a lie. Perhaps the best example of O'Neill's "simultaneous method" is found in the chorus of dialogue and soliloquy which marks the end of Act Six, the climax of the play. All four of the major characters are seated together in Nina's living room. Nina has succeeded in using them all. She has so orchestrated the role of each that her life at the moment is full and rich. Her delight in this she expresses in the following externalized speech:

Yes, you're here, Charlie—always! And you, Sam—and Ned! (With a strange gaiety) Sit down, all of you! Make yourselves at home! You are my three men! This
is your home with me! (Then in a strange half-whisper)
Ssssh! I thought I heard the baby. You must all sit
down and be very quiet. You must not wake our baby.

If this were an objective play, the curtain would fall here,
for the external action is complete. O'Neill, however, now proceeds
to split the one action into four actions. In a series of interior
monologues, he presents the scene from four different points of view.
The first of these is Darrell's. He thinks of telling Sam the truth,
but cannot because "to kill happiness is a worse murder than taking
life." Thus, there is nothing for him to do but "accept her terms."
"And your child is mine! your wife is mine!...your happiness is
mine!...may you enjoy my happiness, her husband!" The action then,
from Darrell's point of view is a story of utter renunciation, the
romantic ideal of sacrifice.

Sam's story is simple, crass and uncomplicated.
Sure good to see Ned again...a real friend if there ever
was one...looks blue about something...oh, that's right,
Charlie said his old man had kicked in...his old man was
rich...that's an idea...I'll bet he'd put up that capital...

To the subtle Marsden, Nina is "the old queer Nina now...the
Nina I could never fathom."
Her three men!...and we are!...I?...yes, more deeply than
the others since I serve for nothing...a queer kind of
love, maybe...I am not ordinary!...Our child...what could
she mean by that?...Child of us three?...on the surface
that's insane...but I felt when she said it there was some­
thing in it...she has strange devious currents that become
the one stream of desire...I feel with regard to Nina my
life queerly identified with Sam's and Darrell's...her
child is the child of our three loves for her...I would
like to believe that...I would like to be her husband in
a sense...and the father of her child after my fashion...
I could forgive her anything.
Marsden's story is more inclusive, his perception of the totality of the situation is the deepest and the broadest of the three men. Still, his place in his story differs from his place in Nina's story. To her he has long ago become the father of her male triple god—husband, lover, father. Throughout the first half of the play, Marsden does not always wear with good grace the father-mask which Nina has forced on him. Still it has been better than nothing, and at this point of the play he seems about to accept it as reality. This acceptance will become more marked as the play moves forward to its conclusion. Ultimately the mask will replace the old face entirely, for at the end of the play when Nina calls him "father...dear Old Charlie," Marsden thinks: "God damn dear old...No! God bless dear old Charlie...who, passed beyond desire, has all the luck at last."

As each man in his thoughts becomes resigned to his place in his own story, Nina thinks triumphantly:

My three men!...I feel their desires converge in me!...to form one complete beautiful male desire which I absorb...and am whole...they dissolve in me, their life is my life...I am pregnant with the three!...husband!...lover!...father!...and the fourth man!...little man!...little Gordon!...he is mine too!...that makes it perfect!...Why I should be the proudest woman on earth!...I should be the happiest woman in the world...Ha-ha...only I better knock on wood...before God the Father hears my happiness!

How right and how wrong she is! In fact, how right and how wrong they all are! It is just this aspect of O'Neill's use of the aside and the soliloquy that makes it so very different from the use to which it was put in premodern drama. When Hamlet's point of view is contrasted with that of the King's in the chapel scene, the point
of the contrast is to reveal Hamlet's error. The audience has possession of a single set of universal facts and standards and can judge his error accordingly. His soliloquy and that of the King's serve only to aid and clarify that judgment. But O'Neill's argument is that each viewpoint is as true and as false as the other. There is no error because from the viewpoint of each individual there is none to be made, but there is also much error because each character assumes a role for himself and the others which they, from their points of view, can only partially play. In essence then, O'Neill's asides and soliloquies do not clarify but actually confuse the facts. This is his deliberate intention, since without the conventions, the audience may feel inclined to judge the action universally and impartially. With the addition of the two devices, the audience is forced to pass five different judgments on Act Six, that is, one judgment for each viewpoint, and one for the action as a comparison and synthesis of viewpoints. By forcing the audience through such a thought process, O'Neill places them in a position of finding it very difficult to reject his contention that life is a meaningless confusion of dreams and lies.

Thus the playwright's structure—by allowing him to capture a simultaneous welter of conflicting viewpoints—both presents and emphasizes his theme: life is a web of romantic ideals, a strange interlude of masks and faces, reality and illusion, happiness and renunciation, which ends in a weary sigh and from which only death emerges as victor. To O'Neill, we are all like the characters in
Strange Interlude. By the end of the play, each has lost his identity as he conceived it. Only the young have an ideal, since they have yet to live through the lying struggle. The others have "passed beyond desire" and are ready to have their life rounded with a sleep. Sam, who never had a face, who was a total mask, whose speech and thoughts always coincided because he always thought the thoughts he was supposed to think, has died. Darrell, who would sacrifice nothing for his career, who thought he could escape the disease of romantic imagination, has sacrificed all for the happiness of Nina and Sam, and at the end, even that mask has fallen away. He wants to do nothing but work in his biological station. He will not "meddle" in anyone's life again. But even this dream is shattered. His experimental station is no longer his because Sam, in good middle-class faith, has robbed him of it by willing it a half million dollars.

Nina has lost husband, lover, son, and happiness. She remains nothing but a shell and she wants nothing but to return to the state of early childhood, to the peace of sitting on her father's knee, thinking nothing, being "in love with peace." Charlie Marsden has a piece of his dream at last, but only a ragged piece. He is married to Nina, but not as husband or lover. Even in marriage he remains "good old Charlie," even as a husband he wears the mask of a father. Charlie feels that he "has won at last," but he has won by losing. He has won by denying the passion he felt for Nina and by replacing the face with the mask, by denying, in essence, his own personality as he conceived it.
With the destruction of the egos of each of his major characters, O'Neill presents the final plight of the modern who is both a determinist and a relativist. To hold to a philosophy that sees all truth as relative to the individual, the believer, like Strindberg, begins by assuming that the individual soul is in touch with some sort of divinity which gives meaning to his private insight. But when the relativist has come to the deterministic conclusion that all other gods have been replaced by the "modern science God," a God who has in his blindness and indifference made "life so perverted and death so unnatural," then he must look about for a newer, happier God. Like O'Neill, his first choice for the new God may be the Nietzschean Dionysus or Mother Earth. Thus Nina makes her act of faith to God the Mother.

We should have imagined life as created in the birthpang of God the Mother. Then we would understand why we, Her children, have inherited pain, for we would know that our life's rhythm beats from her great heart, torn with the agony of love and birth. And we would feel that death meant reunion with Her, a passing back into Her substance, blood of Her blood again, peace of Her peace!

This, however, is but another romantic ideal. It is not long before the thinking relativist realizes that the rhythms of God the Mother have little to do with the impossible jerks, starts, and fits of the individual personality shut up in a labyrinth of internal and external masks and faces. Indeed, God the Mother is but one of the many illusions which we use to hide from ourselves. It may be by some lucky coincidence we can in Her name momentarily arrange all the masks and faces to suit ourselves, but to do this we must distort, as
Nina does in Act Six, reality as seen by others. This distortion we call happiness. But it bears seeds of despair, for it cannot last for long. Others will soon object to the masks which we force upon them. Like young Gordon who refuses to be the object of maternal love, others will force us to change both their masks and ours, thereby causing us unhappiness.

Life, then, to a relativist like O'Neill is like a play, a poorly constructed one, an interlude. We come out of the nothingness of the womb, and although we are romantic enough to feel we have an important individuality, we are forced by our very concept of our own individuation to destroy ourselves and others. The best we can hope for is to make an early exit and find a little peace backstage. The only wisdom we can gain from such a play is that life is a "strange dark interlude in the electrical display of God the Father," the blind and pointless God of modern science.

With Strange Interlude the wheel of modern drama has come full turn. Isben's shunning of the aside and the soliloquy created modern Externalism and made playwrights aware that they were using an objective viewpoint. In an attempt to break through the barrier of third-person objective presentation, the pan-psychic movement experimented with various devices designed to present a first-person subjective point of view. At the end of the first great surge of modern drama came Eugene O'Neill who was not afraid to apply on a grand scale the once abhorred conventions of the aside and the soliloquy, and to employ them in such a way as to produce the
effect of a simultaneity of internal and external action—to produce, in short, a veritable montage of thought, dialogue, action, and differing points of view.

It would be foolish to say that O'Neill's use of these devices is always sure. There are far too many instances where what was said in the aside could just as easily have been said in the "spoken" dialogue. Sometimes this is done purposely, as, for instance, when the dramatist wishes to demonstrate the simplicity of Sam's personality. At other times it seems meaningless and much of the lengthiness of the play can be attributed to the placing in asides and soliloquies ideas which were inserted uneconomically or which could have just as easily been carried in the external dialogue and action. But despite its weaknesses—most of which, as is usual with O'Neill, are rhetorical rather than structural—Strange Interlude demonstrates conclusively that the aside and the soliloquy have not outlived their usefulness as effective dramatic instruments. They can prove as useful to the modern relativistic playwright as they did to those who wrote in a more absolute tradition. Moreover, as O'Neill has established, they can serve as a means of compromise between Externalism and Pan-psychicism. Their value lies, above all, in their ability to give an impression of simultaneity of thought and dialogue, while at the same time presenting that thought directly to the audience.

Surely the audience must have appreciated them, for in its original production Strange Interlude made unique demands upon a modern audience. They were asked to spend such a lengthy evening in the
theatre that it was necessary to take an intermission for supper. They were asked to watch a realistic play which used devices they had been trained to think of as both unnecessary and unfashionable. And what with all this, they were asked to listen to a play, with barely a laugh to cushion the effect, which spent a great deal of time driving home an unhappy point. Yet they came in sufficient numbers to keep Strange Interlude running for over 400 performances. Thus, the play has passed some important tests. It may not be great but it is both acceptable and successful literature.

II

Giraudoux: The Madwoman of Chaillot

In many ways, O'Neill's renovating of the soliloquy in Strange Interlude may serve as a signal of the end of an era in modern drama. Coming as it did at the close of the twenties, Strange Interlude is a play written just before the world was to enter upon a new and unfortunate economic and political period. With the turn into the thirties, intellectuals throughout the world, embittered by the great depression, became more and more concerned with solutions to social and economic problems. In keeping with the spirit of the times, a new generation of playwrights arose who were not to be denied their right to have a say concerning the current economic distress. Problems of the soul were abandoned for problems of the social order. Externalism was the mode best suited for the presentation of such difficulties, and, therefore, the oldest form of modern drama enjoyed a new hey-day. Experiments in Externalism ranged from the realism of Waiting for
Lefty to the Living Newspaper of the Federal Theatre to the Epic Drama of Bertholt Brecht.

Considering the pressing nature of the social and economic dislocations, it would not be surprising to find that during the thirties the pan-psychic drama went into a complete decline. This, however, was not the case, but it is true that the fevered experimentation of the first fifty years lost much of its impetus. Striking examples of totally new structural innovations are much more difficult to locate, and, in general, the eclecticism already noted in the work of O'Neill became more pronounced as the world moved through the depression of the thirties and into the war of the forties. There were, of course, a large number of playwrights who exploited the standard themes and techniques of Pan-psychism. Priestly, for instance, investigated the incongruities of the space-time continuum. Thornton Wilder attacked the problem of eliminating the "fourth wall." The movies, following the example of such point-of-view studies as Beggar on Horseback, ruthlessly exploited the dream sequence and the flashback. In Ireland, Sean O'Casey combined the techniques of Maeterlinck with those of German Expressionism to produce his dream-like work, Within the Gates.

Thus, the period from the beginning of the depression to the end of World War II was characterized not so much by innovation as by synthesis. It was a period of consolidation of gains. Both the externalistic and the pan-psychic dramatists were less interested in finding new forms than in constructing the best possible arrangement
of forms already established by the modern masters. With the outbreak of World War II, even this sort of experimentation was, for the most part, temporarily halted. In the stress of the war, playwrights grew silent or marked time by writing propaganda plays. Along with the rest of mankind they watched in stunned horror as, for the second time in the 20th-century, a war demonstrated in harrowing fashion the inadequacies of a totally materialistic philosophy. As the war drew to a close, the world, having been duly impressed and appalled by the destructive power of science, looked for hope in things spiritual.

On the basis of the past history of the movement, it hardly seemed likely the pan-psychic playwrights could supply a new hope. The history of Pan-psychism is one of profound pessimism. It began in the nightmare anguish of Strindberg's dream, and, for many of its practitioners, its ultimate view of life had come to be that of the tragic dilemma between the face and the mask. This history of pessimism notwithstanding, Paris had hardly been cleared of German soldiers before the people of that city were treated to a delightfully hopeful answer to Pirandello's tragic paradox--Giraudoux's The Madwoman of Chaillot. To the citizens of Paris, Giraudoux argued that having to wear a mask is not so bad, provided one selects the right mask.

Actually, The Madwoman is a point-of-view study in the tradition of Evreinov rather than in that of Pirandello, that is, the play is projected solely through the viewpoint of a single character. Moreover, since Giraudoux produced the major portion of his work in the
eclectic thirties, the play is a synthesis of both old and new techniques. But its intriguing qualities lie not so much in the fact of synthesis itself as in the things synthesized. A brief glance at Giraudoux's dramatic works will indicate that he was interested in two phenomena—the modern concept of the split or divided personality and the ancient and enduring power of the myth and fairy tale. Sooner or later he was destined to bring these two together in a consummate form. Thus, in one of his last plays, a play which he did not live to see produced in 1945, Giraudoux presented the theatre with a fairy tale within the framework of a single individual's point of view.

The reasons which led the French playwright to introduce the fairy tale into pan-psychic point-of-view study can be found partially in his background and partially in the statement which The Madwoman attempts to make. Writing of the forces which shaped Giraudoux's thought, Laurent LeSage points out that the earliest and most lasting influence on Giraudoux came from the German romantics, who formed his major interest in school and who continued to hold his attention when in 1905 he won a travelling scholarship to Munich to study at first-hand German romantic literature. In this respect then, Giraudoux's dramatic heritage was that of most other pan-psychic dramatists. Surprisingly enough, he did not undergo that flirtation with Naturalism which characterized the early careers of such playwrights as Strind-
berg, Pirandello, and O'Neill. From the first he "ignored Flaubert, Zola, and Maupassant, and instinctively disliked Realism. Among the young German writers, Wedekind inspired his greatest admiration." Hence, Giraudoux came to the novel and later to the drama with the ideals of the German romantics and with a deep admiration for their literary heir, the Expressionist Wedekind. These German ideals were essentially subjective and irrational, and their subjectivism and irrationality were to be increased by the vogue of Surrealism, the French counterpart of German Expressionism.

Giraudoux himself cannot be truly called a Surrealist, but he lived and wrote during the time of their widest influence and could hardly have remained unaffected by them. Moreover, as LeSage demonstrates in his essay, "Giraudoux, Surrealism, and the German Romantic Ideal," both Giraudoux and the Surrealist took their basic inspiration from the same source—the German romantics. Surrealism, however, was to put much more faith in modern psychology than did Expressionism. The Germans had postulated a cult of the ego. "The sole criterion of values should lie within the individual ego. The exterior world possesses no real autonomy and must depend on the ego for animation and meaning."

---


22 LeSage, "Giraudoux, Surrealism, and the German Romantic Ideal."

23 Ibid., p. 5.
nonrational manifestations of the human spirit, Surrealists, like the Germans, sought to exploit every psychic state uncensored by reason." 24

Another modern trend which manifested itself in France between the wars was also to have a strong influence on Giraudoux. This was the tendency of certain French playwrights, sometimes identified with Cubism and Surrealism, to return to a theatre dominated by myth, folk tale, or quasi-historical legend. This, of course, was an old tradition which had never quite left the modern theatre. It had flourished in the writings of the symbolists, and around this form as the form destined to rescue the stage for poetry had gathered an important international group which included Yeats, Eliot, and Lorca. In France the use of myth and folk tale in the theatre was probably strengthened and encouraged by Surrealism's interest in the unconscious and in the Jungian concept of myth as the revelation of man's universal unconscious heritage. Whatever the reason, France produced between the wars several outstanding advocates of theatre as myth, the most famous of which was Jean Cocteau, whose outstanding effort was The Infernal Machine. It was in this school that Giraudoux, whose uniqueness resists any close classification, may be said to hold at least an associate membership. If Giraudoux is to be called a Surrealist at all, then it is to this particular surrealistic tradition that he belongs, for Giraudoux was to work almost exclusively with some form of myth. Even that piece of his which is not built upon some existing

24Ibid., p. 45.
myth, *Intermezzo*, can hardly be considered anything but a modern fairy tale. Each of his better known works—*Ondine*, *Tiger at the Gates*, *Amphytrion*—are the retelling of a familiar legend. Thus Giraudoux was beholden to the surrealists for their championing of myth as form, and he was, together with the surrealists, in philosophic debt to the early German romantics and to their latter-day heirs, the German expressionists.

Giraudoux's debt to the German's included both the belief in the ego as the supreme guide to truth and also the tragic concept of the ego as an entity locked in hopeless conflict with itself. To Maurice Valency, Giraudoux's recognition of the individual ego's "profound psychic dualism" was "the conflict that was to entangle his interest in one way or another during the whole of his life as a dramatist."  

This internal conflict was to take many forms. In *Siegfried*, Giraudoux's earliest play, the conflict is between two cultures—French and German. A French soldier, the victim of amnesia, is rescued and rehabilitated by the Germans. Previously a brilliant French writer, he now becomes a brilliant German author. The play itself concerns his inner struggle when his true identity is made known to him. In *Ondine* the internal struggle is between natural heritage and love. The water nymph leaves her own world to marry a mortal, only to find out too late that neither she nor her lover can overcome with love that part of their natures which makes

---

them mortal and immortal respectively.

But Giraudoux's concept of the divided personality was not exactly that of the German's. To the irrationality of Surrealism and Expressionism, Giraudoux brought the undying rationality of the classic French mind. Romantic though he was, Giraudoux could not escape his Gallic heritage. Thus, Giraudoux's divided ego, as in Ondine, suffers only when the total personality gives way to that half which would force it from its natural position in the order of nature. If Giraudoux had a philosophic cornerstone it is a concept of a well ordered world in which each person retains his innate uniqueness while at the same time he accepts and lives the role assigned to him by nature. Thus, Alcmenè prefers to be the wife of a mortal than the mistress of a god, and "the stiff-necked couples of Sodome et Gomorrhe sin in refusing to be man and woman living contentedly together."26 As LeSage sums it up, Giraudoux is "urbane" enough to prefer to "remain on polite terms with the universe."27 He therefore "pursues a pretty dream of a world before the Fall," a world well ordered by nature.

With such a background as he had, Giraudoux could hardly reject the ego as Pirandello saw it, but he need not accept the Italian's conclusions as O'Neill did. Giraudoux's rationality offered him a different and more optimistic solution to the face-mask conflict, and

---

26 LeSage, Jean Giraudoux, His Life and Works, p. 161.
27 Ibid., p. 157.
this rationality brought him to offer to a war-weary world a new hope that grew out of the very phenomenon which led Pirandello into the blackest pessimism. Since the world is now suffering from certain people's urge to move out of their assigned sphere and upset the order of nature, and since the individual has both the power and the necessity to wear various masks, why not, asks Giraudoux, make those masks the single mask of a fairy tale world, a world before the Fall, in which the unnatural disorder of the world, at least for the individual, is once more ordered? Thus *The Madwoman of Chaillot* is a Pirandellian dream play, a modern fairy tale. To the superficial observer, the play seems to be very much the same as any other fantasy, and it does purposefully have the air of a popular fairy tale, but it should not be confused with the traditional romantic fantasy. It is no nearer to *The Tempest*, for instance, than is Strindberg's *The Dream Play*. *The Madwoman* is distinctly modern because while a work like *The Tempest*, as has been noted earlier, belongs to everyone in general and no one in particular, the dream of *The Madwoman* belongs to the Madwoman alone. It is her dream, a world seen through her eyes, and if we are to understand it at all, we must dream the dream with her. We may not remain merely onlookers, comparing and enjoying the differences between reality and the world of the Countess. We must, if we are to accept and understand the play as being more than a pleasant jest, actually join with the Countess as she creates her world. In this way, *The Madwoman* is like *The Dream Play*. It differs, however, from the Strindbergian dream in that it is a conscious
dream. Strindberg is reporting the movements of his unconscious mind. Giraudoux attaches more importance to the rational. His Countess is deliberately creating out of whole cloth a world that is in contradiction to reality. Her dream is a conscious creation of her organizing intelligence and not a vision arising out of her uninhibited Seele. She is thinking the cosmos not feeling the chaos. She is perfectly aware that the point of view she is assuming is both an internal and external mask, but she is quite happy with the mask. In her little spat with Constance, for instance, she admits there is a disparity between the world as she sees it and the world as she wishes to see it.

COUNTESS. We promise you faithfully that we'll believe it all over again afterwards, won't we, Gabrielle? But tell us the truth this once.
CONSTANCE. How dare you question my memories? Suppose I said your pearls were false!
COUNTESS. They were.
CONSTANCE. I'm not asking what they were. I'm asking what they are. Are they false or real?
COUNTESS. Everyone knows that, little by little, as one wears pearls they become real.

As the Countess points out earlier in the play:

To be alive is to be fortunate, Roderick. Of course, in the morning, when you first awake, it does not always seem so very gay. When you take your hair out of the drawer, and your teeth out of the glass, you're apt to feel a little out of place in the world. Especially if you've just been dreaming that you are a little girl on a pony looking for strawberries in the woods. But all you need to feel the call of life once more is a letter in your mail giving you your schedule for the day--your mending, your shopping, that letter to your grandmother that you never seem to get around to. And so, when you've washed your face in rosewater, and powdered it--not with this awful rice-powder they sell nowadays, which does nothing for your skin, but with a cake of pure white starch--
and put on your pins, your rings, your brooches, bracelets, earrings and pearls—in short, when you are dressed for your morning coffee—and have had a good look at yourself—not in the glass naturally—it lies—but in the side of the brass gong that once belonged to Admiral Courbet—then, Roderick, then you're armed, you're strong, you're ready—you can begin again.

This world of the Madwoman then is the world of the consciously assumed mask. It is not a Cabinet of Dr. Caligari. There may, of course, be a certain pathos in the unfortunate disparity between the face and the mask, but there is not necessarily any tragedy. The problem is to adjust the disparity so that the differences disappear, not in the sense that the illusion is shattered but in the sense that it is strengthened. The greed and chaos of the world should be converted to beauty and order, a beauty and order such as is found in the land of myth, in the world as it existed in the legend of Eden. The dictum which states that all truth is inner truth does not necessarily demand that the inner truth be a nightmare. It can just as easily be a romantic fantasy. Starting from this assumption, it was natural that Giraudoux should wed the mode of fantasy with the point-of-view method to turn the concept of the mask and the face into an affirmative statement.

The progress of the play then is the progress of the Madwoman's adjustment of reality to suit her personal mask. All dramatic conflict arises from this problem. At the opening some of the minor obstacles posed by reality have already been removed. Whatever her station in life was, the Madwoman is now a countess, albeit her court consists of waitresses and rag-pickers. This matters little, for
these, at least, have the natural nobility which comes from living in harmony with the universe. Moreover, they form a dutiful and devoted court. They are happy and obedient because they realize that the commands of the Countess are not the unusual demands of a maniac, but the demands of a princess who cherishes a noble dream of a good and ordered world. Their attitude towards the dream of the Countess is reflected in the little scene between the waiter and the President.

PRESIDENT. Waiter, ask that woman to move on.
WAITER. Sorry, sir. This is her cafe.
PRESIDENT. Is she the manager of the cafe?
WAITER. She's the Madwoman of Chaillot.
PRESIDENT. A madwoman? She's mad?
WAITER. Who says she's mad?
PRESIDENT. You just said so yourself.
WAITER. Look, sir. You asked me who she was. And I told you. What's mad about her? She's the Madwoman of Chaillot.

While many of the Countess's difficulties with reality are already solved, certain minor items still remain to be attended to. Young Pierre, for instance, must come home with her, for among other little tasks, he "can take the mirror off the wardrobe door and deliver me once and for all from the old harpy that lives in the mirror." Then there is the matter of the Countess's role in the worlds created by her friends, the Madwomen of Passy, St. Sulpice and La Concorde. She must, for example, put up with Constance's imaginary dog, and with the not-quite-material people whom Gabrielle invites to tea. From time to time she becomes exasperated with the dreams of her friends; but she is usually able to recognize that they are seriously attempting solutions parallel to her own. Her attitude in
the face of her problems is best exemplified by her pronouncement about Josephine's practice of waiting every day to see President Wilson.

In anyone else, Josephine, these extravagances might seem a little childish. But a person of your judgment doubtless has her reasons for wanting to talk to a man whom no one would listen to when he was alive.

The difficulties outlined above are, however, insignificant compared to the Madwoman's two major problems—the bitter and inescapable memory of her lost lover, Adolphe Bertaut, and the rude intrusion into her gay and gentle world of a hateful reality, the realization that there exist greedy and power-mad men who destroy and dislocate the order of nature. The process of solving these two difficulties forms the major matter of the play. Adolphe Bertaut is a problem which she has been facing for years, and, naturally, she has made some headway. His physical deformity she has already turned into a mechanical mishap. "Adolphe Bertaut has no harelip. That was a scratch in the negative." But as yet she has been able to do nothing about the memory of his never having asked her to marry him, nor the memory of having seen him, years later, as a dirty and starving man who stole from under her hand a melon she herself was about to steal.

Her second major problem, the elimination of the greedy materialists in the world, is more immediate, since it is thrust upon her only lately. One day as she sits in her cafe, she sees and hears three men who plot to destroy Paris for the oil beneath the city. To these men, the Madwoman's world of natural order based upon the
individual is dangerous. It is their enemy, civilization. She listens as the President describes his concept of her friends.

Good heavens, look at them! Every size, shape, color and period imaginable. It's utter anarchy! I tell you, sir, the only safeguard of order and discipline in the modern world is a standardized worker with interchangeable parts.

The Countess then realizes that there are "people in the world who want to destroy everything."

They have the fever of destruction. Even when they pretend they're building, it is only in order to destroy. When they put up a new building, they quietly knock down two old ones. They build cities so that they can destroy the countryside. They destroy space with telephones and time with airplanes. Humanity is now dedicated to the universal task of destruction.

To neutralize the ugly reality of such men as the President and the Prospector, the Countess sends them to their death down an endless staircase. There is never any question of her ability to do this since they, like everything else, exist only in her mind. As her friend Constance has the astuteness to point out: "Very well then, tell us what you have decided. Since you're asking our opinion, you've doubtless made up your mind." The question is not can she, but should she destroy them? As she herself says: "I don't have to be merciful, but I must be just." In other words, she refuses to yield to an impulse without rational justification. She consciously elects to banish the disquieting element from her dream. She, at all times, has control over her fantasy.

Down the endless stairs with the President and the Prospector go all the other crass and mercenary men and women in the world. This is perfectly logical to the Countess; after all, "didn't the Deaf-Mute
say they were all connected like the works of a machine." Thus, in
groups, faceless and souless, appear the financiers, the engineers,
the public relations men, and finally, the hard and compassionless
wives of all three groups. All march down the stairs after the
original pair. Before their execution, the Countess has seen to it
that they have been duly tried and condemned. They have lived and
died in her very subjective world, but with their trial she has
demonstrated that it is not the world of a lunatic but a universe of
conscious moral order.

Before sending her enemies to their execution, the Countess
summons enough courage to settle once and for all the question of
Adolphe Bertaut. This difficulty she deals with in her own very
logical manner. Since it is obvious that he will never return
to her, she rejects him. She forces Pierre to play the role of
Adolphe, and in a curious conversation which becomes increasingly
confused by the interplay between past and present tenses of verbs,
the Countess gives Adolphe his dismissal.

PIERRE. No. I love you. I shall always love you, Aurelia.
COUNTESS. Yes, I know. That much I've always known. I
knew it the moment you went away, Adolphe, and I knew
that nothing could ever change it. Georgette in his
arms now—yes. But he loves me. Tonight he's taken
Georgette to hear Denis—yes. But he loves me...I
know it. You never loved her. Do you think I
believed for one moment that absurd story about her
running off with an osteopath? Of course not. Since
you didn't love her, obviously she stayed with you.
And, after that, when she came back, and I heard
about her going off with the surveyor—I knew that
couldn't be true, either. You'll never get rid of
her Adolphe Bertaut—never. Because you don't love
her.
PIERRE. I need your pity, Aurelia. I need your love. Don't forget me...
COUNTESS. Farewell, Adolphe Bertaut. Farewell. Let go of my hand and give it back to little Pierre.

Once Adolphe Bertaut has been dealt with decisively and the last of the corruptors of the Countess's universe have disappeared down the stairwell, the world takes on a new glow. The Madwoman's mask has very nearly replaced reality. "The air is pure. The sky is clear. Life is beautiful again. On the street, utter strangers are shaking hands, they don't know why, and offering each other almond bars." The Countess hears music "which seems to thrill from the uttermost confines of the universe." The voices of the friends of animals, of flowers, of people and of friendship speak to her through the music and thank her for freeing them. The Countess's success is not complete, however. She must undergo one final trial. The voices of the Adolphe Bertauts of the world call to her and make a proposal:

From this day on we shall hold fast to what we love. For your sake, henceforth, we shall be handsome, and our cuffs forever immaculate and new. Countess, we bring you this melon and with it our hearts. Will you do us the honor to be our wife.

This, however, the Countess cannot accept. This is asking too much of reality. She may be the Madwoman of Chaillot, but she's not crazy. "Too late! Too late!" she sadly tells the voices and sends them away. But it is not too late for Irma and Pierre. It is never too late for love to save young lovers from the difficult task of creating a mask to replace reality. Love will do this for them. Love--like the dream of love which she has created--will one day bring the world of crass reality into perfect accord with the world
as seen through the point of view of the Madwoman of Chaillot. Love, if it can triumph, will return the world to the state of Eden. It will rid the world of "pimps" and engage it once more in the important business of having morning coffee and feeding the cats. Meanwhile, as we wait for love to save the world, we can do our share by creating our own world in the image of love. This is the advice the Countess gives to Irma and Pierre.

It's three hours since you've met and known and loved each other. Kiss each other quickly. Look at him, he hesitates. He trembles. Happiness frightens him...How like a man! Oh, Irma, kiss him, kiss him! If two people love each other, let a single instant wedge itself between them, it grows—it becomes a month, a year, a century; it becomes too late. Kiss him, Irma, kiss him while there is time, or in a moment his hair will be white and there will be another Madwoman in Paris. Oh, make her kiss him, all of you! (They kiss) Bravo! Oh, if only you'd had the courage to do that thirty years ago, how different I would be today! Dear Deaf-Mute be still—your words dazzle our eyes! And Irma is too busy to translate for you. (They kiss once more) Well, there we are. The world is saved. And you see how simple it was? Nothing is ever so wrong in this world that a sensible woman can't set it right in the course of an afternoon.

The Madwoman then is Giraudoux's answer to Pirandello's pessimism. He does not deny the conflict between the face and the mask, nor the conflict between inner and outer reality, but he does not see the conflict as always resulting in the hopeless destruction of personality. To have a point of view, to see the world through ego-centered eyes, is a blessing to Giraudoux, always provided the ego which lies behind the eyes is motivated by humility and love. If this be the case, then if our face does not suit us, or if outer reality is uninvitingly cruel, we have the wonderful ability to exchange that face
for a more attractive mask or to soften or abolish completely outer reality. If enough of us do this, consciously and sanely, motivated always by love, then all ugly faces will disappear and the world will become a universe of freedom within natural harmony.

No one will deny that the world of the Madwoman is pure fantasy, and the Countess herself would be the first to admit it. But it is the fantasy of a conscious artist, not the silly joke of a madman. It is sanely conceived and rationally executed. Those who understand the play only as a nonsense farce which attacks big business are not only making an error, but they are also greatly restricting the theme and importance of a fine play. As Laurent LeSage observes:

La Folle de Chaillot is generally described as a philosophical comedy about modern mercantilism. This is quite accurate if one does not imply that it is just a diatribe aimed at capitalism. Giraudoux defends more than he attacks, and his aims are surely not political. The cause here in question is the very unspecific one of poetry and idealism, a just measure of which is necessary to keep materialism and practical astuteness from disfiguring the earth.28

The world of the Madwoman is her personal fantasy, and as such it has as much truth as any other inner experience. It is as true as the nightmare anguish of Strindberg and the torment of the jungle visions of Brutus Jones; moreover, it is a controlled fantasy, carefully created and fashioned by the poetic imagination of the Countess. Above all, it is one of the first point-of-view statements which makes an appeal to some form of rationality. One could hardly

28LeSage, Jean Giraudoux, His Life and Works, p. 80.
call The Madwoman an intellectual drama, but it does hold forth some ideal of an ultimate world order rising out of the chaos of subjectivism.

O'Neill, then, and Giraudoux offer two examples of pan-psychic playwrights who look to older techniques to make effective their modern studies in point of view. The two playwrights select differing traditional devices because each has a different point to make. O'Neill found in the ancient conventions of the aside and the soliloquy two excellent means of presenting a humanity simultaneously shattered by inner conflict and by a web of confusion created by the inability to express to others its own point of view and a reluctance to comprehend alien viewpoints. Giraudoux saw in the presentation of a fairy tale through the viewpoint of the central character a method by which he could turn the despair of Pirandello into a statement of pathos rising into hope.
CHAPTER SIX

THE SOLiloQUY DRAMATIZED

MILLER AND THE EXTERNALISTIC PRETENSE;

ANOUILH AND THE CLASSICAL COMPROMISE

I

Miller: Death of a Salesman

Not so very long ago, at a time when both Miller and Williams
had only lately appeared in the Broadway firmament, a number of Ameri-
can drama critics took great pleasure in pointing out that the New
York stage was the proud possessor of an important dramatic dichotomy.
On the one hand, there was Miller perpetuating the tradition of Ibsen;
on the other, there was Williams writing after the manner of Chekov.
This dichotomy was so obvious, so neat, so comfortable, really, that
one wonders why, in this age of planned parenthood and planned
economy, the two playwrights did not settle for planned creativeness
and climb quietly into the niches so cleverly prepared for them? But
then, playwrights have generally been perversely elusive, and thus it
is that the dichotomy still exists, but Miller and Williams have long

237
passed it by. There is no reason, of course, to discard a perfectly acceptable critical theory simply because there are no dramatists to whom it may be applied. After all, the playwrights may yet appear, or better still, it may be that Miller and Williams, who are still relatively young men, might in the years to come backtrack sufficiently to bring their writing into closer accord with the ideals of certain critics. At present, however, the latter devoutly-to-be-wished consummation does not seem likely, for it is hard to ignore the fact that while the popular dichotomy is based solely on the traditions of the external drama, both Miller and Williams have shown a strong interest in the pan-psychic problem of presenting first-person subjective perspectives. It may well be that, as some maintain, this interest in point of view is simply "heightened realism," but at the risk of being too subtle, it seems much safer and more accurate to describe the styles of the two playwrights as neo-pan-psychic.

To state the matter another way, both men are first and foremost playwrights of the living theatre. To be such means, among other things, to be highly sensitive to the idiom which will make the most direct and vivid impression on a contemporary audience. On Broadway after the war, as on Broadway between the wars, the chief means of exchange between playwright and audience was the common currency of Externalism, and, therefore, it was in some real or counterfeit aspect
of this coin that the two playwrights choose to deal. But, on the other hand, American audiences had become sufficiently educated by the subjective experiments of the twenties and thirties, especially those of the Theatre Guild, that they were not prone to offer vigorous resistance to departures from Externalism, especially if they felt that the play had at least one foot in objectivity. Both Williams and Miller, consciously or not, were aware of this attitude, and they soon learned to toss their audiences a bone of realism on which to gnaw, while they quietly moved the burden of their plays to more subjective comments. From behind the stalking horse of Externalism, they fired their subjective arrows. Theirs was a new subjective method, hiding quietly behind the pretense of Objectivism.

Any one of a number of Williams's works, The Glass Menagerie or Streetcar, for instance, would serve admirably as examples of the new method, but none of them offer quite so striking a mixture of subjectivity and objectivity as does Arthur Miller's Death of a Salesman. This bold and powerful play, which in 1949 took Broadway by storm, was the first, and to date perhaps the only, significant work to come from the young American playwright. Prior to Death of a Salesman, Miller had enjoyed some degree of success with All My Sons, a well-made piece which raised some critics' hopes that at last the New York stage had a true spiritual heir to Ibsen. When Salesman appeared
many of these same critics felt that their hopes were more than realized, for the play clearly wore many of the trappings of Ibsenism. These trappings however were somewhat misleading, for much of what might be called the Ibsenian quality of *Death of a Salesman* is not so much the result of Miller's straining after "realistic" prose, as it is the result of Miller's recognition of his own limitations and of the subsequent use which he made of those very limitations. Miller is neither a poet nor a literary man, and thus his dialogue often smacks more of the language of the street than of the study. This, however, is a more serious handicap to a novelist than to a playwright, and in terms of *Death of a Salesman* Miller actually turned his prose style to his advantage, for in *Salesman* Miller's posture is deliberately ambiguous. He wished to give the play as strong a quality of third-person objectivity as he could, not because he wished to make a totally objective statement, but because he wanted to lead his audience gently and unwittingly into accepting a strongly pan-psychic study. Consequently, he seems to have made little effort to avoid his own tendency toward pedestrian prose. Instead, he used his naturalistic style as a narcotic which pacified those members of his audience who demanded Externalism in their plays.

Just why Miller, who had proven his mastery of Externalism in *All My Sons*, could not make his statement through objective techniques
can be seen from his concept of tragedy. In an essay written for the New York Times, Miller states that he believes "that the common man is as apt a subject for tragedy in its highest sense as are kings."

Miller feels that this is true because he sees tragedy as:

the underlying fear of being displaced, the disaster inherent in being torn away from our chosen image of what and who we are in this world. Among us today this fear is as strong, and perhaps stronger, than it ever was. In fact, it is the common man who knows this fear best.¹

Although Miller believes his concept of tragedy to be much the same as that of classical tragedy, he is somewhat mistaken, for Miller's sense of tragedy is completely and uncompromisingly modern. A classic hero is not, like Willy Loman, interested in "claiming his whole due as a personality." Take, for example, the position of Creon in Antigone. He has no "chosen image of who and what he is." He has, instead, a received image of who and what a king is. He acts in terms of this image, that is, in terms of the universal not the individual image of man. The conflict between Creon and Antigone is, in fact, a conflict between universal values: all good kinsmen should act in accordance with the laws of God and bury their dead; all good kings have a responsibility to protect the peace of the state by enforcing

the laws which they have fashioned. Such an unfortunate juxtaposition of two perfectly acceptable universal concepts is the very essence of the tragic situation in a classical work. In short, classical tragedy proceeds from the universal to the specific.

Miller's tragic view, on the other hand, rests in a very modern manner on the individual. If universal concepts are present at all, they must be induced from the particular case. Creon comes to his throne with an image already prepared for him; Willy must build his own image. This, of course, is the necessary condition for modern man, for he is born into an aclassical world which is not pre-ordered for him. What he ultimately becomes is his own choice, because while there are a number of images to choose from, there is no single received image for modern democratic man. He cannot even, as in earlier times, settle comfortably into the position of dutiful subject. Unfortunately, he is both king and servant, yeoman and lord, merchant and mechanic. Thus, Miller could not have been more contemporaneous and less classical in his view of life's tragic implications. Creon may fail as a king, but kingship remains. Willy's failure also implies the failure of the salesman ideal, since that ideal rests solely on Willy's concept of who and what a salesman is. As Charley says at Willy's funeral:
Willy was a salesman. And for a salesman there is no rock bottom to life. He don't put a bolt to a nut, he don't tell you the law or give you medicine. He's a man way out there in the blue, riding a smile and a shoeshine. And when they start not smiling back—that's an earthquake. And then you get yourself a couple of spots on your hat, and you're finished. Nobody dast blame this man. A salesman is got to dream boy. It comes with the territory.

Briefly, then, the tragedy of such a playwright as Sophocles rests on classical deduction, Miller's on modern induction.

It is possible to agree with Miller that "kings or the kingly" are not required elements of tragedy per se, but it must be recognized that a social view that made it possible to create the concept of kings and the kingly is absolutely essential to classical tragedy. Miller's kind of tragedy is only possible after philosophy has come to accept the belief that even the common man has the ability to manufacture a world in his own image, such a belief as is demonstrated in The Madwoman of Chaillot. Once this view has become thoroughly accepted, it is possible for a playwright like Miller to draw the tragic conclusions inherent in it, conclusions which in other forms had been drawn by O'Neill and Pirandello: man is doomed to tragic defeat when his subjective image not only comes in conflict with itself, but also with the world as conceived by others. To Pirandello and O'Neill, this tragic defeat comes with a dying fall, with a long
and despairing sigh. To Miller, it is stronger, with qualities of great moral beauty, for man may triumph over his tragedy if he is willing to die maintaining his ideal image. "The commonest of men may take on that stature to the extent of his willingness to throw all he has into the contest, the battle to secure his rightful place in the world." 2

Thus, Miller sets for himself a dual problem in Death of a Salesman: he must, first, present a popular image of modern common man, and he must, second, present that man in the process of creating, maintaining, and dying for his ideal image of himself and his world. To solve the first aspect of his problem, Miller cast over his play a certain atmosphere of externality, since this is the quality which had come to be identified in the public mind with a serious treatment of the middle and lower classes. To meet the second aspect of his problem, Miller turned to the convention of first-person point of view, and presented much of the play solely through the subjective vision of Willy Loman. It is some time however before Miller moves from an objective to a subjective illusion, for the playwright carefully cultivates the sympathy of the audience by introducing the initial situation and the whole Loman family as objects before turning to a

---

2 Ibid., p. 230.
presentation of Willy as subject. Moreover, Miller never entirely discards externality, but instead, through the play, weaves a pattern of external and internal statements.

In this way, Miller moves at once on two levels of reality—the outer reality of the Loman family and the inner reality of Willy's mind. Moreover, we must not be misled into thinking that those scenes which take place in Willy's mind are simply pleasant theatrical trickery, a rehashing of cinematic flashback techniques. The whole structure is much more complicated than that, for often the flashback of the movies is little more than a tour de force, a device to display the versatility of the camera and the film editor, whereas Miller's method is a surprisingly real combination of total human thought, from the spatial-temporal reality of the object to the totally free association of the subject. So it is that at one and the same time the play is both built and composed. Nowhere is this better demonstrated than in the fact that while spatially, i.e., architecturally, the climax takes place near the midpoint of the play, temporally the climax happens many, many years prior to the situation and circumstances in which Willy now finds himself. As Daniel E. Schnieder points out, the form of Salesman "is not that of 'flashback' technique, though it has been described as such":

It is rather the same technique as that of Hamlet: the
technique of psychic projection, of hallucination, of the
guilty expression of forbidden desires dramatized....Willy
Loman, exhausted salesman, does not go back to the past.
The past, as in hallucination, comes back to him; not
chronologically, as in "flashback," but dynamically with
the inner logic of his erupting volcanic unconscious. In
psychiatry we call this "the return of the repressed,"
when a mind breaks under the invasion of primitive
impulses no longer capable of compromise with reality.3

As Schneider correctly observes, Miller is approaching the
technique of Shakespeare, but not so much in Hamlet as in Macbeth,
in particular the banquet scene of Macbeth when Banquo's ghost returns
to haunt the troubled king. Or again, it could be said that Miller's
more immediate example is O'Neill's technique in Strange Interlude,
for Miller is making use of a unique kind of soliloquy for much the
same purpose that O'Neill used the soliloquy in Strange Interlude.
The difference is this: where O'Neill's soliloquies are verbalized,
Miller's are dramatized. Instead of presenting Willy's thoughts
through the medium of language alone, Miller is exercising the right
of the dramatist to render them basically in terms of action. In
other words, Willy's soliloquies are more theatrical than literary,
but, above all, they are direct presentations of his stream of con-
sciousness. As Biff says, in them Willy is "spewing out that vomit
from his mind."

XXXIII (1949), 18-21.
While there can be no doubt that Willy is not particularly concerned with separating past from present, he is not, as some critics would have us believe, a pitiable psychotic. Like many other commentators on *Salesman*, Schneider's choice of the term *hallucination* is ill-considered. Apparently such judgments of Willy are the result of the playwright's stark juxtaposition of Willy's intensely subjective vision against that of the objective views and actions of the other characters in the play. This is the basic weakness of Miller's mixture of first and third-person points of view. It is the penalty the dramatist must pay for maintaining the pretext of Externalism. In other words, if objectivity is to be the point of departure, then any significant break with externality will, by contrast, tend to suggest mental derangement. Moreover, Miller adds to this effect by having Biff constantly insist that Willy is insane. This is probably done to excuse and soften the rapid transitions from objectivity to subjectivity, but Biff's protests often serve only to confirm the unimaginatives' suspicions of Willy's mental collapse. Miller attempts from time to time to indicate to the audience that this is not the attitude which is to be taken, but apparently he is not totally successful. Fairly early in the play, for instance, he has Linda point out to Biff:
No, a lot of people think he's lost his—balance. But you don't have to be very smart to know what the trouble is. The man is exhausted...A small man can be just as exhausted as a great man. He works for a company thirty-six years this March, opens up unheard-of territories to their trademark, and now in his old age they take his salary away.

Linda's diagnosis of Willy's condition is correct; her insight into its causes, as might be expected, is only partially valid. Willy's loss of salary is but one of the many cherished ornaments which objective time and reality are now tearing away from his carefully architectured image of who and what a salesman is in this world. The mutilation of a quiet residential neighborhood, the broken-down refrigerator, the dilapidated and still unpaid-for house, and, above all, the failure of his son Biff, all tend to make Willy aware that his passionately conceived and passionately pursued dream of success is no longer an ideal for the present, but an illusion irretrievably lost in the past. But the dream once lost in the object, the passion still remains in the subject, and it is this passion, now as overpowering as it is unrealizable, which Miller sets out to portray.

Thus it is that each episode of the present forces upon Willy's consciousness the disparities between it and the dreams of the future which lay hidden in the past. His son Biff returns home, not as a conquering hero, but as a young man already defeated by life. No matter, Willy will find success for Biff in the events of the past,
in that happy time when Willy was a successful salesman and Biff a fine prospect for football stardom. But even the past refutes Willy's dream, or Willy refutes it himself, for his basic sense of honesty is strong enough not to allow him to erase from his consciousness those episodes which remind him that he was not the success he determined to be and that there were even times when he gave stockings to chance women while his wife sat at home and mended her own.

Ultimately, it is this sense of honesty which brings him to review in the washroom of a restaurant that hidden and unhappy episode which finally and completely destroyed for Biff, and in consequence for the world, the image which his father had struggled so long and hard to build and maintain. This is the failure on which all others hinge, for the present woes are but minor compared to that great sorrow, the loss of his ideal posture in the mind of his first born son. The action of the present but serves to point up the futility of Willy's attempt to recapture Biff for the ideal, and Willy's tragedy resides in his willingness to die for an end which can never be realized. In a sense, however, since the image is and was always Willy's and Willy's alone, his laying down his life in sacrifice to that image does in some manner serve to fix and accomplish it. After a fashion of his own, Willy achieves his triumph.

To point up this highly subjective triumph meant that Miller
must present as thoroughly as possible Willy's own point of view. Since the image which Willy fights and dies for in the present had been developed in the past, it is in the episodes of the past that Miller presents the viewpoint of Willy alone; it is during these episodes that Willy's chosen image is rendered and explored. Against these episodes, the playwright sets the objectivity of the present. Miller has so contrived to interweave the two temporal areas that each event of the present suggests and calls forth a happening of the past, and hence gives the playwright another excuse for moving on to that level of reality represented by Willy's point of view. This interweaving of two levels of reality has its moments of unmatched power. Take, for example, the climax of the play, the scene in the restaurant. Here we begin on the level of third person objectivity. Willy has just lost his job, and Biff has failed, as he has so often before, to find a job. Neither, however, can manage to comfort the other. Consciously, Willy refuses to recognize Biff's new defeat, but a secret locked somewhere within his soul refuses to be denied. It rises up to possess Willy's total awareness. Biff's present failure has called up an earlier, more important one. Willy can no longer deny his vision, and he rushes off to the privacy of the washroom where, shut off from the world, he can allow his most bitter memory an opportunity to replay itself on stage of his soul. In a few swift steps Miller moves from
dialogue to soliloquy, from the objective to the subjective point of view. As the intensity of Willy's psychic agony mounts, as we watch with him his ingnominy at having his young son surprise him with another woman, we move from fear toward pity. It is at this point, just as the scene is about to tumble into full-bloom pathos, that Miller catches up and holds the tragedy of the moment by abruptly shifting back to third-person objectivity. In a nice stroke of romantic irony, Willy is suddenly once again in the washroom and a waiter is helping him up from his knees. The shock obtained from the shift in viewpoint is enough to place a strong check on our pity and hold us on that sharp edge of tragic terror. In such a scene as this the compromise between inner and outer reality could not have been more successfully handled. Here as nowhere else Miller has skillfully emphasized his treatment of Willy's internal life by sharply outlining the subjective experience with bold strokes of Externalism. Miller's particular use of objectivity recalls after a manner the deep, heavy lines of Rouault, lines which set off and call attention to those areas of the painting receiving unique or extensive treatment in color or modeling.

In the final analysis, we cannot help but admire the manner in which Miller went about solving the dramaturgic problem which he had set for himself. He wished to present a modern tragedy, a tragedy of
the common man. To his audience, the concept of the common man was associated with Externalism, but to Miller's mind, the common man's tragedy lay in his passionate desire to lay down his life for his chosen image of himself. To present this image truly and sympathetically called for some sort of treatment of a given individual's point of view. Therefore, Miller was forced, in the first instance, to combine both objective and subjective approaches. Having been forced into this combination, the playwright turned it to his advantage. The present Miller rendered objectively; the pertinent past through Willy's point of view. To relate the two, Miller had each incident in the present serve as a stimulus which projected images from the past on the screen of Willy's consciousness. To portray these images as they flowed across the salesman's mind, Miller selected a device so closely akin to the soliloquy that we may call it the soliloquy dramatized. By thus blending the soliloquies with the external action Miller was able to present the tragic conflict between the world as we fashion it and the world as it fashions us. As M. W. Steinberg observes:

The function of the artist, for Miller, is to provide awareness that 'society is inside of man and man is inside of society' and perhaps to help us to understand this relationship.4

4Ibid., p. 146 f.
Willy dies for his ideal image not, as some critics would have us believe, because he lacked insight into his situation, but because he refused to accept it as the only possible reality. Willy's insight is sufficient to his circumstances. Part of the function of the soliloquies in Salesman—as in Hamlet or Macbeth—is to establish this fact. Although Willy denies to Howard that he had anything to do with Biff's defeat by life, he soon recalls to himself the very time in the past when he shattered Biff's ideals. Actually, the question in Salesman is not as much a question of insight as it is a question of will. Willy deliberately selects his own subjective vision, and rejects all counterproposals by others. It is the major function of the soliloquies to present that vision and to demonstrate the nature, scope, and importance of Willy's choice. The tragedy is not that Willy died in vain, pointlessly and never knowing why, but that he had to die at all. The tragedy lies in the irreconcilability of the subject and the object; in Willy's special case between the need of one man for some small measure of dignity and the indifference of the social group, an indifference which forces Willy to lay down his life in order to keep intact his sense of personal worth.

Death of a Salesman has its share of shortcomings, not the least of which is the poverty of Miller's prose. But such critics as T. C. Worsley display an amazing critical myopia when they argue that the play's basic weakness lies in its "episodic time-switching and place-
switching."

A friend of mine said to me recently of this school of American playwrights: They've discovered the secret of American audiences, who, when they are in the theatre, would much rather be in the cinema. These devices belong to the cinema (and even in the cinema we have begun to groan when the flashbacks start). The playwright's ace is concentration of interest and the Unities are behind that concentration.  

This criticism seems to betray an unfamiliarity with the whole flavor of modern drama. Even more, it serves to place Shakespeare, or any user of the aside and the soliloquy, or, again, any violator of the unities, among the ranks of apprentice playwrights. What Worsley fails to recognize is that Miller is not "time-switching" or "place-switching," but reality-switching. When a playwright is dealing with inner reality he is not concerned with time and place at all, since these concepts have no place on the stage of the human mind. Everything and everyone is always immediately present. To the objective viewer, Willy may be in a restaurant washroom, but in Willy's mind he is in a hotel room with his son and a prostitute. Miller's point is precisely this fact. If Willy's mind were capable of perceiving only the present, there would be no tragedy. But because Willy, like all men, is capable of an intense realization of past in present, of subjective vision in objective reality, his position reaches the point

---

where death becomes the only moral choice, the inevitable solution.

Perhaps Miller does confuse a large and unimaginative portion of his audience. Perhaps he should not have committed himself to the pretense of objectivity at all. But it is difficult to deny that once having done so, his statement gains greatly in importance by his willingness to examine the whole internal-external continuum. Moreover, his solution to the problem of combining the two kinds of human truth, while it may not be the best possible, is clearly superior to O'Neill's somewhat labored efforts in *Strange Interlude*. In short, who is to say, in terms of dramatic conventions not literary style, that Hamlet's considering aloud on an empty stage whether it is "to be or not to be" is any more effective than Willy's conjuring up of a long dead brother with whom he can debate the same question. The most we can say about either of the two soliloquies as dramatic conventions is that the one reveals a character more linguistically minded, the other a character more visually minded.

II

Anouilh: *The Waltz of the Toreadors*

While Miller was making his peace with the American taste for Externalism, Jean Anouilh--the man whom Nicoll and Edward Marsh recognize as "the most original dramatist of our present generation"6 and

6Nicoll, *op. cit.*, p. 914.
the modern dramatist "most worthy of study"\textsuperscript{7}--was striking a compromise of a different nature--a compromise with the French classical tradition. While it is possible to say that in most countries the modern movements in arts and letters have meant above all else a rather complete break with any neo-classic traditions and, at times, an almost perverted surrender to the most excessive urges of romanticist thinking, it must be recognized that in all this glut of irrationality France has stood as the one exception. It is true, of course, that France is the birthplace of Surrealism and of the even more extreme Dadaism, but it is also true that France has fostered modern schools which are wholly or partially opposed to subjective excess. It is no accident, for instance, that while German painters reveled in the freedom of Expressionism, their French counterparts were developing the equally romantic but much more intellectualized Cubism. Briefly, throughout the last three quarters of a century, France has had its share of groups which cried out for more and ever more subjective freedom, but it was never without a number of great artists who set for themselves the task of turning the strength and liberty of the romantic spirit to the service of urbane rationality. It is to the latter group that Anouilh belongs. And although he is "a thorough romantic

at heart,"8 Anouilh has dedicated himself to bringing "lucidity and sanity to the tortured cry for mankind's conscience-striken loneliness that came from Strindberg half a century before."9

This trend toward sanity and lucidity is especially apparent in the French theatre, where it seems that the modern French romantic is not so much attempting to create a new classicism as to impose on his subjectivism the restraint and decorum of neo-classic standards. It is a trend that we have already noted in Giraudoux, and it stems, according to Francis Fergusson, from the "never-quite-broken French theatrical tradition," a tradition which made playwrights feel it was unnecessary "to join the cult: they reject all the prophetic, revivalsestic, or hypnotic attitudes and strategies of Wagner, in the name of the intelligence, the classic spirit, or the integrity of Art."10

In this tradition Anouilh writes, and he is its latest and most extreme exponent. It may be that "in his romanticism Anouilh shows particularly close affinity to Jean Giraudoux,"11 but it is equally true that in his classicism Anouilh "seems to arrive at some conception

8Ibid., p. 33.
9Ibid., p. 34.
11Marsh, op. cit., p. 192.
of the theatre akin to that of the late Moliere." It is these two traditions which Anouilh attempts to blend in Waltz of the Toreadors, and he does an amazingly good job of it.

While Anouilh's tendency to compromise with the French classical tradition can be noted as early as his 1932 work, Thieves' Carnival, it is most apparent and effective in his later works. In such a play as Waltz of the Toreadors, the similarity to Moliere's work is so strong that it has led Marsh to remark that "the structure of the play is exactly like a Moliere character comedy." Marsh, however, is something less than precise, for while there are many striking similarities in structure, it is in general quality rather than in exact dramaturgy that Anouilh resembles Moliere. In Anouilh's most recent comedies of character, for instance, there is the same bitter-sweetness of tone, the same urge to go straight to the essence of a character, the same "strong sense of universalities and abstract values" which distinguish the loose classicism of Moliere. But it is, above all, in his constant concern with hypocrisy, with society's relentless corruption of innocence, that Anouilh most resembles Moliere.

These similarities notwithstanding, there are decided and

12Nelson, op. cit., p. 155
14Ibid., p. 182.
important differences between the modern and the Baroque playwright. Anouilh belongs to what Nelson has called "the age of Pirandello," and while we must agree with Nelson that Anouilh does not simply "tag along...in the wake of Pirandello," there is no denying that Anouilh is much concerned with Pirandellian problems of illusion and reality, of individual mutability, of man as a solipsistic phenomenon. In these matters, Anouilh is closely akin to French Existentialism.

Concerning this Edward Marsh observes:

Before Sartre had made his specially atheistic brand of existentialism a household word Anouilh was basing dramas upon three of its main tenets, all typical of the mood of our times. There is first the conviction that everyone is alone, that no full or adequate contact can be made with others, and every attempt to do so leads to frustration, or to erosion of self. Secondly, one is no more than the sum of one's past actions as seen through the eyes of others...Finally (one) is free to make his own values and need not accept anyone else's.

These existentialist concepts, especially the latter two, are not particularly compatible with the supremely rational world of Moliere, and they fit but poorly within the neo-classic framework. Nevertheless, Anouilh must have seen equal value in both the Baroque and modern principles, for in The Waltz of the Toreadors he set for himself the extremely difficult task of combining the two sets of

15Nelson, op. cit., p. 155.

16Marsh, op. cit., p. 197.
beliefs. In terms of structural conventions, this meant that he had to strike some sort of compromise between the omniscient approach of Moliere and the modern playwright's first person presentation. Surprisingly enough, Anouilh's solution is highly reminiscent of Miller's dramatized soliloquy.

Until the last scene of the second act, The Waltz of the Toreadors romps along in a happy mixture of riotous farce and brilliant high comedy. The point of view is omniscient, and asides and monologues are almost the rule rather than the exception. To be sure, General St. Pe has more than his share of asides and brief soliloquies, but this is to be expected from the major character. But in St. Pe's soliloquies and asides there is a hint of other, decidedly different, things to come, for from the beginning of the play we are vaguely aware that St. Pe's inner thoughts are of a different quality from the other characters. In his soliloquies, for instance, there is a stronger sense of introspection; they are true soliloquies, while the thoughts of the other characters are presented in monologues or in direct addresses to the audience. The emphasis on the General's internal state is increased by our awareness of the mysterious Madame St. Pe, whose raucous voice and unseen figure lurk behind the bright gaiety of the first half of the play.

Only once have we caught a glimpse of Madame St. Pe, and then
only a limp body, more dead than alive, carried over the General's shoulder into the midst of a hilarious scene of comically thwarted suicides. Her dreary and unpleasant voice, however, is the first sound we hear as the curtain rises, and it is not long before we discover that she is constantly on the General's mind. No matter what the subject, his thoughts inevitably turn to her. It is for her that he has sacrificed his own happiness; for her he has kept his true love, Ghislaine, waiting seventeen years. For all his brave military exploits, for all the slaughter of Arabs in battle, the General is a coward before his wife. He cannot bring himself to hurt her. This pitiful situation he explains at some length to the Doctor, summing the whole unfortunate business up in the following speech.

It's easy to talk. You don't know the old bitch—I mean my soul. When she is face to face with my wife, she bawls with disgust and fright; but when I make Emily cry, when she starts to whimper in her wheelchair—where I know she only sits in order to annoy me; when I'm at last about to throttle her—don't laugh, it has crossed my mind—and take my cap off the hallstand and decamp once and for all; do you know what she does then, the great goop? (my soul, that is). She cuts off my legs, she floods me with pity, mean ignoble pity, and old memories of love from the days when everything was not dried up and stale between us. She roots me to the spot. So then I hang my cap back on the peg again and I take my soul on a little jaunt to the brothel to see if it won't cheer her up a bit.

But for all the talk about her, Madame St. Pe appears only once,
in the dead faint previously mentioned. Moreover, she talks to no one but St. Pe. Through it all, therefore, we have the feeling that whatever she may be in reality, the Madame St. Pe we hear about exists only in her husband's mind. This suspicion is confirmed in the second scene of Act Two.

Act Two, Scene Two calls for the play's only shift in locale. From the bright, sunny drawing room of the General, we go to the dreary sickroom of his invalid wife. This shift in locale also signals a shift in the total quality of the play. Up to this point Anouilh's comedy has sparkled with wit and madcap farce. Now the humor becomes weird and macabre. The General, we find, is married to a witch, a harpy of great strength who leaps up to dance on her paralyzed legs and who constantly shrieks out vulgarities and obscenities. Madame St. Pe truly hates her husband, and when asked why she continues to cling to him, she replies in a most brilliant, terrifying, and forceful manner with one of the universal truths of marriage, one of the basic reasons why so many women marry and cling to a man throughout a loveless lifetime.

To keep you, Leon. To keep you for always because I am your wife. For I do love you, Leon, on top of everything. I hate you for all the harm you did to me, but I love you—not tenderly, you fool, not with seventeen years of waiting and letter writing, not for the bliss of being in your arms at night—we never made love together, you poor wretch, you know it—not for your conversation—you bore me—not for your rank either, nor your money—I've been offered more—
I love you because you are mine, my object, my thing, my hold-all, my garbage bin—

Driven to a frenzy by his wife's vulgarities, the General leaps upon her and seizes her by the throat. As he forces her down upon the bed, he cries out in summation of the whole scene: "Phantasmagoria!"

This is exactly what the episode has been. In a sense the scene has taken place in objective reality, but how much of it is verifiable objective occurrence, and how much is the purely subjective reaction of the General we will never know. This much we do know: we have a view of the General's wife only as he could see her. The quality of the scene is the quality of St. Pe's mind in the presence of his wife. Like the subjective portions of *Salesman*, the scene in Madame St. Pe's bedroom is a phantasmagoria of the General's own soul, a presentation of the dramatic illusion through his point of view, in short, a soliloquy dramatized. It is a vivid, dramatically realized psychic condition, a condition earlier explained to the Doctor as: "when she is face to face with my wife, she bawls with disgust and fright...She cuts off my legs...She roots me to the spot."

After the climactic moment at the end of Act Two, the play returns, for the final act, to the drawing room of the General. Something of the bright quality found in the first half of the play is recaptured, but this time in a much more minor key. The wit is less
sharp, more wistful. The farce is less vigorous, more melancholy than
ludicrous. Once again, St. Pe realizes that he has failed with his
wife. He cannot even kill her. By not being able to bring himself to
hurt anyone, he has hurt everyone, most of all himself. He now
realizes that "there's nothing left but a ludicrous old pantaloon who
never saw a single one of his gestures through to its conclusion."

I have the impression that Lieutenant St. Pe is lying
bloodless on a field of battle, not even wounded in the
fight--some idiot's rifle blew up in his back a few
minutes before zero hour--but that all the same he's
going to die.

In truth, the play ends in a typically Molieresque manner.
Since the central character has been studied, the plot is quickly
discarded. A deus ex machina, in the form of a priest, appears and
informs the General that his secretary, and his rival in love, is
really his long-lost son. The General withdraws his claim to
Ghislaine, and all depart--the young lovers to their new-found bliss,
the Doctor to his own wretched wife, the priest and St. Pe's daughters
to the church for a thanksgiving prayer. The General is alone with
his shattered image of himself. It is all as the Doctor has said:

GENERAL. Dear God, how will it all end?
DOCTOR. As in real life, or in the theatre, in the days when
plays were plays--a contrived denouement, not too gloomy
on the face of it, and which really doesn't fool a soul,
and then a little later--curtain. I speak for myself as
well as you. Your blood pressure's up to 250 and my gall
bladder is a bag of stones. Make way for the young! May
they commit the self-same follies and die of the self-
same diseases.
Like Molière, Anouilh even takes the time near the end of the play to toss a morsel of moral out to those who might feel the need of it:

GENERAL. (softly) Lieutenant St. Pe. I want to live. I want to love. I want to give my heart as well, dear God!

DOCTOR. General, nobody wants it anymore. Let it unswell quietly, that old over-tender sponge. You should have sown fewer wild oats and had the courage to hurt while there was still time. Life should be led like a cavalry charge, General. They ought to have taught you that at Saumur. My poor old friend, shall I tell you the moral of this story? One must never understand one's enemy or one's wife. One must never understand anyone for that matter, or one will die of it.

In an extremely short final scene, Anouilh sounds one of the bitterest notes of pessimism in all comic literature. The old General, left alone, contemplates suicide. Suddenly a new maid appears, and the General's taste for a pretty face rises up to animate his broken spirit.

GENERAL. Pamela. Fancy that now, Pamela. And the prettiest bosom in the world too. What is all this nonsense about our having a soul? Do you believe in it? He's a fool that doctor. Put down your broom, my child. It's a bit late to be sweeping up now. And there is never enough dust on things. We must let it settle. You know, you'll find this is an easy sort of place. I'm an old youngster and I don't ask much—provided folks are nice to me. You haven't seen my roses, have you? Come I'll show you around the garden, and if you're a good girl I'll give you one. It doesn't bother you, does it, Pamela, if I put my arm round your waist?
MAID. No sir, but what will Madame say?
GENERAL. Madame will say nothing, so long as you don't tell her. That's a good girl. It's nicer like this, don't you think? Not that it means anything, but still, one feels less lonely in the dark.

What Anouilh has done in Toreadors is to present an old romantic brought to tragic straits by the corrupting power of society. The General's most impressive virtue, his compassion for human feelings, is the very thing which has been his great weakness. It is the breech in his defense through which society has poured its pollution. In his despair, the General has turned to lechery, but this has only added to the disintegration of his youthful dreams. At the opening of the play, he still feels that he can recapture his lost youth and dreams. In his thoughts he is still Lieutenant St. Pe., "graduated second from Saumur! No money, but plenty of courage and well thought of! Ready to give his all for France, for honor, for a woman!" By the end of the play, the General has realized that this is, as the Doctor says, "but a tender memory." He understands that his life is wasted and meaningless, that he has fallen victim to the same middle-class hypocrisy which he satirizes so brilliantly at the end of Act Two, Scene One. He has settled for less than the ideal, and he understands this. When his young secretary protests that he would rather go fast and drown, the General replies:

You are quite right, my boy. It's a sorry business growing old and understanding. Try all the same not to drown
others, even in a good cause. That's what weighs heavy
on a man, hurting other people. I have got used to
everything, but not to that.

It is difficult to suggest a comparison between Miller and
Anouilh. The Frenchman is so much the better writer, so much the
superior dramatic architect, his general so much more interesting
and complex than Willy Loman, that one hesitates to place the two
playwrights side by side. Nevertheless, there is a basic similarity.
Miller's tragic view is much the same as Anouilh's. Both see the
catastrophe in life as the individual's loss of his chosen image of
himself. Miller sees death as the only way in which the individual
can keep his ideal uncorrupted. This is a solution which Anouilh
has also suggested in Antigone, but in Toreadors Anouilh has arrived
at a different resolution, one which is both pessimistic and urbane.
In the face of defeat, one may submit with as much grace as possible.
Willy's answer to life is a wild and desperate taunt, the pointless
taunt of an insignificant beast lost in a concrete waste. St. Pe's
resignation at least has the virtue of civilized dignity. With the
intelligence and insight at his disposal, he recognizes that seeing
life as essentially meaningless need not force one into wild and
incoherent actions. A system of intelligent order, however pointless
at bottom, is certainly preferable to a frenzied irrationality,
equally pointless in the final analysis. The one at least offers the
hope of sanity.
Thus in the first instance, Miller and Anouilh face identical problems. They must find some means of establishing for the audience the ideal image which their central characters have fashioned for themselves. They must also present the dangers, subjective and objective, which lie in store for those fragile images. To do this, Miller depends most heavily on the dramatized soliloquy, Anouilh on the traditional aside and soliloquy. But at the climax of the play, at that point when the General's growing awareness of his loss of his ideal culminates in a terrifying psychic drama, Anouilh turns to a device which he himself calls phantasmagoria, in other words, a soliloquy dramatized. Anouilh is the better dramatist, and his interweaving of the traditional and the dramatized soliloquy, of objective and subjective viewpoints, is much less obvious, much more in keeping with the total quality of his play. But this does not prevent his technique from becoming, at the peak of the play, identical to Miller's special kind of soliloquy.

Here, however, the similarities between Salesman and Toreadores cease. Miller's tradition is that of Ibsen and Strindberg, Anouilh's that of Moliere. Thus while Miller seeks to blend modern objectivity and subjectivity, Anouilh attempts to unite subjectivity with the older omniscient universality. He pays homage to the classic spirit which argues that even if we wish to portray life as meaningless, we need not present it in an incoherent manner. Even meaninglessness can be
presented meaningfully, even irrationality can be viewed sanely. Thus Anouilh returns to the orderliness of the Baroque theatre for his models and methods. In this manner, the audience obtains not only the General's viewpoint, but also the points of view of the other characters, and all of these subjective variations are thrown against the background of a single universal action in which all participate. Moreover, the audience not only knows what each character thinks and does, but also what the author feels about them all, for in the person of the Doctor, Anouilh has made use of the traditional confidant who listens to the General's problems and gives his—and by implication—the playwright's view of the whole matter.

Anouilh's is a romantic world, a modern world in which innocence and ideals are corrupted by time and society, in which man is lost in his own spiritual isolation, in which all things, in the final analysis, are meaningless. But it is also a world of civilized order, of sanity and lucidity, of intelligent wit and rational restraint. Whether this rationality is forced on the play by Anouilh's selection of a form akin to that of Molière's, or whether Anouilh's own sense of order brought him to impose an old form on a modern theme, the two do exist together in the same work of art, and their blending sounds a new note in modern drama. Once a playwright has begun to place the check of classical logic on modern subjectivism,
once has tacitly admitted that subjective truth is not a law unto itself, he has taken an important turn away from the "cult of the ego."

The history of the pan-psychic drama, the history of most modern drama, has been one of profound pessimism. There have been few exceptions to this rule, and Anouilh's work is certainly not one of them. His is perhaps an even deeper pessimism than that of Pirandello. But it may be that with Anouilh this pessimism has touched bottom; perhaps his rationality is an omen of different things to come. The cult of the ego, the emphasis on the world as a reflection of the subject, has brought us to the point of hopeless and helpless confusion. Among the images, words, and symbols which bob along in our streams of consciousness, among the maze of internal and external masks of ourselves and others, we search for some sort of order. It may be that Anouilh has located the object of our search. It may be that he has taken a significant step towards the returning of the subject to a more sensible relationship to the object, towards gaining a saner balance between the individual and universal ego. He may not dispel our pessimism, but he at least clears up a great deal of our confusion.

Anouilh is still young, and modern drama has not run its course. It is difficult at this point to see clearly any decidedly new
direction. Predictions would be foolish. Still there are no denying the signs. Modern drama has become increasingly boneless, increasingly decadent. Externalism has long ago lost its vigor and is at present the plaything of the crassly commercial theatre. The more important Pan-psychism has tended more and more toward complete incomprehensibility. For the better playwrights, the trend has been towards compromise, such compromises as are found in Death of a Salesman and The Waltz of the Toreadors. For the moment, Western drama in general seems to have hit a plateau, and there is no denying that France is the only country at present which is producing a new and exciting drama. And in France, Anouilh is the leading playwright. Who knows, but that his harkening back to the theatre of Moliere is a signal that some sort of new classicism is at hand?
CHAPTER SEVEN

THE SUBJECTIVE PERSPECTIVE: A SUMMARY

Whether we rejoice in it or despair of it, whether we militantly support it or wearily disdain it, it is difficult to deny that we are the latest participants in a long romantic revolution, a revolution whose beginnings are buried somewhere in the late 18th-century, but whose modern manifestations did not appear until the latter quarter of the 19th-century. It was at that time that the growing forces of modernism forced the emergence of a distinctly different outlook, a new philosophy that began by rejecting many of those concepts that had sustained Western man's image of himself from the time of the Delian League to the days of the British Empire, and a philosophy that was ultimately both a decided break with the past and, at the same time, an inevitable result of the century of romanticist thinking which had preceded it.

Long before the birth of modernism, romantic zealots had rejected the concept of Reason as a guide to human conduct. With the fall of the rational ideal, all the tenets of classicism which looked to Reason for support were seriously weakened. As the 19th-century progressed, the most important of these beliefs, the long-standing twin concepts of absolutism and universality--the two strongholds of a view of human actions in terms of moral decisions--became less and less vital to the romantic mind. Thus it was that Romanticism began
by successfully replacing Reason with Passion as a clue to human motives, and, as the 19th-century approached its final quarter, Passion came increasingly to mean individual as opposed to universal passion. It was this latter view that gave the primal impulse to modern thinking.

A new awareness of the uniqueness of the individual, then, lies at the root of that burst of intellectual and artistic activity which brought the 19th-century to a close on a note of feverish animation. The new focus on the worth and value of the specific led many of the early moderns to discard finally and completely the philosophic bases of Western classicism. In place of the old absolutism was set a new relativity which devalued universals and prompted intellectuals to seek final truths in the very subjectivity of the ego. Essentially this meant a new religion of the individual, a new realization of the world in terms of the subject not the object. In respect to the arts, modern relativism forced a stronger appreciation of the role of the observer, and this in turn prompted many artists to search for new forms which would stress the importance of the observer over the thing observed.

In essence, the emphasis on the observer and his special post of observation meant that the ancient artistic problem of presenting the inner thoughts and moods of any and all characters was transformed into the modern problem of rendering the unique viewpoint of a given individual to the exclusion, for the time being, of all other points of view. At first, this problem was attacked through an attempt to substitute a new third-person objectivity in place of the older.
omniscient method. The obvious inadequacy of third-person technique brought forth fresh experimentation, new attempts to represent the object through the subject.

As the century turned, modern preoccupation with an ego-centered world began to take on a stronger and stronger atmosphere of irrationality. The new science of psychoanalysis eagerly pressed beyond the limits of human consciousness. To the psychoanalyst the key to all action was the sub- and the unconscious, those depts of the soul which contained forces primitive and overpowering, forces which often made a shambles of man's moral and intellectual structure. The problem of point of view thus became the problem of presenting acceptable artistic approximations of the sometimes savage and usually incomprehensible moods of the Seele. In short, the artist as a modern relativist began with the assumption that the ego did not exist in the world, but that the world existed in and for the ego. When rapidly-evolving modern thought began to see the ego as an irrational phenomenon, the world as such became irrational. As Strindberg has his Officer say: "If logic is absurd then the world is absurd." And, indeed, to the modern mind it was! The problem of point of view, therefore, became one of seeking conventional means of presenting the irrationality of the universe through the irrationality of the ego. The solution to this puzzle was a device variously known as the radiation of the ego, the interior monologue, or the stream of consciousness.

A particularly talented and interesting group of contemporary novelists began to offer some striking studies in point of view. So
impressive were the experiments of such writers as James, Proust, Joyce, and Faulkner, so vocal were their critics and admirers, that it was presently assumed by some that the presentation of the new relativism through the convention of point of view was the exclusive achievement of the novelist and that the method was, in fact, indigenous only to the novel. This assumption is difficult to support, for the issue of point of view is a primary issue of most modern arts. In duly altered form it is to be found in most of the spatial as well as the temporal arts. Without doubt, it is the central structural problem of a number of important contemporary playwrights, but though critics of the drama have taken notice of its presence from time to time, they have attached far too little significance to it. Such an oversight is probably prompted in the first instance by the meek acceptance of the pronouncements of the critics of fiction, and in the second instance by the widespread view of dramatic realism as an end rather than as a stage in the development of modern subjective forms. So completely enraptured were actor and audience alike with the third-person approach of Ibsenian Externalism that they assumed it to be the norm and goal of modern drama, and they were prone to view any nonobjective presentation of relativism as a perversion of, rather than a necessary break with, the inadequate objective approach. It is this attitude which is probably responsible for so much confusion in modern dramatic criticism, so much hair-splitting and equivocation, so much quibbling over whether a work is realistic or naturalistic, expressionistic or surrealistic. Who can
really tell the difference between the two former schools or the two latter schools? For that matter, who really needs to do so?

Actually, viewed in terms of method—which is, after all, the key feature of any given period—the development of modern drama follows two broad directions—Externalism and Pan-psychism. Moreover, in the final analysis, the former is but the necessary and primary stage of the latter; that is, modern drama originally attempted to present a new, relative world view by rejecting the omniscience of the well-made play and by substituting in its stead a third-person objectivity. When the third-person method proved incapable of making subjective statements, a number of important playwrights of our era, men like Strindberg, Pirandello, and O'Neill, turned to an approach to the dramatic illusion through first-person subjective dramatization. In this respect, then, the development of modern drama is parallel to that of the modern novel from the objectivity of Zola to the total subjectivity of Finnegans Wake.

Moreover, the parallelism of the two forms is the thing to be stressed, for it is a mistake to assume that any experimentation with point of view in the drama is but a late and naive imitation of the techniques of the novelists. In truth, the modern dramatist's interests in the issue of point of view were evidenced quite early. While Henry James was casting about for a means to present Isabel more subjectively, Henrik Ibsen was doing much the same thing with Hedda, and some ten years before Proust began dredging his stream of consciousness, Strindberg had already placed on the stage the grotesque panorama of his own tortured metaconscious states. While it is true
that by 1914 Proust, Joyce and Dorothy Richardson had opened to the
novelist extraordinary new avenues for the study of the human subject,
it is also true that by the same time Strindberg and Evreinov had per­
formed a similar service for the drama. After the first decade of the
20th-century the problem of both the serious modern novelist and the
serious modern dramatist was the problem of rendering introspection,
not intrigue, of presenting the ego chiefly in relation to itself
alone.

It has been the purpose of this study to view the various
aspects of this problem as they manifested themselves in the work of
eight important modern dramatists. The study, then, is primarily a
study in dramatic form, and the focus has been centered throughout,
where it rightfully belongs, on the works of art themselves. But it
has also been the aim of this investigation to demonstrate the sig­
nificance and suggest the scope of the convention of point of view in
modern dramatic literature. Accordingly, the playwrights selected for
study were chosen because as dramatists representative of our times,
they serve to place this work in the mainstream of dramatic criticism,
and because as writers truly alive to the spirit of the age, they set
about inventing or perfecting new theatrical solutions to the problem
of point of view.

As early as 1884 Ibsen began, in The Wild Duck, to seek a new,
subjective perspective, but he was never willing to discard his own
objective method. Therefore, although he strained dramatic symbolism
to the limit in Hedda Gabler, the play remains where it began, locked
behind the plane of the proscenium arch. It thus fell to the lot of
the great externalist playwright, August Strindberg, to break through the restraints of the third-person method. Strindberg's experiments with staging his own stream of consciousness were soon followed by the monodramas of Evreinov, and by 1912 a truly fresh perspective for the dramatic illusion had been created. Thereafter, many of the leading playwrights of German, Italy, France, and the United States took up the structural problem stated so strikingly by Strindberg and Evreinov. What each playwright did with the new dramatic perspective depended upon his own view of the individual in relation to the objective world.

Among the eight playwrights studied herein the solutions have been various. To Strindberg, Evreinov, and Giraudoux, inner truth was viewed as relative almost exclusively to itself alone. Consequently, in The Dream Play, The Theatre of the Soul, and The Madwoman of Chaillot, the three playwrights made their total statement through the subjective point of view of a single person. Kaiser, Miller, and Anouilh, on the other hand, placed more emphasis on the tragic disparity between the subject and the object. Thus, in their works they attempted various combinations of subjective and objective points of view. O'Neill and Pirandello stand midway between the two trios in the sense that they came to view life as an enormously complex maze of interior and exterior conflicts. To make such a statement the two dramatists, in Strange Interlude and Six Characters in Search of an Author, sought out methods of making both an objective and subjective statement simultaneously.
Whether any one of these playwrights, or any playwright for that matter, is totally successful in his use of the new method is doubtful, not because the technique is impossible to the drama, but because in the final analysis the subjective perspective, in the drama as in the novel, is committed to a much too single-minded view of human conduct. In light of this fact, the same general criticism can be applied to both the modern literary forms. There is far too much pretentious obscurity, obscurity which does not grow out of difficult and involved thought, but out of a belief that the irrational impulses of the individual are of significance and interest to all, and, consequently, should be offered in their most chaotic, most Dionysian state, directly to the audience or reader. It is this unhealthy and seemingly inescapable aspect of the rigidly-adhered-to point of view method which has probably caused a recent trend towards compromises with more traditional and more communicative dramatic forms. Playwrights such as Miller and Anouilh have attempted a return to saner and more lucid comments by combining pan-psychic techniques with those of Externalism or those of Classicism.

What will be the ultimate place of the subjective perspective in drama is impossible to say. As present, it is the latest and most logical conclusion of a long period of romantic self-contemplation, and as long as the star of the romanticist is in the ascendency, there is no reason to believe that the subjective perspective will ever fall into total disfavor as an important dramatic convention. Its virtues are many; its weaknesses the weaknesses of the age. The
subjective perspective is the problem that lies at the root of modern drama, the issue which splits contemporary playwrights into two great schools, the issue which transcend the boundaries of the various "ism's," the issue which is the most distinctive feature of the modern theatre, the issue which both shapes and explains our sense of spiritual isolation. In short, the dramatization of the subjective perspective is the central problem of post-Ibsenian drama.
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Books


281


**Periodicals**


VITA

August William Staub was born in New Orleans, Louisiana, on October 9, 1931. He attended schools in New Orleans and Shreveport, and was graduated from Jesuit High School of New Orleans in 1948. In the fall of that year, he enrolled in Louisiana State University and received his B.S. degree in 1952. After serving two years in the U.S. Army, he returned to Louisiana State University and took his M.A. in 1956. From 1956 to 1958 he taught at Eastern Michigan University. Since 1958 he has been taking additional graduate work at Louisiana State in preparation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.
EXAMINATION AND THESIS REPORT

Candidate: August W. Staub

Major Field: Speech

Title of Thesis: Drama and the Subjective Perspective; Aspects of Point of View in Modern Drama

Approved:

[Signature]
Major Professor and Chairman

[Signature]
Dean of the Graduate School

EXAMINING COMMITTEE:

[Signature]

[Signature]

[Signature]

Date of Examination:

May 27, 1960