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THEATRICALISM IN EUROPEAN AVANT-GARDE DRAMA, 1918-1939

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THEATRICALISM IN EUROPEAN AVANT-GARDE DRAMA, 1918-1939

by

Philip Lerman

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The dissertation is dedicated to the memory of my father and mother, Max and Lillian Lerman.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The twenty-one years between the end of the first world war and the beginning of the second in 1939 saw a highly innovative period in European drama. Avant-garde playwrights of the time worked in experimental styles such as expressionism, surrealism, and futurism; and explored the use of dramaturgical devices that included theatricalism. Theatricalism can be found in European drama going back to the Roman era, but this dramaturgical device never became characteristic of the drama of any particular period. Theatricalism, however, flowered in the avant-garde drama of the years between the two world wars.

Theatricalism is defined in this dissertation as a dramaturgical device whereby a playwright incorporates techniques, practices, and conventions of theatrical performance into his play. These elements are drawn from any species of authentic theatrical performance known to the playwright. The theatricalist elements incorporated are designed to call attention to their presence in the play and to the performance source or theatrical form in which they originate. The playwright uses the theatricalist elements for a variety of dramatic purposes such as depicting plot action, delineating characters, illuminating the world of the play, or underscoring a theme. The dramaturgical effect of theatricalism in a play or on that part which contains it is to portray

dramatic action essentially as theatrical performance, characterize the play's protagonists as conscious performers, and to show that the play's environment is located in the theatre and basically consists of a stage and scenic artifice.

The term theatricalism should be clearly differentiated from the term theatricality. The latter term merely signifies a general attribute of the theatre and is not a specific dramaturgical device. Theatricality applies to that which contains or conveys the qualities of theatrical performance. It connotes belonging in or being appropriate to the theatre. As it pertains to drama, theatricality implies a play's suitability for theatrical presentation. The term refers to those attributes of a play which will enable its smooth transference to the stage and facilitate the play's transformation from drama into theatre. Apart from this, theatricality performs no specific function in the dramatic structure of a play, as does theatricalism.

The theatricalism that I am concerned with in this dissertation is the kind that only the playwright puts into his play. During the inter-war period, innovative directors such as Vsevolod Meyerhold demonstrated that even plays not inherently theatricalist could be given a theatricalist production. Meyerhold used music-hall conventions in his 1934 staging of Dumas' The Lady of the Camellias, and he used circus techniques in his 1922 productions of Crommelynck's The Magnificent Cuckold and Sukhovo-Kobylin's Tarelkin's Death. As an apprentice to Meyerhold, Sergei Eisenstein used circus and variety-stage techniques in his 1923 stage adaptation of Ostrovsky's Enough Stupidity in Every

Wise Man. Meyerhold also gave a theatricalist production to Mayakovsky's Mystery-Bouffe and The Bedbug—plays which contained many theatricalist elements. However important theatricalist production may have been to the avant-garde theatre of the inter-war period, this type of theatricalism is not examined in the dissertation.

My aim in this dissertation is to show how avant-garde playwrights of the inter-war years used theatricalism in their plays, and thereby to demonstrate that this dramaturgical device made a valuable contribution to the drama of that period. Through numerous examples I will illustrate both the specific forms of theatricalism used by the avant-garde playwrights and the variety of its application to the plays. The examples selected are taken from forty-four plays of the inter-war period whose styles run the gamut of European avant-garde drama, and which represent the work of playwrights from many countries.

Many avant-garde playwrights of the inter-war years incorporated theatricalism into their work because they found this device compatible with their perception of the times as well as their artistic goals. The terrible carnage of the first world war, and the social and economic collapse which followed, stripped the most innovative European playwrights of any illusions about the society that produced the catastrophe. These playwrights lost belief in the stability and sanity of such a society and in the veracity of a theatre that depicted it as "real." This disenchantment translated into a hostility toward illusionism in drama and theatre practice. Theatricalism offered the avant-garde playwright a dramaturgical weapon against illusionism, and by conspicuously

incorporating theatrical artifice he forestalled an illusionistic production of his play.

As he sought ways to emphasize the immediacy of the dramatic event, the avant-garde playwright found that theatricalism could imbue drama with the spontaneity of theatrical performance, rather than the false convention of the realistic theatre which pretended not to be theatre.

The inter-war period saw the popularization of startling concepts of human nature such as the idea of the fragmented psyche and the multiplicity of personality. These views of individual behavior prompted the avant-garde playwrights to devise new ways to delineate character. They looked to the vast reservoir of performance conventions for unique inspiration in depicting action and character.

Shaken by the disintegration of whole societies in the aftermath of World War I, the avant-garde playwright frequently portrayed the world of his play as being similarly fragile. By drawing a parallel between the social structure and the scenic structure of his play, the playwright could ridicule the illusion of substance and permanence in both life and art.

The avant-garde playwright between the wars rejected the dramatic styles of the past such as romanticism, realism, and the well-made play. Theatricalism offered a way to exploit dramatic material from prior periods without actually imitating it. By treating borrowed material as a performance element in his play, he could control its relationship to the main line of the dramatic action.

These reasons help to explain the increased use of theatricalism after the first world war. Theatricalism, however, has a history that goes back to the Roman era. The following are examples of theatricalism prior to its proliferation in the twentieth century.

Amphitryon by Plautus contains a very early example. In the play's prologue, Mercury informs the audience that he and Jove have arranged the events of the play so that Jove can seduce Alcmena. Plautus shows the two gods performing as authors of the play in which they also appear as dramatic characters. Plautus also allows Mercury and Jove to behave as willful actors who appropriate roles belonging to other characters in the play. In another example of theatricalism the playwright calls attention to the performance convention that portrays the passage of time in drama when he lets Jove extend the night in which he seduces Alcmena.

The next significant appearance of theatricalism occurs in Elizabethan drama, when Shakespeare incorporates a play within-a-play into two of his early comedies. The Pyramus and Thisby interlude in A Midsummer Night's Dream, and the Pageant of the Nine Worthies in Love's Labour's Lost, parody theatrical performance conventions which allowed actors to step out of character and address the audience. These two comedies also contain a variant of the play-within-a-play: the audience as performer as well as spectator. The characters who watch the amateur theatricals in each of the plays compete with the players for the stage and try to out-perform them. In Anne Righter's words, the audience

characters "insist upon becoming actors in a play which cannot provide them with a part."[1]

Shakespeare's most famous use of the play-within-a-play is the "Murder of Gonzago" performance in Hamlet. An additional theatricalist element in Shakespeare's tragedy is Hamlet's use of theatrical performance to manipulate events in the play. He gives a convincing performance as a madman in order to mask his true feelings, and he acts with "the consciousness of a dramatist,"[2] when he revises the scenario for the performance of "The Murder of Gonzago" so as to entrap Claudius. Robert Nelson offers the observation that Hamlet's life so simulates the performance of a play that "we can almost think of him as his own author, his own director, and his own protagonist."[3]

Shakespeare experimented with the play-within-a-play in the chronicles as well as in the comedies and tragedies. Act II, Scene IV of Henry IV, Part One contains a significant bit of playacting in which Falstaff and Prince Hal take turns pretending to be the King counselling his son on the youth's association with the old knight. When he plays the King, Falstaff urges Hal to maintain the friendship; but when Hal assumes the role of the King, he threatens to banish Falstaff. Beginning as comic playacting, the scene turns serious when the old knight pleads

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[1]Anne Righter, Shakespeare and the Idea of the Play (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1967), p. 100.

[2]Lionel Abel, Metatheatre (New York: Hill & Wang, 1963), p. 49.

[3]Robert Nelson, Play Within a Play (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1958), pp. 27-28.

against banishment. Hal's role-playing foreshadows his rejection of Falstaff upon being crowned King Henry V.

The Knight of The Burning Pestle by Beaumont and Fletcher contains a play-within-a-play throughout its entirety. The inner play occupies almost all of the outer play, and the two progress simultaneously. Ralph, who begins as a character in the outer play becomes a major protagonist of the inner play, while the citizen and his wife remain in the outer play and periodically comment on the inner play. The Knight of The Burning Pestle is an early example of the play-within-a-play that critically comments on the theatre of its time.

The sixteenth century Spanish playlet The Wonder Show by the novelist and playwright Miguel de Cervantes, features a play-within-a-play in which the behavior of the stage audience is meant to reflect the foibles of the actual audience. Two unscrupulous showmen put on a nonexistent show, and tell their audience that it is visible only to those of proper lineage. When the stage audience vehemently pretends to see what's not there, the real audience is given an insight into theatrical illusion and a lesson in social hypocrisy.

Molière supplies an example of theatricalism in The Rehearsal at Versailles. This one-act play simulates an actual rehearsal of Molière's theatre company for a command performance before King Louis XIV. The dramatic characters of the play are Molière and the members of his troupe, and these roles were performed by Molière and each actor of the troupe playing himself. In the simulated rehearsal, the real actors played themselves playing their customary roles in Molière's

plays. Molière's intentions in Rehearsal at Versailles are to show off the skills of his acting company, to express his theatrical beliefs, and to delight an audience with a behind-the-scenes look at theatre practice.

Other notable examples of the rehearsal form of the play-within-a-play are found in The Rehearsal (1671) by George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham, and in Richard Brinsley Sheridan's The Critic or A Tragegy Rehearsed (1770). The first play burlesques the plots, themes, and stagecraft of seventeenth century English heroic tragedy. Sheridan's play ridicules pretentious playwrights who plagiarize Shakespeare, gullible critics, and effusive press agents. The rehearsal of Mr. Puff's tragedy satirizes the tendency by playwrights to rely on acting, staging, and scenic conventions to manipulate the audience's interpretation of a play.

The eighteenth century Italian playwright Carlo Gozzi uses obvious scenic artifice as a dramaturgical device in The King Stag (1762). His purpose was to demonstrate the essential theatricality of Italian drama in contrast to the literary qualities advocated by Carlo Goldoni. Gozzi's scenic show includes a prop talking-parrot, a laughing plaster-bust, and mock animals. The playwright also stages a series of magical transformations when the play's hero and villain exchange bodies. These transformations openly rely on the artifice and versatility of theatrical performance.

There are several notable examples of theatricalism in nineteenth century European drama. Ludwig Tieck's Puss in Boots (circa 1797) is

a play-within-a-play that satirizes the conventions of illusionistic theatrical performance. Tieck portrays the actors of the inner play as incompetent, shows its author toadying to the audience, and ridicules the pomposity and gullibility of the audience. In Puss in Boots Tieck uses the play-within-a-play primarily to parody this dramaturgical device.

Johann Nestroy's The Talisman (circa 1840) offers another example of theatricalism in nineteenth century drama. This play draws its theatrical performance conventions from the variety stage. The plot of The Talisman is constructed as a bill of music-hall or vaudeville acts. The events of the plot are presented in a sequence of musical numbers and comic sketches. The basic comic routine throughout the play is the hero's manipulation of a series of wigs. The hero is depicted as a conscious performer, and his prototype is recognizable as a vaudeville performer.

Leonce and Lena (1836) by Georg Büchner contains two protagonists who create and perform a variety of roles in the play. Leonce casts himself in roles that resemble Hamlet, Romeo, and Don Quixote; while his friend Valerio assumes the complementary roles of Horatio, Mercutio, and Sancho Panza. Büchner uses this theatricalist device to show how role-playing in life distorts and dissipates meaningful action.

The action of Arthur Schnitzler's The Green Cockatoo (1899) takes place in a theatrical cafe on the eve of the French Revolution. Actors mingle with the cafe patrons and improvise scenarios to entertain them. One actor relates how he has just killed his wife's lover. The performance is so convincing that his wife's actual perfidy is brought out.

When her lover enters the cafe the actor commits the murder he had previously enacted. In this, Schnitzler shows life imitating theatrical performance.

Robert Nelson sees a three-tiered play-within-a-play structure in The Green Cockatoo. The revolution beginning outside the cafe constitutes the outer play, while all that we see going on in the tavern is the play within that play. The murder of the lover parallels the events taking place outside inasmuch as the lover was a member of the nobility now doomed by the start of the revolution. The third tier in Nelson's proposed structure is the performance of the actors for the entertainment of the cafe audience. This he refers to as a "play within a play within a play."[1]

Theatricalism thus had a lengthy, though sporadic, history in European drama before its proliferation in avant-garde plays after World War I. During the inter-war years the avant-garde playwrights developed a wide range of applications of theatricalism, and greatly helped to establish its versatility as a dramaturgical device. Through the frequent and varied use of theatricalism by the inter-war playwrights, a pattern of its basic forms emerged. The play-within-a-play is, of course, easily recognized; but other consistent forms of theatricalism can be detected if one examines a sufficient number of inter-war avant-garde plays.

In readying this dissertation, I found significant examples of theatricalism in forty-four of the inter-war avant-garde plays I had

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[1]Nelson, Play Within a Play, p. 118.

examined. After careful study of the theatricalism in the forty-four plays—many of which yielded more than one theatricalist element—I would classify the numerous examples under five basic rubrics. The categories were determined by similarities of form in the theatricalist elements rather than by their dramatic function, because the formal aspects of theatricalism seemed easier to categorize, whereas the theatricalist elements in a play varied with the dramatic aims of each playwright. What has evolved from this process of classification is an anatomy of theatricalism as it applies to most drama of the twentieth century.

My claim that theatricalism has detectable formal aspects is not shared by the scholar and critic John Gassner. Gassner, in his writings, often commented on theatricalism in modern drama, but he does not find a formal structure in the dramaturgical device. For example, he says:

> Theatricalism has not yet acquired any classical configurations because it has not found a consistent form. The idea of theatricalist art has been with us throughout the century, but its various formal and stylistic manifestations have been tentative, elusive or fractured. . . . It's "idea" persists and is, in my opinion, essentially sound, but its forms have been transitory.[1]

I believe, however, that this dissertation will demonstrate that theatricalism does indeed have consistent form.

Establishing the basic categories of theatricalism was an essential step toward fulfilling the primary goal of the dissertation; affirming the importance of theatricalism to inter-war avant-garde drama by illustrating its use by the playwrights of the period. The five categories

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[1]John Gassner, Form and Idea in Modern Theatre (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1956), pp. 140-141.

constitute the basic structure of the dissertation and contribute a logical order to the study of theatricalism in the inter-war years.

Each of the five chapters which follow this one contains examples of a specific theatricalist category. All examples used were drawn from forty-four avant-garde plays of the inter-war period, and each example was placed in its appropriate chapter. The final chapter of the dissertation contains examples of theatricalism in avant-garde plays after 1939.

There follows a brief description of the chapters and the theatricalist attributes of each category.

Chapter II, "The Play Within a Play." This is possibly the oldest, and certainly the most frequently used dramaturgical device in the many centuries of European drama. It is also the most familiar form of theatricalism to students of the theatre. The play-within-a-play almost epitomizes theatricalism in that it directly portrays the performance of drama in a theatre environment. In this chapter the specific aspects of theatricalism in the play-within-a-play are brought out by examining the performance role of the actor, the dramatist, and the audience.

Chapter III, "The Self-dramatizing Character." This theatricalist device allows the playwright to incorporate theatrical conventions associated with the creation and performance of drama without having to resort to the play-within-a-play. The self-dramatizing character constructs his own role in the play by employing the consciousness of the dramatist and the techniques of an actor.

Chapter IV, "Borrowed Parts; Borrowed Styles." The avant-garde playwright creating theatricalism out of plots, characters, and dramatic styles borrowed from other plays. He treats the borrowed elements as guest performers and repeated theatrical performances incorporated into his play.

Chapter V, "Spectacles and Scenic Shows." The playwright incorporates the spatial and scenic characteristics of theatrical production into his play. He locates the action in the auditorium or lobby of the theatre as well as the stage. The playwright makes scenic artifice an active element in his play rather than merely a realistic or pictorial background. He also may openly manipulate the performance conventions which portray the passage of time in drama.

Chapter VI, "Mining the Popular Entertainments." The playwright draws upon the performance conventions of Grand Guignol, the variety stage, circus acts, carnival shows, the movies, and radio broadcasting. This category contains a large variety of theatrical performance conventions and, correspondingly, a large number of examples. These include performance forms which hark back to the Medieval era as well as those which depend on modern technology. Because this category is the most comprehensive I have placed it last.

Chapter VII, "Theatricalism After 1939." This chapter argues that theatricalism continues to be an important device in avant-garde drama after 1939. The examples selected are arranged under the same basic categories of theatricalism as were those of the inter-war period.

CHAPTER II

THE PLAY WITHIN A PLAY

The play-within-a-play consists of an inner play within an outer play. The inner play may occupy almost the entire length of the outer play, as it does in The Knight of the Burning Pestle; or it may appear only in a segment, as does "The Murder of Gonzago" in Hamlet. In either form, the play-within-a-play operates according to the following principles: major characters of the outer play are, or become involved in, putting on a stage play; these characters are portrayed as actors, playwrights, directors, theatre officials, or members of a theatre audience.

The dramatic effect of the play-within-a-play grows out of the relationship between the inner and outer play. Robert Nelson points to the thematic connection between the two plays when he proposes that

> the relationship of the inner play to the outer play prefigures the relationship between the outer play and the reality within which it occurs: life.[1]

For example, a theme of jealousy in the inner plays reflects and comments on the theme of jealousy in the outer play, which reflects and comments upon jealousy actually experienced in life.

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[1]Robert Nelson, Play Within a Play (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1958), p. 10.

Nelson is correct in pointing out the importance of thematic relationships. However, another and equally important type of relationship exists between the inner and outer play. This relationship is based on basic conventions and techniques of actual theatrical performance, which the characters of the outer play use to put on the inner play. In such a relationship the inner play is shown as a theatrical performance which evolves from the dramatic action of the outer play. The characters of the inner play are portrayed by characters of the outer play who perform as actors. And the open use of scenic artifice in the inner play helps to establish the locale of the outer play as essentially a stage. This type of relationship between the two plays, more than the thematic one, links the play-within-a-play to theatricalism.

During the inter-war years, the theatrical performance conventions that were most noticeably used in the play-within-a-play involved the actor, the playwright, or the members of the audience. Therefore, the examples in this chapter are arranged in the following groups, to illustrate how each performing convention was incorporated and applied.

"The Actor as Protagonist of Both Plays." When he performs in a play, the actor is two people: himself and the role he portrays. This subcategory of the play-within-a-play shows how his performing conventions can lead the actor to confuse his identity.

"The Dramatist as a Character in His Play." It is an axiom of the theatre that the playwright puts something of himself into his play. This subcategory shows a playwright putting himself into his play either directly or by proxy.

"The Audience as Spectator and Performer." The audience usually watches the performance of a play and expresses a judgment of it. This subcategory shows how the audience may be used as performers in the play-within-a-play.

The Actor as Protagonist of Both Plays

Georg Kaiser's The Protagonist theatricalizes the actor's confusion of identities. This play offers the extreme example of an actor who is unable to distinguish between or separate his role and his life. The actor-protagonist of Kaiser's play is so "at the mercy of" the part he is playing that he has great difficulty in finding "my way back to myself." He is both obsessed with and victimized by his desire for "complete transformation," the ultimate manifestation or, at least, aim of the actor's performing conventions (p. 66).

When the actor-protagonist is trapped in his role, his only means of escape from the pretense and falsity of playacting is his absolute trust in the honesty of his sister. She represents the protagonist's sole lifeline to reality. Her virtue is the beacon which guides the actor back to his true self. For this reason she tours with the little band of players through Elizabethan England. The dramatic climax to Kaiser's short play occurs when the actor's lifeline to reality is severed.

Kaiser uses the theatricalism inherent in the play-within-a-play to achieve the dramatic climax of The Protagonist. In fact, he uses two separate inner plays to lead us to the play's violent conclusion.

The first is the rehearsal of a mime drama that is to be performed later for the troupe's noble patron. The mime's light-hearted plot theatricalizes the satisfactory arrangement that the protagonist believes exists. In the mime's scenario, the protagonist portrays himself as a husband who reluctantly endures his wife's smothering embraces. His only respite is his visit to his faithful mistress. The mime's conclusion shows the husband making a successful accommodation between the two females. The wife in the scenario represents the actor's craft, to which the protagonist remains wed despite the almost unbearable demands it makes; and the mistress is his sister, in whose fidelity he finds escape (pp. 72-73).

If the first inner play of The Protagonist expresses the contentment of the protagonist-actor, the second inner play reflects the turmoil that grips the actor when he learns that his sister has a secret lover. Suddenly the beacon of virtue provided by the sister is extinguished, and the protagonist-actor cannot find his way back to reality.

Ordered by his patron to replace the farce with a serious mime, the protagonist converts the first scenario to dramatize his new state of mind. In the second inner play the protagonist portrays himself as the anguished husband of a deceiving wife. He seeks out his mistress, and desperately tries to interest himself in her. However, when he sees his wife with her secret lover he angrily rushes from his mistress and besieges the adulterous couple. In this scenario, the deceiving wife represents his sister, and the mistress is his actor's craft in which he now seeks distraction from his grief and rage (p. 75).

Robbed of the trust in his sister's virtue, the protagonist actor is unable to free himself from the role of deceived husband. When his sister tries to guide him back to reality, the protagonist kills her. The actor and the role are now one, and there is "no longer any distinction between" the protagonist's actions in the outer and the inner play (p. 76).

The play-within-a-play is incorporated into The Protagonist as a rehearsal for a later performance. The rehearsal form allows Kaiser to include the two contrasting versions of the inner play through which the radical changes in the protagonist-actor's mental state are reflected. The plots of the inner plays, in combination, theatricalize the main action of the outer play.

The relationship of the two mimes to the outer play prefigure, as Robert Nelson suggests, the relationship of the outer play to the world and specific reality that the dramatist is writing about. The inner plays of The Protagonist mirror the outer play about an actor who is too profoundly submerged in his craft. Kaiser relates the protagonist's misuse of an actor's performing conventions to the acting style of the German Expressionist actor of the 1920s, which Mel Gordon characterizes as the actor's desire "to transform himself from one soul-state to another."[1] The playwright of The Protagonist dramatizes the danger of this complete transformation as it is desired by Expressionist actors.

The Protagonist incorporates actors' performing conventions directly into the play's dramaturgical form. The protagonist of the

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[1]Mel Gordon, "German Expressionist Acting," The Drama Review, September 1975, p. 35.

outer play manipulates these conventions to make himself the protagonist of both the outer and inner plays, and so underscores the theatricalism of the play-within-a-play.

The actors in Bulgakov's The Crimson Island are preparing to present a new play about the Russian Revolution entitled "The Crimson Island." Bulgakov focuses on three theatrical conventions. One is the casting of the play, the assignment of roles. The second involves the process of rehearsing; and the third—since the theatre is in Soviet Russia—has to do with gaining the approval of the official censor. In the exercise of these three conventions, Bulgakov's characters perform roles in the inner play which parallel and comment on their roles in the outer play.

In the first instance, rival actresses contend for the leading female role in the inner play. One actress wins the part because she is the wife of the theatre director. She is cast in the role of an English lady, while the loser is given the part of her maid. The difference in professional status between the two competing actresses is converted to a difference in the social status of the roles they play in the inner play. The action of the inner play continues the hostility between the rival actresses, as the English lady fires her maid for incompetence, and the maid retaliates by joining the revolt against the Lady's privileged status (pp. 315-319).

The inner play, "The Crimson Island," is a parody of a serious play about the Russian Revolution. Bulgakov humorously compares the social inequities of Czarist Russia shown in the play, with the professional inequities and unfair practices that exist in the theatre world.

The rehearsal of the inner play pits the play's author against the director. Their rivalry, like that of the actresses, begins in the outer play and is transferred to the inner play. In the outer play, the strife between author and director at first is over changes in the inner play's text, but it quickly spreads to include the director's annoyance at his wife's flirtation with the attractive young playwright. The director's defense of his authority and his fear of being cuckolded both manifest themselves during the rehearsal of a scene of the inner play.

This scene is between Lady Glenarvan and her lover; acted by the director's wife and the play's author—who has been recruited to substitute for a missing actor. When the wife plays the love scene too amorously for the director, he interrupts the rehearsal (pp. 313-314). The director has been acting the role of Lord Glenarvan in the inner play, thus making his role of jealous husband similar in both the inner and outer plays. As a jealous husband in both plays, his attempt to thwart the love scene is consistent with his role in each play, but with the demand that the author delete the scene, the director allows personal interest to affect professional judgment. This, like the first example, is meant to show how an author's play may be victimized by the impulses and vanities of its performers.

Savva, the official censor, furnishes a third example in The Crimson Island of an actor who plays a part in the inner play which mirrors his role in the outer play. When he arrives to judge the play, the censor insists on watching the performance from a prominent place in

the setting. He even accompanies the actors as they move about the stage. Savva thus interpolates himself into the performance of the inner play.

The censor's final perch on stage is the throne vacated by the deposed tyrant of Crimson Island—the inner play's Russia (p. 331). By occupying the throne at this moment of the inner play, Savva assumes the role of the Soviet tyrant who is replacing the old czarist one. This role matches his role in the outer play, for as theatre censor, Savva is a tyrant of the Soviet regime to the actors onstage.

With the completion of the performance, the actors gather around the censor to hear his verdict. Savva still sits on the stage throne, like a ruler pondering his decision; while the actors attend him, as if a deputation of humble subjects (p. 337). At this moment, the action of the outer play merges with the plot of the inner play.

Bulgakov has humorously demonstrated how certain performance conventions used by actors can undermine the text. Rival actresses distort the play by using it as a vehicle for their animosity. The director alters the text of the play in order to restrain his philandering wife. And the censor stalks the play from the vantage point of an actor. These three examples underscore the theme of Bulgakov's play, which criticizes the encroachment of theatre practice and government censorship upon the integrity of a play.

Bertolt Brecht uses actors' performing conventions as a basis for the relationship between the outer and inner plays of The Elephant Calf. In the outer play, Uriah, Jesse and Polly put on a play to demonstrate to Galy Gay that he is a murderer. The inner play they stage

is a fable in which Galy, as an elephant calf, is falsely proven to have killed his elephant mother. Thus, Galy Gay is on trial in both the outer and inner plays, and as an actor is the similar protagonist of both.

As a play-within-a-play, however, the entire Elephant Calf serves as the inner play to Brecht's A Man's A Man. First of all, the characters of The Elephant Calf come from the larger play, where they played identical roles and engaged in similar actions. In A Man's A Man, Uriah, Jesse and Polly tricked Galy into incriminating himself by making him an actor in a staged crime involving an elephant. And the soldiers who were onlookers to this ruse also act as the theatre audience in The Elephant Calf. This play is a theatrical-performance version of the entrapment of Galy Gay, originating in A Man's A Man.

The method used to entrap Galy is similar in both plays: Gay is tricked into participating in a trumped-up crime. The theatrically staged crimes are similar in both plays. In A Man's A Man, Galy, who is acting the role of Jip the soldier, is accused of a crime committed against the British Army; while its theatrical performance version in The Elephant Calf seeks to prove Galy guilty of killing his mother. Both constitute crimes against one's parents, for to the soldiers in A Man's A Man, the British Army is their only family. And an elephant is the victim of each supposed crime: the British Army elephant Galy is accused of selling, and his elephant mother that Galy is accused of murdering.

The actors in The Elephant Calf present as formal-theatre performance the events which the impromptu actors of A Man's A Man have contrived as informal theatrical performance. For example, Uriah, Jesse and Polly stage a phony crime for Galy to commit. The Army elephant that Galy sells is actually a stage prop, Jesse and Polly under a blanket playing the part of an elephant. Galy leads the mock elephant by a rope to the incriminating sale (Sc. 6). In The Elephant Calf, Galy is similarly tricked into committing what appears to be a crime. He is lured into leading Jesse, who plays Galy's elephant mother, by a rope tied around Jesse's neck. When he accidentally almost strangles Jesse, he is accused of murdering his mother (pp. 215-216). The two scenes share similar performance conventions as well as plot details; namely, the same actor (Jesse) impersonating an elephant in both.

Galy also involuntarily performs in the trial that Uriah, Jesse and Polly rig to convict him. This event from A Man's A Man is transformed, in The Elephant Calf, into a theatrical performance of the rigged trial. To prove his innocence, Galy is required to climb up a ladder held by Uriah without injuring the holder. Galy's weight inevitably tears off Uriah's hand (an artificial one), thereby establishing Galy's guilt. Galy then exhibits the hand to the audience (pp. 212-213). This action crystallizes the image of Galy acting in a theatrical performance of his false condemnation. Galy's role as a voluntary actor in The Elephant Calf reflects and comments on his role as an involuntary actor in A Man's A Man.

The reason that Uriah, Jesse and Polly have invented a theatrical performance for Galy is similar in both plays. The three soldiers want to impose a role of their choice on Galy, and they use theatrical conventions to convince him to accept it. In A Man's A Man, they want Galy to permanently play the role of the missing Jip, and in The Elephant Calf they want Galy to accept the role that the play within the play falsely confirms him in. In both plays, Galy is coerced into assuming permanently the role he has been playing only temporarily.

Through most of each play, Galy balks at accepting the required role, but a violent event in each play shows him the folly of zealously insisting on one role over another and he quickly accepts. The event in A Man's A Man is Bloody Five's castration, self-inflicted in order to maintain his famous role in the British Army (Sc. 10). In The Elephant Calf, Galy accepts the role imposed on him by the play's outcome in order to quell a violent challenge to the play's ending, by the soldier-audience (p. 218).

Although usually regarded as an epilogue to A Man's A Man, The Elephant Calf bears a play-within-a-play relationship to the larger play; mainly because the protagonist and antagonists who act out the impromptu theatrical performances in A Man's A Man are also the actors of the organized theatrical performance in The Elephant Calf.

Luigi Pirandello wrote three plays which contained a play-within-a-play: Six Characters in Search of an Author, Tonight We Improvise, and Each in His Own Way. In each play, the relationship between the outer and inner play is founded largely on theatrical performance

conventions. The examples which follow show how Pirandello made the actors in each play the protagonists of both the outer and inner play.

The Father, Stepdaughter, and other Characters who interrupt the rehearsal of Pirandello's play, are the actor-protagonists of Six Characters in Search of an Author. They are true actors because they carry within them the seeds of the drama that they are "impatient to perform." Asked by the theatre's Director to produce the "script," the Father explains that "the drama is inside us" (p. 2012).

The Six Characters, rather than the bickering members of the theatre troupe, are the authentic actors in the outer play. Eric Bentley finds the Six Charactrs "more real" than the so-called Actors, whom he sees portrayed by Pirandello as "creatures out of a play."[1] In other words, the Six Characters are the real actors in the play, whereas the members of the acting troupe personify fictional versions of an actor.

As actors, the Six Characters have come in search of a stage and an audience, in order to enact the drama they carry within themselves. Albert Bermel states this to be the real objective of the Six Characters' search. He points out that as protagonists of their drama as well as its only qualified actors, the Characters have come to the theatre to "have their drama certified" by playing it themselves.[2]

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[1]Eric Bentley, Theatre of War (New York: The Viking Press, 1973), p. 60.

[2]Albert Bermel, Contradictory Characters (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1973), p. 140.

In an enactment of the seduction in Madame Pace's shop, the Father shows why the Characters are best qualified to be the actors of their drama. As he begins the scene he is "already clothed in the reality of his created life," yet seemingly unprepared for "the drama which will break upon him" (p. 2035). The Father displays the skill of a competent actor who is thoroughly prepared in his role, yet is still able to make his performance seem spontaneous.

The Father is joined by the Stepdaughter and the Mother for the climax to the scene in Madame Pace's shop. As the Characters re-create those painful moments, their acting performance deeply affects the members of the theatre troupe who watch. Thus, the Characters, as actors, finally perform their drama for an audience.

The scene in Madame Pace's shop constitutes the inner play, of which the Six Characters are the protagonists. And since they are the only credible actors in the theatre world of the outer play, they are its protagonists also. Therefore, the Six Charactrs are, in practice, actors who are the protagonists of both the inner and outer plays.

Here, as is usual in the play-within-a-play, the inner play is joined to the outer play by actors' performance conventions. In this case, however, there is an extra link in the chain that joins the two plays. The connection is customarily made by the actors of the outer play acting the roles of the protagonists of the inner play. In Six Characters in Search of an Author, the protagonists of the inner play assume the role of actor in the outer play so that they can act their own roles as protagonists of the inner play.

Pirandello contrasts the effective acting of the Six Characters with the hackneyed style used by the actors of the theatre troupe. The Leading Man tries to play the Father's part in the scene in Madame Pace's shop. He plays the role in the "waggish manner of an elderly Don Juan" (p. 2037). By showing those stock characterizations, Pirandello chides actors for misusing their conventions and distorting their roles. He reminds actors that the dramatic character itself contains the seeds of a good performance.

The Characters of Six Characters in Search of an Author wrest the stage away from the actors who cannot portray them authentically. The actors in Tonight We Improvise wrest the stage away from the director who does not allow them to perform authentically as actors. In so doing, the actors in the outer play make the issue of actors' performing conventions an important link between the outer and inner plays.

The actors in Tonight We Improvise are required to perform the inner play by improvising their dialogue and physical actions in accordance with a scenario given them by the director in the outer play. Lacking a script the actors have to rely on their own personal resources to improvise their roles in the inner play. Therefore, the role which each actor creates strongly reflects his or her character in the outer play.

For example, the Leading Actor is shown to be short-tempered and quick to take offense (p. 16), vain in his annoyance at being introduced to "a public that already knows me" (p. 17), and suspicious that the Leading Actress is improvising her role at his expense (pp. 26, 62-63).

These patterns of behavior are transferred to the Leading Actor's role in the inner play. As Rico Verri he violently accuses the other characters of making "fun of me behind my back" (p. 59), refers to himself as "the only man in his room with honorable intentions" (p. 61), and is obsessed with the fear that Mommina—played by the Leading Actress—is betraying him (p. 84). In contrast, the Leading Actress reveals herself to be withdrawn, insecure and lacking in self-confidence. As Mommina, she confesses that Verri's behavior makes her "life in a continual state of trepidation" (p. 45).

The Character Actor and Character Actress each also perform similar roles in the outer and inner plays. The actress bullies and abuses the actor, and this pattern of conduct is repeated in their roles as Mommina's parents. Thus Pirandello points out the connection between actors as people and actors as performers. He uses actors' performing conventions to help him show the relationship between life and the theatre.

Actors' performing conventions also form the main link between the outer and inner play of Tonight We Improvise. The actors of the outer play slip in and out of their roles, and scenes of the inner play are interspersed with arguments among the actors, and between them and the director Dr. Hinkfuss. For example, a dramatic scene in which Verri upbraids Mommina's family for having humiliated him is suddenly interrupted by the Leading Actor, who chides the other actors for their responses to him in the role of Verri (pp. 62-63).

In another instance, Pirandello uses performing conventions to create a startling transition from outer to inner play. The actresses playing Mommina's mother and sister prepare the Leading Actress for her final scene with Verri. They make up the actress to show the ravages to Mommina's beauty caused by her marriage to Verri, and they costume the actress to emphasize her physical debilitation. As they transform the Leading Actress into the downtrodden Mommina, the actresses slip into their own roles as her mother and sisters (pp. 78-80).

Besides employing them for transitions, Pirandello also uses performing conventions as the framework of an inner-play scene. The death of Mommina's father Sampognetta is constructed as an actor's illustration of how this type of scene should be played. Angered at the limitations imposed by the director, the old Character Actor demonstrates how, if allowed, he would play the scene. Then, alternately explaining his technique and performing the role, the old actor creates a death scene that moves the other actors to tears (pp. 69-70).

In Tonight We Improvise, Pirandello makes the point that theatre performance relies mostly on gifted actors and inspired acting. Mommina's death scene is written to dramatize both the performance of an inspired actress in the outer play, and the valiant but futile efforts of Mommina to resuscitate her gift as an opera singer. The scene ends in a graphic fusion of actor and role. The strain of performing causes Mommina's heart to give out, while simultaneously the strain of performing causes the actress to faint (p. 97). At the end of the play Pirandello calls for actors who can bring a playscript to life on stage

while, at the same time, preserving the distinctions between life and the theatre.

Each in His Own Way contains a play-within-a-play which is more formally structured than the other plays of Pirandello's theatre trilogy. The inner play spreads over the two formal acts of Each in His Own Way, while the outer play takes place only during the Interludes which follow each Act. Thus it would appear that the outer play grows out of the inner play, instead of the reverse which is more usual. However, the inner play does grow out of the outer play, because the plot of the inner play imitates events that have taken place in the outer play. Aside from their thematic link, the two plays are also related by the conventions of performing.

The relationship based on performing conventions operates when the protagonist is an actor who performs similar roles in both the outer and inner plays. Delia Moreno and the Baron Nuti, whose notorious affair is the subject of the inner play, are the protagonists of the outer play. And even though they are not the actors who perform the inner play, Delia Moreno and Baron Nuti see themselves as the protagonists of the inner play present on the stage of the theatre. Moreno describes how terrible it was to "see myself there on the stage acting that way," and Nuti protests at having been shown "there on the stage in public" (p. 328).

Though not the actors who perform the inner play, Moreno and Nuti become the actors who perform in the outer play. During the first Interlude, their presence in the theatre is noted by the comment that Moreno

and Nuti are "the actors in the real drama" (p. 299). When they confront each other in the theatre lobby, which is the locale of the Interludes, Moreno and Nuti perform a segment of their "real drama." Thus they become actors as well as protagonists in the outer play. And as actors, Moreno and Nuti involuntarily imitate the actors of the inner play by performing what the audience in the lobby recognizes as "the same scene" they have just seen on stage (p. 329).

In his three theatre plays, Pirandello uses the play-within-a-play to demonstrate the relationship between theatrical performance in life and on stage. He shows that a close alliance between the two sets of conventions are beneficial to drama presented in the theatre, but he also shows how the distinctions between life and the theatre must be preserved.

Michel de Ghelderode twice used the play-within-a-play device. For his theatricalist interpretation of the Faust legend, The Death of Doctor Faust, Ghelderode creates three actor-protagonist characters who perform similar roles in the inner and outer plays. And in his one-act play Three Actors and Their Drama, Ghelderode has his actor-protagonists use the inner play to solve a dilemma in the outer play.

The Death of Doctor Faust contains two varieties of protagonists. One group consists of the legendary characters: Faust, Marguerite, and the Devil; while the other group is made up of the actors who play these characters in a performance of the classic at a tavern theatre. In their first performance on the stage of the theatre the three actors perform as the protagonists only of the inner play, but the role of

protagonist in the outer play is forced onto them mainly because of actions taken by the legendary protagonists.

The actor who plays the devil is the first who involuntarily becomes a protagonist in the outer as well as the inner play. Diamotoruscant—the devil in Ghelderode's version—hypnotizes the actor into believing that he actually is the devil. This earns the actor ridicule and abuse from the tavern customers. He is the first of the three actors in Ghelderode's play who confuse their identity with their role and gravely suffer for it.

Ghelderode establishes a pattern in the relationship between the actor-protagonists from the inner play and the legendary protagonist of the outer play. Faust, Marguerite and Diamotoruscant perform as dictated by the legend, and their actions lead to each actor's becoming confused with the role he performed in the tavern theatre. Marguerite's suicide sends an angry mob in pursuit of her seducer. The Actor Faust, still in costume, is mistaken for Faust and forced to flee. They meet where they have both sought refuge from the mob. To escape guilt for Marguerite's suicide, Faust seeks to exchange identities with the Actor Faust. Faust's manipulations eventually drive the actor to so identify himself with the role of Faust that he accepts punishment of death at the hands of the mob (p. 146). Faust's manipulation of identities also destroys the actress who played Marguerite. Trying to resurrect Marguerite in the actress, Faust succeeds only in driving the actress

mad. Thus each actor-protagonist is forced to identify with his role and suffers a fate similar to that of the character he portrays.

In Three Actors and Their Drama, Ghelderode also uses performing conventions as a dramatic element. However, in this one-act play the actors who identify themselves with their role find that it brings them to a satisfactory resolution.

"Their drama" begins with the Ingenue and Juvenile Lead in love but neither can betray the husband, the Heavy Lead of the acting troupe. Engaged to perform a play whose plot parallels their situation, the young lovers decide to follow the plot of the inner play and kill themselves.

As the three actors perform the inner play they gradually superimpose their own identities onto the roles. The suicides, including an unexpected one by the husband, are, however, only stage deaths from which actors quickly recover. The husband finally resolves the triangle: he will retire and allow the lovers to tour together. Having played the cuckolded husband for so long on stage, he now accepts the role in life.

Ghelderode states that this play is about

> the double identity of the actor, who plays a part on the stage and plays a part in life, and, who, finishing up by confusing his two identities, will conduct himself on stage as in life.[1]

Jean Giraudoux's Paris Impromptu is not a play-within-a-play but rather a performance-within-a-play, and as such merits inclusion in this chapter. The actor-protgonists of Giradoux's play are the members

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[1]Michael de Ghelderode, excerpts from "The Ostend Interviews," in Ghelderode, Seven Plays, Vol. 1 (New York: Hill and Wang, 1960), p. 127.

of Louis Jouvet's troupe performing as themselves on the stage of the Athenee theatre in Paris.

In this play Giraudoux shows actors practicing their craft and exhibiting their performing techniques. The actors warm up for a rehearsal by reciting dialogue from Molière's Rehearsal at Versailles, in an obvious tribute to the model for this play. The actors engage in a spoof of "natural" acting styles, and Jouvet parodies a martinet-director along the lines of Max Reinhardt.

Like its model, Paris Impromptu is a performance play, and Giraudoux directs the actors' performance toward goals similar to Molière's in Rehearsal at Versailles. Their performance shows off the talent of the acting troupe with which the playwright is affiliated. As part of their performance, the actors defend the author's playwriting style and reply to his critics. Lastly, the actors' performance is aimed at securing the highest official patronage, for the play ends with Jouvet's plea to the French Government for the kind of support that Louis XIV gave to Molière.

The Dramatist as a Character in His Play

What is a living playwright's role in the theatrical performance of his play? He is initially responsible for the stage-worthiness of his play: whether it can be transformed into theatre and performed by actors. He is obliged to lend his skills in any way necessary to the rehearsal of his play. The playwright or his representative is required to protect the script from unauthorized changes or from unwarranted censorship.

Certain avant-garde playwrights viewed the dramatist's role in the production of his play as a performance convention, and as such incorporated it into their plays. In the examples that follow, playwrights either perform in their play as the absentee dramatist of the inner play, or represent themselves in the outer play as a playwright-character. The playwright's presence in his play, whether unseen or in appearance by proxy, lends an added element of theatricalism to the play-within-a-play.

Luigi Pirandello makes himself an absentee or unseen playwright-character in each of his three theatre plays. In Six Characters in Search of an Author he is referred to as the author of the play that the acting troupe is rehearsing when the Six Characters arrive at the theatre. The actors complain that they do not understand and therefore cannot perform Pirandello's play (pp. 2007-2008). "We can be your new play," one of the Six Characters suggests (p. 2009). Thus Pirandello makes himself an agent in the dramatic action of Six Characters in Search of an Author.

In Tonight We Improvise, Pirandello is the playwright who has been banished from the theatre so that the director Hinkfuss can use the playscript merely as the basis for an improvised performance (pp. 11-12). However, when the performance erupts into chaos, the actors demand Pirandello's reinstatement as the playwright who must supply them with "speeches written, word for word" (p. 74).

As an absentee playwright-character, Pirandello gives himself a dramatic relationship to the actor-characters in both of the above

plays. The bad actors of the first play can't perform him, while the good actors of the second can't perform without him.

Pirandello makes himself the playwright of the inner play being performed in Each in His Own Way. In this role, Pirandello becomes the subject of a heated discussion by the audience-characters of the First Choral Interlude. Although Pirandello himself or an actor portraying him never appears, the playwright's spirit (and presence) are invoked. A member of the onstage audience asks if Pirandello is in the theatre, and is told by another that "he may be" (p. 301).

In the Second Choral Interlude, Pirandello makes his unseen presence in Each in His own Way a bit more tantalizing, when Spectators in the lobby scene spread rumors that the playwright's face has been slapped either by Delia Moreno or by the actress who portrays her in the inner play. Thus the playwright has succeeded in making himself the subject of a dramatic scene in the First Choral Interlude, and the participant in an offstage dramatic scene which is reported in the Second Choral Interlude.

By remaining off stage in each of his three "theatre-in-the-theatre" plays, Pirandello avoids the necessity of being portrayed by an actor. He manages to make himself, rather than a fictional version of himself, a character in his plays. This gives the playwright a presence which, though not tangible, is nonetheless real. Through it, he epitomizes the playwright's peripheral role in rehearsal and performance.

In the following three examples a playwright makes himself a character in his play by proxy. The examples are taken from Vitrac's The

Mysteries of Love, Bulgakov's The Crimson Island and A Cabal of Hypocrites.

Vitrac's The Mysteries of Love does not clearly distinguish between an outer and inner play. It is nonetheless a play-within-a-play because it locates itself as a play being performed in a theatre; one of the characters appears in the role of the author of either the outer or inner play; and the protagonists, Patrick and Leah, behave as theatrical performers in their interaction with the audience.

The character designated as The Author appears as Vitrac's proxy in The Mysteries of Love. The other characters in the play accept him in this role, and ask for his help when their drama reaches a stalemate. "How do you want all this to end?" Patrick asks The Author. After first hedging in his reply, The Author lamely tells Patrick that "in this particular case, I would behave as you do" (p. 251). Through his proxy, Vitrac reveals that the playwright does not always know which path his play's action should follow, and that sometimes he must wait for his dramatic characters to show him the way.

In an encounter at the end of the play, The Author and Patrick blame each other for the play's outcome. The Author claims that Patrick's "words make everything impossible," and Patrick reminds The Author that he put those words "into my mouth." Vitrac uses their argument to point out the difficulties imposed on the playwright by his need to use words: especially volatile words which easily turn into "gunshots or dizzy spells" (p. 265).

Through the character of The Author, Vitrac theatricalizes the symbiotic relationship between a playwright and his dramatic characters, and also expresses his ideas on the art of playwriting.

Dymogatsky, the playwright-character in The Crimson Island, serves as the author's proxy. Bulgakov fashions Dymogatsky's fate at the hands of censors to closely parallel his own experiences. The director-character demands that Dymogatsky remove the love scene from his play because it reminds him of Zoya's Apartment (p. 314). The reference is pertinent because this Bulgakov play had been accused by some critics of being pornographic.[1] Later in The Crimson Island, the inner play is banned by the censor-character and then passed by him after Dymogatsky reluctantly makes the requested changes. Zoya Apartment also had been temporarily banned until Bulgakov agreed to make revisions.[2] However, even with changes that suit him, the censor bans Dymogatsky's play from all Russian cities except Moscow. An editor's footnote points out that similar restrictions were imposed on Bulgakov's The Days of the Turbins (p. 345). Through Dymogatsky, Bulgakov recalls and reenacts his own experiences at the hands of the censors.

A Cabal of Hypocrites is Bulgakov's mostly fictional play about the effects of censorship on the playwright Molière. Bulgakov does not picture Molière as the recognized genius he was to become, but

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[1]Ellendea Proffer, "Introduction to Zoya's Apartment," in The Early Plays of Mikhail Bulgakov (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1972), p. 97.

[2]Ibid.

chooses rather to portray Molière as a working playwright like himself—faced with a similar censorship. His Molière stands in for Bulgakov.

The play-within-a-play in A Cabal of Hypocrites is Bulgakov's original version of Molière's The Imaginary Invalid. Bulgakov shares the authorship of the inner play of A Cabal of Hypocrites with his playwright-character Molière, and thereby establishes a concrete identification with the play's potagonist. Moreover, Bulgakov's identification with Molière's classic is aimed at dramatizing the kinship of two playwrights who lost the struggle against censorship.

The Audience as Spectator and Performer

Every playwright wonders to some degree about the probable response of a theatre audience to the play he is writing. The dramatist knows that a large measure of his play's success lies in the hands of audiences as well as actors; and whereas he exercises some control over the actors' performance—through character delineation and influence at rehearsals—he usually has very little control over the performance of the audience. Some inter-war avant-garde playwrights, however, sought token control over the audience by making them characters or performers in plays. In the examples which follow, members of the real audience are: portrayed onstage, portrayed in the auditorium, and asked to perform in the play.

The audience in Brecht's The Elephant Calf is made up of the soldiers who witnessed Galy Gay's incrimination in A Man's A Man. In The Elephant Calf, Brecht turns the soldier-spectators into the theatre audience, which witnesses the fictional enactment of Galy's incrimination.

The actors in The Elephant Calf are also soldiers from A Man's A Man: Uriah, Polly, Jesse, and Galy Gay in his new identity as Jip the soldier. As soldiers, the actors and audience of The Elephant Calf have been trained to perform similarly and together so that this habitual co-performing influences the way the soldier-audience behaves. The soldier-audience sees its role in the theatrical venture as that of an active co-performer, rather than passive spectator.

Brecht visually enforces the concept of audience and actors as co-performers in The Elephant Calf. The opening stage directions call for the theatre on stage to be seen from the side so that the audience in the auditorium will simultaneously see the performance of the actor and audience characters (p. 206).

The audience and actor characters perform together when they exchange remarks about the progress of the inner play during both its scenes and intermissions. The actor characters enlist the audience characters as fellow performers by having them join the actors in singing "Rule Britannia" (p. 214). The audience characters make themselves performers when they sing "Wipe your jackboots, Johnny," during an intermission (p. 211).

As an audience, the soldiers in The Elephant Calf are shown to be having fun. They have been allowed to smoke and drink during the play's performance (p. 206), and they have been spontaneous and outspoken in their comments on the inner-play's plot. These audience characters are performing the way Brecht wants real audiences to perform. Brecht wants audiences, as well as actors and playwrights, to have fun while

performing their respective roles in the theatre process.[1] In The Elephant Calf Brecht satirically dramatizes the relaxed, informal theatre environment in which he believes audiences will exercise the proper critical judgment of a play.

Brecht saw a model for the theatre in the relationship between performer and spectator at sporting events. He thought that theatre audiences should respond to an actor's performance in the same spirit that it judged a sporting event.[2] Brecht has incorporated this concept into the performance of the soldier-audience in The Elephant Calf. In his opening address to the on-stage audience, Polly encourages them to place bets on the outcome of the plot, and announces that "the act curtain will fall each time the audience bets" (p. 206).

Brecht ends the play with a sporting event in which an actor and a member of the audience participate as co-performers. Galy Gay offers to box the most outspoken critic of the play from the soldier-audience, and all go off to the boxing match.

The audience characters in The Elephant Calf execute Brecht's proposals for audience behavior, which he believed would be beneficial to both actor and spectator. A few years before writing this play, Brecht had unsuccessfully tried to institute similar reforms in the theatre.[3]

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[1]John Willett, Brecht on Theatre (New York: Hill and Wang, 1964), pp. 6-8.

[2]John Willett, The Theatre of Bertolt Brecht (New York: New Directions Books, 1968), p. 144.

[3]Ibid., p. 145.

Pirandello treats both fictional and real audiences as performers in his theatre plays. The on-stage audience in Each in His Own Way and the auditorium audience in Tonight We Improvise are made to behave the way Pirandello expects audiences to behave when watching his plays.

The on-stage audience characters in Each in His Own Way perform as actors as well as spectators during the Choral Interludes which alternate with the Acts of the inner play. In the stage directions that introduce the First Choral Interlude, Pirandello refers to the audience characters as "actors for the moment" (p. 292).

In their Introduction to Each in His Own Way, Dukore and Gerould describe Pirandello's treatment of the audience in this play. The on-stage audience portrays the actual audience as being "conditioned and almost programmed in their automatic responses" to Pirandello's plays. Dukore and Gerould suggest that if "when the actual audience goes to the actual lobby during the real intermission, they repeat and imitate the lines Pirandello gave his audience of actors," then Pirandello will have made the real audience into actors in a theatre-performance of Each in His Own Way.[1]

Tonight We Improvise offers several examples of Pirandello seeking to make an actual audience perform as part of his play. The approach here is more direct than in the previous play discussed. In the first instance, Pirandello uses an established theatrical convention to turn the members of the actual audience seated in the auditorium into

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[1]Bernard F. Dukore and Daniel C. Gerould, eds., Avant-Garde Drama (New York: Bantam Books, 1969), p. 260.

performers as well as spectators. The opening stage directions of Tonight We Improvise call for the house-lights in the theatre to go out while the stage footlights come on, and then they call for the audience to be kept in the dark waiting for the front curtain to part or rise. This, the stage directions state, is designed to make the audience "rustle about in their seats" (p. 7). The failure of the curtain to open is part of the play's dramatic action, and Pirandello seeks to incorporate the spontaneous reactions of an actual audience into this segment of the dramatic action.

In another instance, Pirandello tries to make the actual audience perform on a cue given by a character of the play on stage. Dr. Hinkfuss asks the audience to signify their agreement with him by applauding. Pirandello's stage directions at this point stipulate that the applause is to be started by actors planted in the auditorium, but orders the actors to "stop at once if the real audience does not contagiously follow their example" (p. 21).

The actors planted in the auditorium play parts as members of the real audience. They bear such appellations as "A Very Old Gentleman From A Box" and "A Young Spectator In The Orchestra." From their places in the auditorium, they perform roles in both the outer and inner plays of Tonight We Improvise. In the outer play the audience characters act as foils for Dr. Hinkfuss's tirade on Pirandello (pp. 8-15), and in the inner play they assume roles as outraged members of the audience in the theatre to which Signora Ignazia noisily brings her family and friends (pp. 35-37).

Pirandello's most daring manipulation of the real audience takes place during the Interlude of Tonight We Improvise. Here the playwright contrives to make members of the audience leave their seats in the auditorium and perform as audience to the scenes of the Interlude staged in the actual lobby of the theatre. The scenes are performed simultaneously in different parts of the lobby, and audience members are free to watch a particular scene or to circulate among the four groups of actors. The actors in the lobby remain in their roles from the inner play and the scenes continue the inner-play scenario. Thus, the members of the real audience who mingle with the characters and actions of the inner play are involuntarily performing as spectator characters in the inner play.

Of Pirandello's three theatre plays, Tonight We Improvise lays the greatest emphasis on theatrical performance. The play explores the variety of theatrical performance that can emanate from both the actor and the audience. Elizabeth Burns has aptly characterized Tonight We Improvise as "a performance within a performance instead of just a play within a play."[1]

The audience in Vitrac's The Mysteries of Love is given a role to perform in the play that is similar to the role assigned to the author character. Like the proxy author, the proxy audience is inveigled by Patrick and Leah into becoming involved in their plight. But while the author appears as a nameless character on-stage, the audience is

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[1]Elizabeth Burns, Theatricality (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), p. 47.

represented by unidentified voices emanating from the auditorium of the theatre.

Patrick seeks to get the audience involved by: sitting and staring at them (p. 231); throwing a basket of toy dogs at them (p. 232); and "taking the audience into his confidence" by revelling in Leah's love (p. 233). For her part, Leah confesses her love for Patrick to the audience.

These declarations of love invoke the concern of the voices coming from the audience, and mysterious gunshots follow which suggest suicide or murder (pp. 233-234). Like the Author, the ubiquitous Voices in the audience unwillingly become a party to Patrick's and Leah's problem. Thus the audience, represented by these voices, is characterized as both spectator and performer in The Mysteries of Love.

When the Author confesses his inability to find an ending to the play, his only alternative is to hand Patrick and Leah each a loaded gun. Having had all that she can endure of Patrick's empty rhetoric, Leah fires a shot from her gun. At whom? Patrick? At any rate the bullet purportedly strikes and kills a spectator in the audience. The action which ends the play involves the bizarre semi-participation of a member of the audience.

Vitrac's The Mysteries of Love, which was initially directed by his partner in the Théâtre Alfred Jarry, Antonin Artaud, reflects Artaud's theatrical theories. As a result, the play contains a "highly innovative mingling of audience and performance," in which "the audience

is consistently invited in every way short of actual participation to enter into the play itself."[1]

The examples in this chapter show how the play-within-a-play was used by inter-war avant-garde playwrights and how the dramaturgical device proved useful to them—how it aided in the achievement of specific dramatic goals. The playwrights who used this device developed and refined its theatricalist qualities, particularly involving the role of the actor, the dramatist, and the audience. Avant-garde playwrights expanded the theatricalist nature of the play-within-a-play by demonstrating how theatrical-performance conventions could be used to relate or unify the outer and inner plays. These playwrights also showed how the play-within-a-play lent itself to criticism of their contemporary theatre practices and practitioners.

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[1]Michael Benedikt and George E. Wellwarth, eds., Modern French Theatre (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1966), Introduction, p. xxx.

CHAPTER III

THE SELF-DRAMATIZING CHARACTER

A self-dramatizing character is one who uses the performance conventions of an actor to try to formulate a satisfactory role for himself in the play. This character is not portrayed as an actor engaged in theatre production, but rather as a character whose actions in the play simulate or strongly resemble those of an actor creating and performing a role. The effectiveness of this theatricalist device depends on the success or failure of the character's efforts.

Avant-garde playwrights between the wars endowed this character with the ability to construct his identity, and showed him rehearsing and performing roles apparently of his own devising. Playwrights allowed the self-dramatizing character to invent scenarios in which he performed or forced other characters to perform, in order to achieve his goals. Above all, the self-dramatizing character seeks an actable role in the play. Lionel Abel called attention to this type of dramaturgical device when he referred to a character in a play who will "collaborate in his dramatization,"[1] and to characters who "participate in their own dramatization."[2] Abel seemed also to be speaking of this form of theatricalism

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[1]Lionel Abel, Metatheatre (New York: Hill and Wang, 1963), p. 58.

[2]Ibid., p. 78.

when he described a character who acts "like a playwright, employing a playwright's consciousness of drama," and another who treats fellow characters "as if they were actors in a play."[1]

The self-dramatizing character is distinguished by his unique dramatic action, which can be defined as seeking his authentic role in the play or formulating a role he finds suitable and endurable. To illustrate the self-dramatizing character I have selected the following examples: the devil in Ghelderode's The Death of Doctor Faust, Galy Gay and Bloody Five in Brecht's A Man's A Man, the nameless protagonist in Pirandello's Henry IV, Don Perlimplin in Lorca's The Love of Don Perlimplin and Belissa in the Garden, the Shadow in Shvarts's The Shadow, Shen Te in Brecht's The Good Woman of Setzuan, and Him in E. E. Cummings's Him.

Diamotoruscant, the devil in The Death of Doctor Faust, tries to create an authentic and suitable role for himself in Ghelderode's version of the Faust legend. His attempts conflict with Diamotoruscant's performance of the devil's traditional role in the enactment of the legend. Ghelderode's devil strives to shed a role which over the centuries has come to be regarded merely as a stereotype, and to create in its place a role that will restore mankind's belief in the authenticity of the devil.

Mankind's loss of belief in the existence of the devil is demonstrated during Diamotoruscant's first encounter with the patrons of

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[1]Ibid., pp. 46-47.

the tavern. The skeptical patrons refuse to believe his claim that he is the devil even after an awesome display of his supernatural powers. The patrons merely regard it as a show put on by an illusionist or an actor (pp. 106-109). Diamotoruscant finds it difficult to dispel the public's image of the devil as a theatrical performer after his countless representations in plays, operas, and films.

Diamotoruscant's required role in Ghelderode's version of the Faust legend is two-fold. First he functions as a stage director for the other characters of the legend. He carefully places Marguerite where she will be seen by Faust (p. 111), and he coaches Faust on how to approach Marguerite (p. 114). In this function, Diamotoruscant also must guide the play's action toward the conclusion prescribed by the legend. His other role is to perform as the devil in Ghelderode's version of Faust. Diamotoruscant's duties as monitor of the legend come into sharp conflict with his desire to reshape the devil's role in the legendary play.

The role Diamotoruscant wants to perform is closer to the way human beings behave than to the conventional hell-fire and brimstone cliche. "I am only a very little different from humans," he explains to Faust (p. 113). To the movie theatre Barker he confides his desire to be a devil who is as weak, foolish and sentimental as a human being. He confesses to feelings of tenderness, to a preference for illusion over reality, and to ludicrous behavior (p. 125).

The Barker accepts Diamotoruscant in his new role. Diamotoruscant views the Barker's acceptance of him as the devil, and not merely an

actor playing him, as a confirmation of this new role. The Barker becomes the audience for whom Diamotoruscant performs, not as an actor, but as an authentic devil. However, this role and the Barker's appreciation of it are short-lived.

Influenced by the humanity of his new role, Diamotoruscant moves to save Faust from the fate prescribed in the legend. The devil refuses to lure Faust into the pact which would doom the old man. In effect, Diamotoruscant is rewriting the Faust legend. However, when an angry mob accuses Faust of seducing Marguerite, Diamotoruscant, out of pity, moves to save Faust from the disgrace of prison. The devil convinces the mob that Faust and he are actors, and that the seduction has been only a theatrical performance. This tactic saves Faust, but at a tremendous cost to Diamotoruscant. He has to deny his role as authentic devil in the presence of the Barker (pp. 129-131).

As a self-dramatizing character, the devil in Ghelderode's The Death of Doctor Faust unsuccessfully tries to reconstruct the popular version of his role. Acting as supervisor of the performance of the Faust legend, Diamotoruscant moved Faust and Marguerite about the stage as if they were actors. In his attempt to save Faust by revising the legend, Diamotoruscant temporarily took on the role of the play's author. Through the character of the devil, Ghelderode dramatizes the difficulty of shedding the stereotypes of stages and cinema that sometimes cling to great fables.

Galy Gay in Brecht's A Man's A Man is a dramatic character who is ready to assume a new role. First he temporarily takes on the

identity of Jeraiah Jip and answers for the soldier at muster. When the Widow Begbick asks him if he is Galy Gay, "the man who carried my cucumber basket," Galy denies that identity in favor of the more attractive role as soldier (p. 88). Still in the role of Jip, Galy denies being Galy Gay, even to his wife who has come looking for him (p. 101). However content he is to play the role of Jip, he is not yet ready to assume it permanently.

The three soldiers, Uriah, Polly and Jesse, want Galy to permanently fill in for their missing comrade Jip. They devise a scheme that will make Galy surrender his identity as Galy Gay and willingly assume the role of Jip. Their play is to make it impossible for Galy to continue in that role, thus leaving him no other role to play but that of Jip. They ensnare him in a trumped-up crime and then stage a mock trial in which to terrify the unsuspecting Galy into submission. They succeed in getting him to deny his identity as Galy, particularly when he believes he is being sentenced to death, but they fail to get his firm acceptance of the role of Jip (p. 122).

When Galy awakes after fainting at the mock execution, he is confronted by a coffin which, he is told, contains the body of the executed criminal Galy Gay. Uncertain about who actually lies in the coffin, Galy, nonetheless, recognizes the need to find another identity, and now makes an effort to learn to perform as Jip. He asks Polly to confirm him in the role and to help him rehearse for it. "Now you're walking like a soldier," Polly assures him. "Then say: 'Walk around, Jip,'" Galy asks of Polly (pp. 132-133). As he prepares to go off to war,

Galy strives to be convincing in his new role by promising to show the other soldiers "what Jeraiah Jip of Tipperary is made of!" (p. 133).

On the train to the battlefront, Galy once again balks at giving up his identity, until Bloody Five's self-emasculation convinces Galy that it's just being pigheaded for a man to "make such a fuss about his name!" (p. 140). Then, after exploring all its benefits and advantages, Galy decides that the role of Jip is preferable to his identity as Galy Gay.

Galy does not merely choose between two roles; he formulates a new role out of his old role as Galy and his adopted role as Jip. As a soldier, Galy becomes a terrifyingly efficient one. Single-handed he shoots down an enemy fortress and earns the title of "human fighting machine" (p. 147). The role he has fashioned out of the old Galy and the soldier Jip bears little resemblence to either. He has created a completely new character.

When the original Jip arrives at the battlefield, Galy forces him to accept his discarded identity. Galy assigns a new role in the play to Jip. As a self-dramatizing character, Galy creates two new roles in A Man's A Man: his own and the one of Jip the porter.

Galy Gay's self-dramatizing character represents Brecht's skeptical opinion of his fellow-man's capacity for change and self-improvement. The old Galy was no bargain to begin with: weak, craven, ready for a little larceny. The character that Galy has created—the human fighting machine—is frighteningly efficient and hungry for power. "I've tasted blood," Galy-Jip exclaims (p. 146). "He'll have our heads yet," is Polly's prediction at the close of the play.

Bloody Five is also a self-dramatizing character in Brecht's A Man's A Man, but unlike Galy Gay who creates his role at the end of the play, Bloody Five comes to the play in the role he has created and there takes drastic steps to insure against losing it.

As Sergeant Charles Fairchild of the British Army, he acquired the title of Bloody Five by cold-bloodedly killing five prisoners of war in a previous campaign. Since then Bloody Five has perpetuated and nourished his fearsome image through the brutal punishment he metes out to soldiers under his command. Bloody Five is the only role that Sergeant Fairchild ever wants to play.

Unhappily, however, Sergeant Fairchild has another role which he despises but cannot prevent himself from performing. When it starts raining he "succumbs to terrible attacks of sensuality," and Bloody Five, "the most dangerous man in the Indian Army," is transformed into the Bloody Gent. As the Bloody Gent he "concentrates on girls for three days on end," and this renders him "as un-dangerous as a milk-tooth" (p. 86). He exchanges his uniform for civilian clothes during these periods of compulsive womanizing, and this earns him the open ridicule of the soldiers he terrorizes when he is Bloody Five.

On the train to the battlefront, Bloody Five awakens from his last binge. Bewailing the loss of a name that was "a byword," and one which could be "found three times over through all the pages of history," Bloody Five decides to take steps to guarantee against being forced to perform any role except that of Bloody Five (pp. 138-139). He shoots away his testicles to eliminate the sexual urge that periodically sabotages his desired role.

The manner in which Bloody Five created his role and the outrageous way that he maintains it constitute Brecht's satirical reflections on the way people create and perpetuate their roles in society. Bloody Five built his reputation upon the massacre of war prisoners. Brecht suggests that famous and powerful people have often acquired wealth and prestige through unscrupulous and even criminal means. And the self-emasculation that Bloody Five performs to protect this role from his own natural impulses is a grotesque parody of the philanthropy and other actions undertaken by the famous and powerful in society to maintain their status.

The nameless protagonist creates for himself the role that he performs in Pirandello's Henry IV.[1] His identity as a character is one he has bestowed upon himself: that of the medieval German emperor Henry IV. Then, first in the grip of madness and later by conscious play-acting the protagonist clings to this role through most of the play.

Initially he had chosen this role for an historical masquerade devised by his friends. It suited him because it allowed him to play opposite Matilda, who rejected his love. Matilda had chosen the role of Matilda of Tuscany who was historically the "implacable enemy" of the medieval Henry IV. The young protagonist wished to dramatize his perception of himself as the object of Matilda's hostility (p. 392).

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[1]I have used Eric Bentley's translation which appears under the title of "The Emperor," in The Genius of the Italian Theatre (New York: The New American Library, 1964), pp. 378-438.

The protagonist had created his role as Henry IV by painstakingly using the techniques of an actor preparing for a theatrical performance. Matilda, now a countess, recalls that he had "been obsessed with it for over a month" (p. 395). During the historical pageant the protagonist was thrown from his horse and knocked unconscious. When he revived he apparently suffered from the delusion that he actually was the medieval emperor Henry IV. The accident had caused the role he had been performing to become fixed in his mind as his authentic role in life.

For the next twelve years, the protagonist believed himself to be emperor Henry IV living in his medieval palace. This delusion was supported by his family who furnished part of a villa to resemble Henry's living quarters, and hired actors to portray members of Henry's privy council while they attended to the protagonist's needs.

When his sanity suddenly returned, the protagonist realized that he could not return to a life that had left him behind. He bitterly accepted that he had no other role to play but the one he had been performing in madness for the past twelve years. So for the eight years following his mental recovery, he had remained in his stage-set environment, and, attended by the actors who still believed him mad he had continued to behave as though he were Henry IV. But he could now manipulate the scenario devised by others to contain him. By consciously creating the scenario in which he and the hired actors performed, the protagonist functioned as dramatist as well as actor.

The protagonist again functions as an actor and dramatist when he is visited in his villa by Countess Matilda and Baron Belcredi.

She, the woman he had loved twenty years earlier, and Belcredi, the man the protagonist believes had stolen her from him, still believe that the protagonist is deluded. He makes them dress as medieval characters before he will see them, and attributes roles to them that approximate the parts that he believes they played twenty years before. Matilda's role makes her the object of the protagonist's love, and Belcredi's is that of a treacherous adviser. Believing that they are humoring a madman they perform these roles in his presence. He has coerced these two characters into a scenario of his own devising.

Matilda and Belcredi have come to the villa with a plan to shock the protagonist out of his delusion. They arrange to confront him with living images of himself and Matilda as they looked twenty years ago. They hope to shock him into realizing that he is no longer a young man playing Henry IV, or, possibly, no longer the real Henry IV. The protagonist, however, becomes incensed and wants to recreate the scenario that took place twenty years earlier. This time his rivalry with Belcredi centers on Matilda's daughter Frida, who has been attired to resemble her mother as she looked twenty years ago. With renewed bitterness at the loss of Matilda and his youth, the protagonist enacts the winning and possession of Matilda using Frida to represent the object of his love. Frida is confused and terrified when she finds herself a participant in a scenario she doesn't understand.

Overwhelmed by the recollection of his love and loss of the young Matilda, the protagonist seeks refuge in the role which eight years earlier had sheltered him from bitter reality. Again pretending madness,

he clutches Frida in his arms. Although they know he is sane, everyone except Belcredi is momentarily convinced by his performance. The Baron tries to rescue the frightened girl; in so doing he re-enacts the role of spoiler in the eyes of the protagonist, whose anger at Belcredi is inflamed and expresses itself itself in his performance as a madman. Uncontrollably governed by his recreated role, the protagonist grabs a sword and fatally stabs Belcredi (p. 438).

Now the protagonist is left no choice but to continue to seek refuge in the role of madman. However this is a role he can no longer play with authenticity because he has told the actor-attendants he is sane.

Eric Bentley describes "Henry" as a man who has applied himself to the task of "constructing himself."[1] This, Bentley claims, was the purpose of the protagonist's role playing. As a self-dramatizing character, the protagonist could cope with life only in the role he invented.

Don Perlimplin, the hero of Lorca's playlet The Love of Don Perlimplin and Belisa in the Garden, is a self-dramatizing character who constructs a role in opposition to those roles imposed on him by others. His servant Marcolfo forces the old man into marrying the sensuous young Belisa, and Belisa promptly gives him the role of cuckold.

The old Don Perlimplin, however, suddenly finds himself consumed by love for his beautiful young wife. He therefore creates a role more suited to his youthful passions than the roles life has given him.

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[1]Eric Bentley, Theatre of War, abridged ed. (New York: The Viking Press, 1973), p. 42.

He invents a mysterious young lover for Belisa, whose fleeting appearances and ardent letters win her love.

Realizing that he cannot sustain the role indefinitely, and since it already has achieved its goal—that of winning Belisa's love, Don Perlimplin stages a scenario in which the young lover will die. He arranges for Belisa to meet the young man in the garden. While they wait, Don Perlimplin tells Belisa that he intends to kill the lover. Pretending to see him, Don Perlimplin runs out of the garden. Then, in the costume of the lover, Don Perlimplin re-enters mortally wounded. "Perlimplin killed me," he tells a stunned Belisa (p. 379).

As the youthful lover, Don Perlimplin had achieved his desired role. Dying, he tells Belisa of his physical desire for her, which he could never have hoped to gratify as old Don Perlimplin.

During the reconstruction of his role, Don Perlimplin also has succeeded in reconstructing Belisa's role. "It seems to me that I am another woman," she exclaims while waiting in the garden for her lover (p. 378). In his role as ardent young lover, Don Perlimplin has transformed Belisa from a vain girl capable only of self-love into a woman who has learned to love deeply.

The Shadow in Shvarts's The Shadow is a self-dramatizing character who literally materializes himself out of another character in the play. The Shadow tears himself away from the Scholar and proceeds to create an identity and construct a role for himself in the play. He takes the name Theodore-Christian, which is the reverse of the Scholar's name Christian-Theodore. Like the name, he creates a character that is the

opposite of the outward nature of the Scholar. Whereas the Scholar is good but naive, the Shadow is ambitious and seeks success through unscrupulous methods.

In his first appearance as a character in the play, the Shadow acknowledges that he "came into the world" just recently, and when asked who he is he writes his name in sand, underscoring his impermanence at this point in the play (p. 415). To solidify his identity and establish a role he allies himself with powerful people and offers to help them in their conspiracy against the Scholar. As he rises quickly in rank to an official in the government, he seeks to be known only in the role he has created for himself. He requests his fellow conspirators to "forget once and for all who I was and remember who I've become" (p. 424).

In his first confrontation with the Scholar since becoming a separate character, the Shadow discovers that he still retains the habits of his former identity as the Scholar's shadow. His limbs ache to repeat the Scholar's every movement (p. 429). To overcome this bar to his becoming an independent character, the Shadow schemes to force the Scholar to submit to his authority. Then the Shadow tries to make the Scholar serve as his shadow. By having a shadow of his own, the Shadow hopes to create his substantiality as a character.

The Shadow also tries to establish credibility as a character by replacing the Scholar in the affections of the Princess. Unable to inspire her love, the Shadow evokes the emotions which lurk in the darker side of her nature (p. 432). He has decided to solidify his

identity by exploiting the weakness in others. He builds a character which takes its parts from others. "I talk to every man in his own language," he informs his fellow conspirators (p. 425).

His attempts to construct an independent character end in failure. The Scholar forces the Shadow back into his old role. When the Scholar commands him to "know your place," the Shadow responds by imitating the Scholar's movements (p. 449). Thoroughly discredited in his assumed role, the Shadow is forced to run for his life. Somewhere on the road he will join up again with the Scholar, who now will keep his shadow under control.

There are other self-dramatizing characters in The Shadow: characters who try to reconstruct their roles in order to function successfully in society. Pietro, the innkeeper, wants to be seen as a violent man so as not to reveal his softer nature. He recognizes the advantage of a frightening image in a dangerous world. Julia Juli, the famous singer, exchanges her role as a "virtuous, sentimental, middle-class girl" for one of shallow sophistication, so as to be identified as a member of the social elite (p. 429). Caesar Borgia, the journalist, portrays himself as the epitome of "frankness," in order to mask the deceitfulness in his character. The Doctor affects a role of disinterested cynicism to escape his desperate fear of life.

It is the Shadow, however, who is the most vivid self-dramatizing character in Shvarts's play. The Shadow attempts to construct an autonomous character out of experiences gained in his old role as the Scholar's shadow. "I've learned about life a thousand times better than he,"

the Shadow brags (p. 446). Manipulation of human weakness is the Shadow's key to self-realization and power. He knows the Scholar "as nobody else does," whereas the Scholar's naivete renders him vulnerable (p. 415).

The Shadow is let loose because the Scholar does not know the evil inherent in his darker side. Shvarts portrays this side of one's nature as a shadow always ready to spring into life as a dangerous adversary.

Shen Te in Brecht's The Good Woman of Setzuan is a self-dramatizing character who creates an alternate role in order to make her first role endurable. She creates and performs the role of Shui Ta because, as Albert Bermel explains, "it incarnates everything Shen Te would like to be, would have to be to get on in the world."[1] Her first role has been assigned to her by society as represented by the three visiting gods (p. 14). Shen Te is forced to perform as the good woman of Setzuan both by divine injunction and because of the weakness in her own nature.

By inventing Shui Ta, Shen Te performs a dramatist's function; she creates a new character in the play. Shen Te then performs this role using the techniques and conventions of an actor: vocal and physical impersonation, and costume. The other characters in the play (except for Mrs. Shin) accept this new character. They do not perceive Shui Ta merely as Shen Te in disguise. Shen Te's intention of creating an alternate role is realized. By their acceptance of Shui Ta the other characters confirm Shen Te in her created role.

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[1]Albert Bermel, Contradictory Characters (New York: E. P.Dutton & Co., 1973), p. 123.

Shen Te has created the character of Shui Ta to protect herself from exploitation by others. When she performs the role of Shui Ta, Shen Te is able to be strong, even unscrupulous in her own defense. Occasionally, however, Shen Te's impetuous nature threatens Shui Ta's credibility. When Yang Sun, the pilot whom Shen Te loves, comes to her tobacco shop, she forgets that she is in her role as Shui Ta and runs to the mirror to primp before greeting him (p. 51). Shen Te even undercuts Shui Ta's role as her protector. She goes to Yang Sun although Sun has just told Shui Ta of his intention to exploit her. When others summon Shui Ta so that he may prevent Shen Te from leaving with Sun, Shen Te refuses to produce her defender, declaring Shui Ta's opposition "wrong" (p. 59).

Shen Te constructs her character in the play to include the role of Shui Ta. In the role of Shui Ta, Shen Te manages to reconstruct the character of Yang Sun, by employing him as a factory overseer. As Sun's mother testifies:

> The strong and wise Mr. Shui Ta has transformed my son from a dissipated good-for-nothing into a model citizen. (p. 76)

In formulating his parable about the roles we are forced to play in society, Brecht draws upon conventions of theatrical performance particularly as they are manifested in the device of the self-dramatizing character.

Like Shen Te, the protagonist of E. E. Cummings's Him invents another role to play in order to make his present one endurable. However, unlike Shen Te, Him plays both roles simultaneously. Him refers to

his other self as the man in the mirror or Mr. O'Him. This role has been created to substitute for Him in tasks at which he expects to fail. As a playwright, Him makes Mr. O'Him the author of his play, so that the stigma and pain of certain failure will be felt by his invented character rather than him. In his relations with his mistress, Me, the play's protagonist depends on his invented role to perform for him.

The character Me is given a role to play in the scenario that Him weaves around her. He calls her the "mistress of the extraordinary Mr. O'Him" (p. 357). After she can bear no more of the hopeless affair she tells Him: "You fell in love with someone you invented" (p. 400).

Him's own invented role does not insulate him from failure. Me breaks off Him's love-making when she senses that she is being seduced by a proxy (p. 398). Ironically Him's other role thwarts his magnificently staged suicide attempt. Brought to despair by his failure as a playwright, Him tries to shoot himself. Watching the act in a mirror he sees his other self doing the same. The suicide attempt fails because Him can't be certain which role is being killed (p. 352).

Formulated with the skill of a playwright and performed using the techniques of an actor, Him's created role, nevertheless, is a dismal failure. Instead of serving him the other role has only thwarted and frustrated him. Faced with this realization, Him purges himself of the other role and returns to Me to begin a new life with her. Him is a self-dramatizing character in Cummings's scheme of the play, which

is the "exploration of the multiple facets of a single personality in the artist's quest for vocation."[1]

The eight self-dramatizing characters described in the chapter illustrate how this theatricalist device offered playwrights a way to use performance conventions in depicting characters and their actions in a play without having to resort to the play-within-a-play.

The performer who invents his own role and devises his own scenario harks back to an ancient form of theatre in which the actor was his own dramatist. Thespis of Icaria, whose name has become synonymous with actor, performed in dramas of his own construction more than fifty years before Aeschylus wrote his tragedies.

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[1]Bernard F. Dukore and Daniel C. Gerould, eds., Avant-Grade Drama: Major Plays and Documents Post World War I (New York: Bantam Books, 1969), p. 333.

CHAPTER IV

BORROWED PARTS; BORROWED STYLES

Borrowing plots and characters from older plays is a playwriting practice brought into prominence by Shakespeare. Since the Elizabethan era, playwrights have integrated plots and characters from other plays in their own work, sometimes altering names and plot details to fit the nationality or period of the new play. Some of the borrowing has been unobtrusive: adaptations of obscure or lesser known plays; while other borrowings such as contemporary versions of famous classics have drawn attention and invited comparison.

The inter-war avant-garde dramatists rejected the artistic styles of the past and were averse to imitating or copying its forms outright. Some of them, however, found ways of tapping the wealth of existing dramatic material and incorporating borrowed elements into their plays, without diminishing the innovative or experimental nature of the avant-garde work. They did this by devising techniques which would estrange the borrowed elements from the main line of the dramatic action of the host play.

One of the techniques used by the avant-garde playwrights to estrange borrowed material was to call attention to the particular element, its source, and the specific way it was being incorporated and used in the host play. Another method of keeping the borrowed elements

from being absorbed without notice was to forge a discordant marriage between the borrowed element and host play. To accomplish this, the playwright deliberately created jarring juxtapositions of style and dramatic genre between the borrowed element and the play that contained it. For example, the playwright would inject characters and plot segments taken from familiar tragedies into a play that was essentially comic. Or he might superimpose a style associated with religious drama onto a play with an overtly iconoclastic theme.

The examples in this chapter illustrate the use of borrowed parts and borrowed styles. The parts consist of familiar characters and recognizable plot segments. The dramatic styles come from distant as well as recent periods. The examples also show how a borrowed style may be applied only to a portion of the host play or superimposed onto the entire play.

The following plays supply examples with which to illustrate this category of theatricalism: Wilkiewicz's The New Deliverance and The Mother, Olyesha's The Conspiracy of Feelings, E. E. Cummings's Him, Cocteau's The Infernal Machine, Goll's Methusalem, Karms's Elizabeth Bam, Mayakovsky's Mystery-Bouffe, and Aragon's The Mirror-Wardrobe One Fine Evening.

In The New Deliverance, Witkiewicz uses Shakespeare's King Richard III to personify one of the extremes of villainy in the play. Tatiana explains that Richard's presence in Witkiewicz's play is a form of penance, and that he "has been given an indefinite leave of absence" from his own play to perform a part in "a little comedy" that Tatiana is

putting on (p. 99). This immediately points out the incongruity of the tragic king's presence in a comedy.

Witkiewicz's one-act play contains a confrontation between ancient—almost primitive—man, represented by Shakespeare's Richard the Third, and Florestan Snakesnout, prototype of contemporary mankind. Richard, the classic villain, argues that he and his contemporaries "slaughtered one another" for something they at least believed in, whereas Snakesnout and his kind dedicate themselves only to causes that can gain them financial profit (p. 105).

Richard associates himself with his role in Shakespeare's play when he speaks of his "monstrous lies" and "revolting infidelities" (p. 102), and he reminds everyone of his performance in his own play when he applauds Tatiana's lust for vengeance with the remark that it's "in our style" (p. 108). He characterizes himself as having been a performer giving a theatrical performance in Shakespeare's play.

Snakesnout earns Richard's open contempt not for the beastliness in contemporary man but for the theories and philosophies in which he couches it. Tatiana reminds Richard that in his time life "in the grand manner" was still possible, whereas for her and Snakesnout life "has been poisoned" by modern society (p. 104). Richard's role in Witkiewicz's play is to represent the man who longs for life in the grand manner, the individual who was once capable of purposeful action but who is now shackled and restrained by modern society. Richard struggles against his shackles, while Snakesnout pragmatically adjusts to his.

The restraints on Richard are dramatized in the mode of an Elizabethan play. Two Shakespearean Murderers keep him pinned to a stone pillar. However, his torture consists of having to witness the "hideous dramas" performed daily by Tatiana and her friends as they display their "psychic guts" and "metaphysical navels" (p. 99). Richard can bear the agony of his shackles, but is distressed by the sight of modern masochism.

Witkiewicz borrows Shakespeare's villainous king to represent the ancient style of inflicting torture and enduring suffering in contrast to the modern. Richard's impersonal relationship to the Murderers is contrasted to the modern relationship between victim and torturer. The modern victims seek their torturers amongst their intimate relationships. Joanna Snakesnout finds her ultimate torturer in her son Florestan, and he willingly submits to the torture inflicted by Tatiana whom he loves. Richard, however, regards this as "sham" torture and "make believe" suffering. Only Tatiana's vengeful cruelty to Joanna is believable to him (pp. 107-108).

When Forestan has to face the physical torture inflicted by Six Thugs—the modern counterparts of Richard's Murderers—he behaves ignobly. Thus modern man fails his test for a "new deliverance" because, in Richard's words, he "doesn't even know how to suffer" (p. 111). And in spite of his proven villainy in Shakespeare's play, Richard in Witkiewicz's The New Deliverance displays a strength and endurance of suffering that is lacking in modern man.

To underscore his theme in The New Deliverance, Witkiewicz picks a dramatic character famous for his resoluteness and pits him against the insubstantial Florestan Snakesnout. Richard the Third as an established dramatic character has credibility while Florestan's main dramatic characteristic is his lack of credibility. Richard appears in Witkiewicz's play somewhat as a guest actor performing the part that has made him famous. He often refers to characteristics of his role in the first play. This performance aspect inherent in the borrowed character contributes to the theatricalism of the device.

The play's emphasis on theatrical performance and its jarring juxtaposition of modern and medieval man have their roots in Witkiewicz's dramatic theories. In his essay called "On a New Type of a Play," he states his desire to create dramatic characters who would

> produce events which by their bizarre interrelationships create a performance in time not limited by any logic except the logic of the form itself of that performance.[1]

The protagonists of Olyesha's The Conspiracy of Feelings evoke characters and situations from Shakespeare's Othello and Hamlet. They relate themselves to Shakespeare's characters and perform actions which appear to be borrowed from the two tragedies. Olyesha thus creates ironic and satiric parallels between events in his play and similar events in Shakespeare's.

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[1]Stanislaw Ignacy Witkiewicz, The Madman and the Nun and Other Plays, eds. Daniel C. Gerould and C. S. Durer (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1968), p. 293.

In the personal and ideological struggle between the Babichev brothers, Andrei compares himself to Othello while Ivan performs like Iago. "I just read Othello," Andrei tells Shapiro, as he draws a parallel between his and Othello's heroic accomplishments. Also, Andrei like Shakespeare's Moor is an "ugly bastard" who has won a young woman's heart (Valya) "with tales of his great deeds" (p. 229).

Ivan's Iago-like actions are motivated by envy and spite. In the tenement he exploits love and hate, tries to provoke murder, as part of his plot to undermine Andrei and Soviet stability. He urges the jealous Young Man to kill Lizaveta's husband, and thereby "act out . . . to the end" the Othello-like drama (p. 220). Ivan's performance is noted by the Young Man, who calls him "quite an actor" (p. 221).

Ivan's performance also relates him to several characters in Hamlet. Realizing that he is a comical and ineffectual conspirator, Ivan characterizes himself as Polonius. He seems also to connect Kavalerov with Polonius—by advising the young man to father a daughter and call her Ophelia, but he aims the characterization chiefly at himself. Kavalerov is merely a younger version of Ivan. Both are idealists, dreamers, failures, and both have been spurned by Valya (pp. 238-239).

The conspiracy led by Ivan borrows its plots and characters from Othello and Hamlet. Ivan recruits accomplices the way a theatre manager auditions and casts actors; first, the Young Man in the tenement, and next Kavalerov. "You'll certainly be the leading man in my company,"

Ivan declares when he sees the scorned Kavalerov examine his razor (p. 236).

The Ghost of King Hamlet is the character that best personifies Ivan. Ivan is a ghost from the past, a bizarre apparition that beseeches his spiritual son Kavalerov (Hamlet) to avenge the wrong done to them both by Andrei (Claudius). "I am your king," Ivan tells the guests at the nameday celebration (p. 246), "the king of the dead" (p. 249).

Like Hamlet, Kavalerov finds himself saddled with the role of avenger. In a moment of introspection, he echoes Hamlet's anguish in an avenger's role. Holding his open razor, Kavalerov questions the reason for killing Andrei (p. 217). The vignette recalls Hamlet's reservations about killing Claudius in prayer. Usurper of power and Valya's vile seducer, Andrei fits the role of Claudius for both Ivan and Kavalerov. Kavalerov's adoration of Valya is almsot child-like, and his obsession with her loss of virtue points up his Hamlet-like role.

Andrei's main Shakespearean role in Olyesha's play is Fortinbras, and it is so designated by Ivan. "Enter Fortinbras," he announces, as the victorious Andrei enters the stadium with his army of football players (p. 253). Dukore and Gerould confirm that throughout the play, "the major opposition is between the introspective and intellectual Hamlet-like Kavalerov and the Fortinbras-like strong man Andrei."[1] Ivan reminds Kavalerov that Hamlet ends with Hamlet dead and Fortinbras triumphant; and he urges Kavalerov to reverse the ending of Shakespeare's

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[1]Dukore and Gerould, Avant-Garde Drama, p. 206.

play and reverse the course of Russian history. Finding neither possible, Kavalerov kills Ivan, the ghost from the past who had incited this folly.

Ivan's connection with the Polonius role establishes Valya's link to Ophelia. Shakespeare's Polonius turns his daughter into an instrument of conspiracy, and Ivan creates his brainchild—the anti-machine machine named Ophelia—as an instrument of his conspiracy. Shapiro makes Shakespeare his adversary in Olyesha's play. An advocate of pragmatism and progress, Shapiro sees Shakespeare as the figurehead of romanticism and regression. He therefore ridicules and undercuts the playwright at every opportunity. He mockingly refers to him as "Boris Shakespeare" (p. 231), distorts Shakespeare's treatment of love (p. 233), compares the ingredients of the plays to the ingredients of a salami (p. 255), and characterizes the ludicrous threat to Andrei's life as "a little Shakespeare" (p. 256). Throughout Olyesha's play, Shakespeare and his characters are used as "parody, subtext, image, and allusion."[1]

E. E. Cummings uses characters and scenes borrowed from both Shakespearean and Greek tragedy to create parody in Him. The borrowed characters appear in Cummings's play as the three withered female Figures, and their scenes fit into the dramatic action of Him in the same way that the Witches scenes fit into Macbeth, or that the interludes of the Chorus fit into Greek tragedy. The Figures also parody the three Fates of Greek myth.

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[1]Ibid.

I will first show the connection between the three Figures in Him and the Witches in Macbeth. In their first appearance in Him, the Doctor introduces them as "the three Weird Sisters" (p. 338). "Weyerd" is how the Witches are frequently referred to in Macbeth, so Cummings makes "weird" the Figure's name. The behavior of the three female Figures in Him is a parody of the Witches' actions in Macbeth. The three figures continually rock in their chairs as they engage in mesmorizing cross-talk reminiscent of the rhythmic stirring of the cauldron that accompanies the Witches' incantations in Macbeth. Even the topics mentioned by the Witches and the three Figures are similar. Both groups frequently refer to grotesque creatures: the Witches to toads and swine; the Figures to hippopotami; and both groups gossip about husbands.

Cummings's placement of the three Figures' scenes in Him and the dramatic function of these scenes in the play resemble the placement and function of the Witches' scenes in Macbeth. The first three Figures' scene in Him approximates the Witches' appointment scene and first meeting with Macbeth. In Him's first encounter with the Figures, whom the Doctor identifies as the three Weird sisters, Him performs the role of a comic Macbeth, while the Doctor serves as his Banquo. The announcement of Him's role in Cummings's play ("Mr. Anybody, Everyman, Marquis de Poussiere") ironically echoes the announcement of Macbeth's progressively elevating titles in the corresponding Witches scene from Macbeth. Rather than elevating Him his titles only point to man's nothingness (p. 338). Him's first encounter with the three Weird sisters reveals the tragi-comic flaw in his nature, that of excessive role playing.

This event parodies the revelation of Macbeth's tragic flaw—excessive ambition, in his first meeting with Shakespeare's weird sisters.

Parallels between the three Figures and the Witches of Macbeth can be found in other scenes of Cummings's play. Him's second meeting with the three Figures is a parody of Macbeth's second meeting with the three Witches. Plagued by images of his failure, Him goes to the Weird sisters to find out what's "around the corner" for him (p. 347). In Shakespeare's play, Macbeth is plagued by images of his crime (Banquo's ghost), and seeks out the weird sisters to discover what's in store for him. Cummings's Weird sisters deliver an array of prophecies that confuse and distress Him, just as the apparitions displayed by the Witches only serve to increase Macbeth's desperation.

The scenes of Him in which the three female Figures perform are borrowed from Greek tragedy as well as from Macbeth. These scenes function equally as choral interludes, and the three Figures comically imitate the speech and actions of a Greek chorus.

As choral interludes in Cummings's play, the scenes are placed so that the three Figures can comment on Him and Me scenes just concluded. Their observations, though phrased in popular cliches and non sequitur remarks, focus on the ongoing ordeal of Me's childbirth and Him's rebirth. In their constant rocking the three Figures recall the rhythmic movement of a Greek Chorus, as do their speech patterns. Speaking in platitudes, parroting the conventional wisdom of their society, and engaging in banal explanations of extraordinary occurrences, the three female Figures can be seen as a surrealist spoof of a Greek Chorus.

As a parody of the Greek fates, the three Figures are introduced in their first scene as "Miss Stop, Miss Look, and Miss Listen" (p. 338). These names are also admonitions once found on traffic signs, and they are Cummings's spoof on the admonitions and warnings given by the Fates in Greek Tragedy. The three Figures issue comical warnings in their borrowed role as Fates: "it's Friday the thirteenth . . . beware of pickpockets . . . look at Napoleon . . . lost the Battle of Waterloo . . . what happened to Jesus Christ" (p. 358).

During their discourses, the three Figures perform as parodied Fates. When one sympathizes strongly with Me or echoes a female view of marital discord, she invokes Clotho, the Fate who held the distaff. As the Figures ruminate on pregnancy and childbirth they invoke Lachesis who spun the thread of life, and when the Figures talk of pain, disaster and death they invoke Atropos who cut off the thread of life.

Cummings calls attention to the sources of the borrowed characters and plot segments in Him, and the elements drawn from Greek and Shakespearean tragedy stand out through their use as parody. Cummings's choice of different sources for his borrowing fits the play's pattern of varied styles, and the juxtaposition of tragedy and farce fits in with the play's juxtaposition of surrealist and popular entertainment conventions. The scenes in Him that borrow from Macbeth show how plot segments taken from one play can be treated as theatrical performance when they are incorporated into another play. The borrowing playwright has his characters put on a performance of the borrowed scene in their own play.

Witkiewicz borrows plot segments from Strindberg's Ghost Sonata and Ibsen's Ghosts, and incorporates them into The Mother. The characters of The Mother point out the borrowings and their source. Leon characterizes a situation in Witkiewicz's play as "meat-with-all-the-juices-cooked-out-of-it-tragedy à la Strindberg," and another as "dramas à la Ibsen." Leon's mother turns her son's irreverence of the great dramatists into a complaint about her mistreatment: "You treat Ibsen and Strindberg just the same way you treat me" (p. 129). Later Mrs. Eely equates Leon with his dead father and observes that the "two of you are completely alike in every way—just like in Ibsen's Ghosts" (p. 145).

The direct references to Ibsen and Strindberg and the plot segments borrowed from their plays are incorporated into The Mother to help illuminate the world of Witkiewicz's play. The borrowed plot segments are used by Witkiewicz to parody the attitudes and values of a world that no longer exists, and to ridicule Mrs. Eely's attempt to recreate and live in such a world. As Gerould and Durer point out, Witkiewicz calls attention to a fabricated "obsolescent dramatic universe," thereby "undermining its credibility and validity as a way of feeling and thinking in the modern world."[1]

Strindberg's Ghost Sonata supplies the vampire motif which Witkiewicz then gives to the characters of The Mother. Mrs. Eely twice calls Leon a vampire, in accusing her son of sponging on her and sucking her dry (pp. 121, 139). Leon and his mistress Sophie characterize

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[1]Witkiewicz, Madman and the Nun, p. 111.

themselves as vampires because of their exploitation of society (pp. 130, 134, 135, 136). The characters in The Mother use the vampire description with obvious awareness of its application in the Strindberg play.

The plot segments borrowed from Ibsen's Ghosts reflect Mrs. Alving's guilt in the fate of her husband, her fear that Oswald will inherit his father's vices, and Mrs. Alving's concern for her son's poor health and precarious mental condition. Witkiewicz rearranges and modifies the plot details taken from Ghosts so that their presence in The Mother creates a parody of their application to Ibsen's play. Witkiewicz's borrowings from Ibsen's Ghosts theatricalize the world from which Mrs. Eely takes her bourgeois values and attitudes, and ridicule her attempt to recreate that world for herself.

Mrs. Eely confesses to her maid Dorothy that she drove her husband to crime for material reasons.

> I only wanted to be a little better off . . . if only I hadn't constantly hounded him with it, he . . . wouldn't have died with a noose around his neck. (p. 142)

This is a parody of Mrs. Alving's confession which implies that her refusal of sex drove her husband to his vices.

Mrs. Alving's dread that Oswald will turn out like his father is parodied in Mrs. Eely's observation that Leon is exactly like his father, but "hasn't become a criminal yet" (p. 135). However, when Leon does reveal the extent of his criminal activities, his father's ghost approves. "For the first time," the father's voice proclaims, "I can see that you're my son" (p. 153). The figurative ghost of the dead father in Ibsen's play is transformed into a stage ghost in The

Mother, whose presence is felt through the sound of his laughter and his mocking remarks. As Gerould and Durer point out, Witkiewicz's technique "is to take what is metaphoric and symbolic in Ibsen and make it quite literal."[1]

The concern that Mrs. Alving displays over Oswald's poor health and his possible insanity is parodied in Mr. Eely's expression of contempt for Leon's dependency on her. "You were always such a weakling," she tells him (p. 127). And when Leon screams that he is about to go out of his mind, Mrs. Eely observes: "that would be very typical of you" (p. 129). Leon's warning of imminent madness and his mother's callous response stand in juxtaposition to Mrs. Alving's emotional reaction to Oswald's on-coming madness in the last scene of Ghosts.

The dramatic action of Witkiewicz's The Mother is played in conjunction with a performance of scenes from Ibsen's Ghosts. Witkiewicz borrows plot segments from Ghosts and incorporates them into his play as if they are performances of these scenes, and then shows the performances being badly imitated by the characters of his play. The plot segments from Ibsen's play represent recalled modes of social performance which Mrs. Eely is trying to act out.

Jean Cocteau borrows a famous scene from Hamlet for the First Act of The Infernal Machine, and then uses a sentimental plot taken from Boulevard drama in Act Two. The playwright borrows plots from such diverse sources because they furnish him familiar and popular

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[1]Ibid., p. 114.

theatrical material with which to dramatize a contemporary version of the Oedipus play. From Hamlet, Cocteau takes segments of the Ghost scenes on the ramparts (Act I, Scenes 1, 4, 5); and from the sentimental drama of Boulevard theatre he takes a plot about doomed love.

Francis Fergusson describes Cocteau's goal as meeting the audience on its own ground.[1] In The Infernal Machine, Cocteau incorporates dramatic material and theatrical performance conventions familiar to most of his audience. The purpose is to lay the foundation for his way of telling the Oedipus story. Cocteau has borrowed material for its possible effect on an audience during performance. He has selected the Ghost scenes from Hamlet because of their vivid presence on a stage, and he has chosen a plot from sentimental drama which has a strong emotional impact on an audience. Cocteau has always thought of drama as theatrical performance. His surrealism has relied more on performance effects than on aesthetic doctrine.

Cocteau harks back to the opening rampart scenes of Hamlet because they constitute a vivid coup de théâtre which is familiar to his audience. The appearance of the slain King Hamlet's ghost is an exciting event.

Cocteau also wanted to create a familiar and theatrically exciting mechanism for the warnings and foreshadowings necessary to the performance of the Oedipus drama. For this task the ramparts scenes from Hamlet provided one of the most famous performances of ghostly exhortation that could be borrowed. Cocteau chose to borrow the method of exposition

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[1]Francis Fergusson, The Idea of a Theatre (Garden City: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1953), p. 211.

used in the rampart scenes of Hamlet rather than adapt the methods of Greek tragedy because the Shakespearean model was more in tune with the theatrical experience of his audience.

In borrowing from Hamlet in his dramatization of the Oedipus myth, Cocteau was exploiting the similarity between the two as noted by Gilbert Murray and other scholars. An essay on the subject by the psychiatrist Ernest Jones had been published in 1910.[1]

Cocteau also uses the ghost scene in the First Act of The Infernal Machine to create both suspense and irony. The ghost's dire warnings go unheeded up to his last moment on stage and inject a melodramatic element of suspense into the scene. Cocteau shows how one can dramatize the events of the Oedipus myth using familiar conventions. And when no one pays attention to the Ghost's warning, Cocteau is making an inverted parallel to the Ghost scene in Hamlet which creates the kind of comic irony that delights French audiences.

The encounter between Jocasta and the Young Soldier in the First Act of The Infernal Machine shows Cocteau borrowing a plot line from the sentimental drama of the Boulevard Theatre. It is one which dramatizes the disastrous consequences of an older woman falling hopelessly in love with a man young enough to be her son. Cocteau uses this familiar plot to foreshadow the tragic consequences that will follow Jocasta meeting with Oedipus. In this encounter, the Young Soldier

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[1]First published under the title "The Oedipus Complex as an Explanation of Hamlet's Mystery" in The American Journal of Psychology, January 1910.

prefigures the part Oedipus will play in his future encounter with Jocasta, and Cocteau shows his audience--through Jocasta's incompatible emotions--how the Oedipus myth resembles the plot of a sentimental drama. She admits to Tiresias her sexual desire and maternal love--a mixture the French audience would appreciate.

> When I touched that soldier a moment ago . . . I almost swooned. He (Oedipus) would be nineteen now, Zizi, the same age. (p. 28)

Cocteau also borrows a plot line from a well-known drama which has recently been acted out in life. Isadora Duncan had been killed in a freak accident: the long scarf she frequently wore became caught in the steering wheel of the automobile in which she was riding. Cocteau borrows the character of the flamboyant and theatrical Isadora for Jocasta in this scene, and uses the tragic accident to the dancer to foreshadow Jocasta's suicide by hanging herself with her scarf. When the blind Tiresias steps on the scarf tightening it around Jocasta's neck, she remarks:

> Its always trying to strangle me. One moment it catches in branches, another moment in the moving wheel of a carriage. . . . In the end, it will kill me. (p. 17)

Later in the First Act, the Young Soldier also steps on the scarf nearly strangling Jocasta--foreshadowing Oedipus's role in her death.

The main borrowing in Act One is from Hamlet, while in the Second Act of The Infernal Machine, Cocteau borrows exclusively from the sentimental drama of the Boulevard theatre. He dramatizes the encounter between Oedipus and the Sphinx which heretofore has remained a mystery in the myth. The plot line that Cocteau uses for the encounter is that

of the romantic young girl, eager for love, who has the misfortune to fall helplessly in love with an attractive cad. The cad does not return her love, but instead ruthlessly exploits her. To satisfy his ambition the young girl gives the cad everything he wants, even her most precious possession. He abandons her after getting what he wants. She suffers pain and humiliation, but is ready to forgive him when he comes back. However, he has only returned to exploit her further. Sadly, the young girl gives the cad all she has left to give and dies.

Using this familiar plot, Cocteau shows why Oedipus was able to solve the riddle of the Sphinx. The mystery of the myth is explained in theatrical events which his audience understands and accepts. The encounter allows Cocteau to portray Oedipus as a shallow, unscrupulously ambitious young man at this point in the drama. This view of Oedipus will contrast sharply with our view of him when, having "been manipulated by the cruel gods," he "will be made, in the end, into a man" (p. 84). Also, the encounter between Oedipus and the Sphinx draws an ironic parallel with the encounter between the Young Soldier and Jocasta in the First Act. Cocteau tells us that both encounters are going on simultaneously, and he dramatizes both as sentimental drama. Oedipus and his proxy, the Young Soldier, are shown inadvertently exciting the emotions of overly romantic women; and both of the women suffer as a result. Cocteau uses the theatricalist device of parallel performances to intensify the ironic aspects of the Oedipus drama.

The source of the borrowed plots in The Infernal Machine is recognizable to Cocteau's audience, and the disparity between Greek myth

and popular theatre is skillfully reconciled in Cocteau's version of the Oedipus drama. The blending of the disparate elements is, in fact, a feature of the play. Cocteau borrows plot segments as much for their theatrical performance imagery as for their dramatic relativity to The Infernal Machine. He exploits the visceral impact and visual imagery of these scenes as they exist in the recollections of an audience who has seen them performed before.

In scenes VII and VIII of Methusalem, Goll's characters adopt performing conventions usually associated with "middle-class tragedies"[1]— a dramatic style popularized by Diderot and Lessing in the eighteenth century. The introduction of these conventions is precipitated by Ida's out-of-wedlock pregnancy, and the family's concern for its effect on both their reputation and shoe business. Inasmuch as unwanted pregnancy frequently was the subject of middle-class (or domestic) tragedy, Goll's bourgeois family assumes attitudes and manner which it deems proper to the crisis. The result is a parody of domestic tragedy and its typical performing conventions.

Goll likens the performance of his characters in these scenes to that of actors attempting to perform a style of drama for which they are neither suited nor equipped. As performers, Methusalem and his family are more suited to low comedy than to serious drama. The playwright draws a parallel between low-comedy actors using performance conventions of domestic tragedy and his bourgeois characters pretending

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[1]J. M. Ritchie, ed., Seven Expressionist Plays (London: Calder and Boyars, 1968), p. 18.

a concern with virtue and honor. The characters, as performers, periodically revert to a familiar low-comedy style, causing their true motives and natural behavior patterns to break through the veneer of gentility. Goll thus theatricalizes the hypocrisy and innate materialism of the bourgeoisie.

Ida reveals her pregnancy with affected spirituality, prompting Methusalem to remark that she "is playing the Virgin Mary" (p. 101). When son Felix arrives, his father notifies him of Ida's condition in stilted, stagey speech: "Your sister Idea 'knows' a man." Felix responds in kind; staggering back a step, he utters "Im-possible!" (p. 102). The performance conventions of domestic tragedy are interspersed with low-comedy bits: Methusalem howls at the pain in his leg and chastises his "fallen whore of a daughter!" Similarly, the family dishonor is woven into a low-comedy routine about opportunistic merchants.

The end of scene VII offers the clearest exmple of low-comedy business intruding upon a convention of domestic tragedy. When Ida's mother finally comprehends that her daughter is pregnant, she cries out and seems about to faint. Before she collapses, however, she "quickly places the glass she is carrying on the table, after wiping the foot of the glass with her dress, not to dirty anything" (p. 103). The mixture of performing conventions demonstrates bourgeois materialism at work even in the face of calamity.

In scene VIII, Felix and the Student engage in a verbal duel, each using performance conventions as weapons. Felix attacks with conventions and cliches from domestic tragedy, and the Student counters

with those associated with low comedy. Felix has costumed himself for a duel scene (morning cost, monocle), whereas the Student comically flaunts his threadbare appearance (down-at-heel shoes, holes in his shirt).

Felix condemns Ida's seduction as the deflowering of a virgin, while the Student characterizes it as a low-comedy situation. Felix hurls insult, scorn and contempt at the Student, who retaliates by informing Felix that his fly's undone.

The scene's final encounter between performing conventions occurs when Felix avenges his dishonor by shooting the Student. The Student falls to the ground and "visibly breathes out his soul" (p. 106). Low comedy prevails, however, as the Student gets up, tips his hat to Felix, and cheerfully leaves. Seducers of innocent girls may be killed in domestic tragedy, but they usually live to do it again in low comedy.

Daniil Kharms was a Russian avant-garde writer of the inter-war period. In 1927 he wrote Elizabeth Bam, a one-act play which concerns the harrassment of the heroine by government prosecutors who falsely accuse her of having committed a crime. Kharms's play satirizes the methods used by the Soviet rulers to eliminate anyone they perceived as an enemy of the state. The play contains nonsensical exchanges between its characters, songs, vaudeville skits, and a segment which borrows the style of a Medieval Morality play's contest between good and evil.

The segment of Elizabeth Bam that uses the style of a Morality play's contest occurs when the heroine's Father comes to her defense against the two prosecutors who threaten her life. The senior prosecutor

accepts the Father's challenge, and the other prosecutor narrates the allegorical battle. The contest is announced as "The fight of the two knights," and its identity as theatrical performance is established through the mention of the "Text . . . Music . . . Choreography" supposedly accompanying it (p. 134).

Peter, the senior prosecutor, performs as the evil knight while Elizabeth's Father plays the role of the good knight. The evil knight prepares for combat by uttering a mock incantation to invoke evil powers (p. 135). In allegorical contests such as this, the evil knight frequently has supernatural powers. The other prosecutor describes his knight's wizardry:

> With one motion of the wing he moves the oceans, with one swing of the axe he fells forests and mountains, with one movement he escapes capture. (p. 134)

Elizabeth's Father prepares for combat by drinking a toast to his daughter, and in the role of the chivalrous champion, dedicates himself to her defense.

The allegorical battle begins, and as it progresses, each combatant explains his tactics and describes his maneuvers. The evil knight is vanquished and asks for Elizabeth's forgiveness. Then the narrator formally ends the sequence in Kharms's play with the declaration: "The fight of the two knights is finished" (p. 137).

Kharms uses the moral contest which exists in this form of Medieval drama to create a satiric parallel with an ideological battle raging in Russia during the 1920s. This battle is between the revolutionaries who fought to establish a communist utopia and the new hierarchy of

bureaucrats and secret policemen who now rule Russia. The Father is the old Bolshevik who relives the excitement and glory of the revolution. He sings of a battle that "excites the outlaw; makes a boy a youth" (p. 136). The prosecutor, on the other hand, fights by bureaucratically prescribed regulations:

> Please follow attentively the flitting of our swords, where each directs its edge and where each takes direction. (p. 136)

It is an ideological conflict between the visionary and builder, as represented by the Father in the battle of the knights, and those who threaten to stifle progress with a bureaucratic reign of terror. The Father chooses the weapons of the battle: "Let us fight . . . you with a word, I with my arm" (p. 134). The bureaucrat's weapon is the officially sanctioned distortion of words, language, facts, which can make the innocent appear guilty. Kharms borrows the style of the Medieval Morality play to elevate his dramatization of the contemporary contest.

Kharms contrasts the conclusion of the mock Morality play to the ending of the outer play. In the ideal world of the Morality play, the evil prosecutor is defeated by Elizabeth's father, and she is saved. In the harsh world of the main play—Soviet Russia of the 1920s—Elizabeth is falsely accused by her mother and led away to face severe punishment. The prescribed outcome of the Morality play, where innocence is rescued, is ironically compared with the inevitable verdict of a corrupt judicial system.

Mayakovsky borrows from the Medieval Mystery play for his Mystery-Bouffe. Medieval drama heralds the rise of the Christian-Capitalist era in the western world, and in Mystery-Bouffe, Mayakovsky celebrates its demise and announces the dawn of the Socialist Commune. The playwright extrapolates from the Mystery play to help him extol the new myth as well as reject the old.

The deluge that sweeps away the sinful old world in Mystery-Bouffe is "Revolution's Flood," not God's punishment. When the ark is built, its inhabitants consist of "seven pairs of The Unclean"—workers and members of the proletariat, and "seven pairs of The Clean"—princes, politicians, and priests of Christian capitalism (p. 46). This is an example of how Mayakovsky appropriates the old imagery of the biblical myth.

In the Mystery play, moral exhortation by God or Jesus directs Man toward attainment of spiritual paradise in the life to come. Mayakovsky uses the image of Christ walking on water to introduce the "man of the future." This Messiah is militant and aggressive, and in his "new Sermon on the Mount" to the despairing Proletariat aboard the foundering ark, he describes the material paradise here on earth that the workers can achieve with their own hands (pp. 87-90). God's Flood and Christ's miracles are images through which the Medieval Mystery play inspires obedience to divine commandments. In Mystery-Bouffe, Mayakovsky converts these images to visual metaphors of the Revolution.

Medieval Religious Drama frequently used farce to portray human frailty, to show the need for obedience to divine commandments, and

to illustrate the power of divine grace. In Mystery-Bouffe, Mayakovsky too uses farce for didactic purposes, particularly in his treatment of The Clean. They are shown trying to thwart the Revolution (Mayakovsky's version of divine grace), and when opposition becomes impossible, The Clean scheme to control and profit from the Revolution. Exasperated by the manipulations of The Clean aboard the ark, The Unclean toss them into the sea (p. 81). The outrageous behavior of The Clean and the roughness of their treatment at the hands of The Unclean simulate the farcical treatments of the Medieval Mystery play.

Mayakovsky also borrows the performance style of the Mystery play and incorporates it into his instructions to the actors who were preparing the first production of Mystery-Bouffe. An observer of the rehearsals recalls that Mayakovsky demanded "heroic pathos, and grandeur" from the actors playing The Unclean, while he encouraged "exaggerated parody" and "satiric buffoonery" in the acting style of those playing The Clean.[1] This mimics the performance style of the Medieval Mystery play, in which the good and bad characters were differentiated by vivid acting styles.

Mayakovsky borrows some essential characters of Mystery plays (God, Satan, Angels, Devils, Saints), as well as their principal locales (earth, heaven, hell). In Mystery-Bouffe, the playwright inverts the myths that portray these characters and their locales. The Unclean find hell and its devils much less horrible than their former experiences under capitalist oppression; and they discover that the rewards of heaven are nothing but fraudulent promises.

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[1]Wictor Woroszylski, The Life of Mayakovsky (New York: The Orion Press, 1970), p. 238.

In Medieval religious drama, stage business and scenic effects—often naively graphic—depict biblical events and moral struggles in a visually explicit manner. Mayakovsky draws on this convention when he describes the Flood in Mystery-Bouffe as water gushing out of a hole in a large representation of the earth's globe (p. 60). In the conflict between the Proletariat and a discredited deity which takes place in heaven, the workers strip the vengeful Jehovah of his power by appropriating his lightning bolts for future use in industrial electrification (p. 114).

Symbolical scenic images are a characteristic of the Medieval Mystery play. Mayakovsky includes such images to extol the new myth in Mystery-Bouffe. Celestial visions of a locomotive and a steamship guide the workers toward the earthly paradise of the Commune (p. 119). The machine represents the new image of salvation. And when the workers finally arrive at the Promised Land, they stand before the gates—not of a biblical heaven—but of a materially marvelous industrial city of the future (p. 125).

Mayakovsky also derives a stylistic technique from the Medieval Morality play. In the last Act of Mystery-Bouffe, there are characters representing inanimate objects, who are called "Machines, Things, Edibles." These characters welcome the workers to the new Socialist paradise. This is another example of how Mayakovsky appropriates and inverts conventions of Medieval drama. Material goods in the Morality play were supposed to lead to hell, not heaven.

The only character in Mystery-Bouffe other than the members of the proletarian Unclean who manages to survive all the ordeals and reach the Socialist Promised Land is the one depicted as a Menshevik compromiser. Mayakovsky leaves the bourgeois agents of Christian Capitalism back with their fellow devils in hell, but allows the Compromiser a view of the Commune. In the scheme of the Mystery play, he is a character who initially opposes the master plan for salvation, and then goes along when he sees its benefits.

In Mystery-Bouffe, Mayakovsky mocks the myths of the old order and extols the virtues of the new. His sardonic plagiarism is always apparent, beginning with the designation Mystery in the play's title. The juxtaposition of the play's religious referents and vigorously secular goal is intentionally jarring, although Mayakovsky uses (often in inverted form) aspects of Christian mythology to dramatize communist ideology. The Act structure of Mystery-Bouffe simulates the stations of Man's journey to redemption in the Medieval Mystery play. And many of the specific events have been chosen for their performance qualities as well as their dramatic parallels.

In The Mirror-Wardrobe One Fine Evening Louis Aragon parodies the bedroom farces and domestic melodramas that were a staple of the boulevard theatre in his time. To construct his parody, Aragon borrows the dramatic style intrinsic to the popular theatre—the late nineteenth century well-made play. Though the bedroom farces and domestic melodramas are the source of the parody, the real target of his ridicule is bourgeois society, to which this genre of boulevard drama panders.

Aragon mocks contemporary theatre for both its reliance on sterile dramatic forms and its service to a sterile society.

Boulevard business does not begin until after a surrealist prologue is performed in front of the main curtain. Despite his surrealist dialogue, Aragon makes a clear distinction between the fantastic, surrealist world of the frame and the pseudo-naturalist world of the play proper. The prologue and epilogue dramatize the bizarre juxtapositions—including those in the social and political sphere—that the surrealists see in the real world, while the inner play juxtaposes the illogic of the bourgeois world with the logic of the well-made play. The text enters the fraudulent bourgeois world as the character Theodore Fraenkel (named after a surrealist associate of Aragon) announces sardonically that now "the world must become the world again," and the curtain rises to reveal a "vulgarly furnished room" (pp. 180-181).

In The Mirrow-Wardrobe One Fine Evening, Aragon parodies both the boulevard style of drama and the bourgeois view of intimate relations reflected in the well-made play. The author mocks the games played with love and sex—its maneuvers of seduction, the stereotyped role playing, and the formulas of manners and sentiments, reciprocally imitated by society and theatre. The bourgeois couple in the play act out the theatrical conventions of concealment, suspicion and jealousy which are intrinsic to the well-made play style and its boulevard products.

The world of the well-made play is a duplicate of respectable conventional society, and Aragon parodies this society through its

dramatized representation. A pointedly theatrical transition from the surrealist world to the bourgeois is made as stagehands interrupt the prologue to bring the mirror-wardrobe on stage. The vulgarity of the bourgeois world is epitomized in the stage set; and its obsession with wealth and security is expressed by the husband Jules, as he brings home his newly earned riches (p. 187).

Plot action in the well-made play is visually generated by the heroine's desperate attempts to conceal past or present indiscretions. This effort is parodied by Leonore's unsuccessful efforts to goad Jules into opening the wardrobe to discover the hidden lover. The evidence of guilt in the well-made play is contained in something concealable, such as a letter; whereas the guilt container in Mirrow-Wardrobe is a large piece of furniture that dominates the stage set. Of course, the precariously concealed lover is a familiar device of French bedroom farce, and Aragon could depend on the audience's conditioned response. This unabashed manipulation of the audience is a derisive reference to the well-made theory, which saw dramaturgy merely as a series of techniques of affecting the audience.

A major dramaturgical element of the well-made play is the continuous pattern of ups and downs, with each reversal contributing to the mounting suspense. Aragon parodies this technique with Jules's wavering before the wardrobe, creating a "will-he-open-it?" mock suspense. Jules' behavior in the face of Lenore's challenge is also Aragon's parody of established bourgeois patterns for the avoidance of unpleasant realities.

The strong passions and romantic dialogue found in well-made plays such as Camille, are parodied in Jules' flowery expressions of love to Lenore. This ludicrous exercise in elevated language mocks bourgeois pretensions to culture, particularly in Jules' speech about embracing Lenore

> as the young handsome Roman does the Sabine women in the painting a copy of which is at the lady attorney's office. (p. 182)

Strong passions are to be suppressed in the bourgeois world by good manners. When Jules stands before the doors of the wardrobe, terrified by his own emotions, he utters one last appeal to Lenore: "His name, quickly, for the sake of good manners" (p. 193).

If Jules is a parody of the pompous and boring bourgeois husband, his neighbor, Madame Leon, is his counterpart as the bourgeois wife; and both are deservedly being victimized by an errant spouse. Both are also champions of the status quo, and defenders of the respectable world of the well-made play. The natural affinity between Jules and Madame Leon finds its counterpart in the apparent empathy between Lenore and the wayward Mr. Leon. The women antagonists parody two art forms of wifely complaint: Madame Leon suffers public humiliation at the hands of her husband, and Lenore is a sexually deprived wife. Yet each is playing a game with her husband.

The reduction of profound emotions such as honor and love to game playing characterizes the farcial versions of the well-made play. In Mirror-Wardrobe, Jules too plays games with love and honor. As a grotesque example he throws matches on the floor, and kneeling like a child,

begins to arrange them in rows, pretending all the while not to understand that Lenore is telling him she has a lover (pp. 182-183). In her essay on Mirrow-Wardrobe, Annabelle Henkin Melzer points to a similar scene in Pots of Money by Labiche and Delacour, in which a character counts coins with his prospective son-in-law while simultaneously discoursing on love.[1] The farcical mixture of serious emotion with game-like activity, as exemplified by the Pots of Money scene, is lifted to parody in Aragon's play.

There is a parallel between the games each woman plays with her husband. Madame Leon is rooting out her missing spouse, while Lenore is daring Jules to root out her hidden lover. Madame Leon's intrusion excites suspicion that her husband may be Lenore's lover in the wardrobe. It is a familiar situation in the well-made play, and Aragon teases his audience with it. However, the author is not mainly concerned with concocting deceptions for fictional characters, but rather with exposing the deceptions of the bourgeois world.

These deceptions are portrayed in the well-made play through the discrepancy between basic motivations and the veneer of socially acceptable behavior. The temptations and concealments in these plays mostly revolve around sexual desire. We may ask whether Lenore's tempting of Jules to bring her lover out of concealment is merely a burlesque of a domestic melodrama, or is it a ritual of sexual release?

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[1]Annabelle Henkin Melzer, "Louis Aragon's 'L'Armoire a Glace Un Beau Soir': A Play of the Surrealist Epoque de Sommeil," Comparative Drama, Spring 1977, p. 55.

Aragon's play dramatizes the conflict beween bourgeois conventions and sexual drives. The spectre in the wardrobe that Lenore tempts Jules to confront is his own sexual desire. Jules is the lover Lenore wants freed from confinement. But every time Jules approaches the wardrobe, the image he sees in its mirror is "Jules the husband," and bourgeois respectability drives him back. Bourgeois society forbids him to play both the husband and lover with the same women. He is left to spout empty romantic speeches borrowed from a dramaturgy which theatrically conventionalizes this separation of roles.

Finally, Jules smashes the mirror, eradicating the image and role of "Jules the husband." With the freeing of Jules the lover, Lenore's tone of frustration gives way to one of open desire, and the two go off to consummate the new relationship (p. 193).

Jules returns to open the wardrobe, from which emerge the characters of the prologue. Thus the stage is returned to the surrealist world of the "marvelous."

These examples demonstrate that the playwrights in question called attention to the source of their borrowings and to the methods of incorporating the borrowed element into contrasting plays. The avant-garde playwright created incongruous, discordant and even jarring juxtapositions between elements in his own devices and the ones he borrowed. The most theatricalist aspect of this dramaturgical device, however, is its relationship to theatrical performance.

Much of the borrowed material comes from plays which have been frequently performed in the theatre. The playwright can be reasonably

sure that a large segment of the audience has seen or read the play from which the material is borrowed. This certainly applies to Shakespeare's famous tragedies, and the various popular manifestations of nineteenth century domestic tragedy, melodrama, and sentimental drama, which fueled European theatre for the first four decades of the twentieth century. The Mystery and Morality play are purely west-European in origin, but their didactic biblical stories and myths would be recognized by Russian audiences familiar with liturgical spectacle.

The plots, characters, and even styles that inter-war avant-garde playwrights took over could be counted on to evoke visual and emotional recollections. The playwright of the host play thus could create any number of novel effects. In their general application, borrowed characters appear in the host play somewhat as actors performing a role for which they are well known; and borrowed plots are treated as a performance of a famous scene from a familiar play. A borrowed style creates the image of actors performing their scenes in the wrong play.

CHAPTER V

SPECTACLES AND SCENIC SHOWS

Theatricalism is a dramaturgical device which manifests itself through specific forms. The basic operating principle of each of its forms is the incorporation by the playwright of conventions and techniques of theatrical performance. The conventions and techniques taken from the so-called legitimate theatre fall into two groups: those pertaining to the performance of the actor and those which regulate the use of space, time, and scenic effects in theatrical performance. The theatricalist category analyzed in this chapter involves the conventions of the latter group.

Let us first define the conventions and techniques of space, time, and scenic effects. Spatial conventions divide a theatre into two basic areas. The stage and backstage area is traditionally relegated to the performer and the scenery, while the auditorium and lobby are considered the audience's territory. Time applies to methods of dividing or arranging the sequence of performance segments (acts, intermissions), and to means of denoting the passage of time within the play's performance on stage. These means involve the use of houselights, curtains rising or falling, stage lights going down or coming up, and clocks on stage to specify time. Scenic effects here refer to those derived from the use of scenery, props, and stage lighting.

How can the playwright incorporate the performance conventions of space, time, and scenic effect into his play? He may specify that the action of his play is to be performed in the auditorium or even the lobby of the theatre; or he may create the illusion of a fourth wall of the stage separating his characters from the audience, and then shatter this spatial illusion. The playwright may incorporate any of the conventions which denote the passage of time during the theatrical performance of drama, and he may use the conventions to serve a dramatic purpose in his play. For time conventions to become theatricalist, the playwright must call attention to how its conventions are incorporated and employed. Scenic effects may be portrayed as theatrical performers in the play rather than merely functioning as visual background. In another theatricalist use of scenic effects, the playwright calls attention to the scenic elements as stage artifice. The conventions and techniques of scenic artifice may help to characterize the world of the play or to underscore a theme.

The avant-garde playwright between the wars incorporated theatrical performance conventions of space, time, and scenic effect in the play in the form of spectacle and scenic show. Spectacle is created when the playwright indicates that the action in his play moves off the stage and spreads to a part of the theatre not normally used as a performance area, such as the auditorium or lobby. Scenic shows comprise theatrical performance conventions which organize stage space, denote the passage of time, and delineate scenic elements as outright artifice or portray them as theatrical performers.

Spectacles

"The point of my work in the theatre," Vladimir Mayakovsky declared a few years before his death in 1930, "is an attempt to restore spectacle to the theatre."[1] In the Prologue to Mystery-Bouffe—the first of his three plays about the Russian Revolution—Mayakovsky prepares the audience for a theatre-wide spectacle by reminding them that the stage is "only one-third" of the theatre space. If the auditorium is included in the play's action, their pleasure could be "multiplied by three." The playwright, in the Prologue, promises to show the audience "life transformed by the theatre into a spectacle most extraordinary!" (pp. 45-46).

The promise of the Prologue is vividly fulfilled in the last scene of Mystery-Bouffe when the worker-characters invite the audience onto the stage to demonstrate the unity that exists between all members of the proletariat. This spectacle is the culmination of Mayakovsky's theatre-wide teaching play, wherein both the characters and the audience learn the lessons of the Revolution. The play's world and central theme—the new era of the Commune—are theatrically symbolized by the fusion of performer and spectator in common purpose.

Mayakovsky uses spectacle in Mystery-Bouffe to celebrate what he believes to be the realization of the Commune. Ten years later he uses spectacle in The Bedbug to mock and condemn the betrayal of the Commune. By 1929, the practices of Lenin's New Economic Policy had

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[1] Woroszylski, Life of Mayakovsky, p. 480.

fostered the revival of bourgeois values and habits among the people. This becomes the world of The Bedbug, with betrayal of the ideals of the Revolution the theme.

The first half of the play satirizes the vulgarity and self-indulgence released by the NEP, while the second half comically envisions the antiseptic results wrought by a world-wide Communist bureaucracy fifty years into the future. In the very last scene, however, Mayakovsky wrenches the play back to the present for a final attack on its original target—represented by the audience in the theatre.

In The Bedbug, Mayakovsky again creates the theatre-wide connection between his character-performers and the audience; however, this time he sends his characters into the auditorium. In Mystery-Bouffe the audience took part in celebrating the victory of the Commune, whereas in The Bedbug they are being attacked for deserting it.

At the beginning of the play, performers as peddlers hawk goods up and down the aisles of the auditorium. Their sales jingles and the merchandise offered—Coty perfume and fur-lines brassieres—lampoon the renewed passion for luxury. Simultaneously a pantomime on stage portrays shoppers entering a department store, and coming out laden with packages. Thus Mayakovsky introduces this important theme of The Bedbug with a theatre-wide spectacle.

The next theatre-wide spectacle serves as the transition between the NEP world of 1929 and the futuristic world of international Communism. The wedding of the play's hero Prisypkin—arch-proletarian turned bourgeois—ends in a drunken brawl and disastrous fire. After the Firemen

conquer the fire, they march through the auditorium warning the audience that conduct similar to what they have seen on-stage will destroy the Soviet Republic (p. 166).

Fifty years later, Prisypkin is thawed out of a block of ice and put on display as an example of the NEP parasite who selfishly exploited the gains of the Revolution. In the closing moments of The Bedbug, Prisypkin rushes to the edge of the stage and tars the audience with a similar brush:

> My own people! Dear ones! How did you get here? So many of you! When did they unfreeze you? Why am I alone in the cage? (p. 195)

Then in a satirical parallel to the spectacle that ends Mystery-Bouffe, Prisypkin invites the audience on stage to share the cage with him; and in Mayakovsky's view, to share the guilt of betraying the Revolution.

The theatricalism in Mayakovsky's plays reflects the close working arrangement between the playwright and Meyerhold. From the beginning, Mayakovsky attended rehearsals of all his plays produced by Meyerhold; and it is probable that the final version of Mystery-Bouffe, The Bedbug, and The Bathhouse incorporate ideas inspired by the gifted director. Meyerhold's chronicler Edward Braun supports this supposition.

> So close were the two—both as men and as artists—that to read Mayakovsky today is to sense the true atmosphere of Meyerhold's theatre.[1]

Pirandello incorporates both theatre-wide spectacle and a show with scenic artifice into Tonight We Improvise. Here spectacle involves

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[1]Edward Braun, Meyerhold on Theatre (New York: Hill and Wang, 1969), p. 240.

the use of backstage, auditorium and theatre lobby to supplement the action on stage. At the beginning of the play, an argument is heard among the "actors" back stage behind the closed curtains (p. 8), and shortly thereafter the Character Actor is heard protesting a loud slap delivered by the Character Actress (p. 17). The action in the auditorium mostly involves Dr. Hinkfuss and the characters planted in the audience—a subject already discussed in Chapter II. Dr. Hinkfuss's other forays into the auditorium include his entrance down the aisle and onto the stage (p. 9), his directing from the front row of the orchestra (pp. 27-70), his expulsion from the theatre by the actors (p. 76), and his return at the close of the performance (p. 96). The director also stages a Sicilian religious procession that enters from the back of the auditorium, moving down the center aisle and onto the stage (pp. 26-28).

The most remarkable aspect of Pirandello's theatre-wide spectacle in Tonight We Improvise is found in the Interlude between the Second and Third Act. The principal characters of the play appear in the lobby joining the audience at intermission, with each still in his role, behaving as though he were merely a part of the audience. Grouping themselves at four different places in the lobby, "each group, independent from the other, performs a simultaneous scene" (p. 39). The short scenes do nothing to advance the plot of the play within the play, but merely comment on what has thus far taken place. The Interlude in the lobby also shows Pirandello manipulating an important time convention of the theatre: the intermission. Traditionally the intermission is a recess in the performance period of a play, but in Tonight We Improvise,

Pirandello gives his audience no respite from their involvement in the drama.

The world of Tonight We Improvise is the entire theatre; stage and backstage area, auditorium, and lobby. One theme of the play concerns creativity in the theatre, and Pirandello makes full use of the physical theatre to illustrate the possibilities that the theatre offers the dramatist.

Similarly, the world of Six Characters in Search of an Author is the theatre, and creativity its theme. Albert Bermel describes the play's theme as theatre "depicting itself as the art—that is, the act of creating theatre."[1] The spectacle at the end of Six Characters broadens the arena of this creative act to include the backstage and lobby along with the stage and auditorium; and the awesome mystery of theatrical creation is dramatized by the events comprising the spectacle.

First we hear the Actors back stage, moved but confused by what they have witnessed on stage. They leave wondering if the Little Girl's drowning and the Boy's suicide were part of life or merely a convincing theatrical performance. Next, the badly unsettled Director suddenly finds himself facing—because of an electrician's mistake—the larger than life silhouettes of the surviving Characters projected on stage by a light from backstage. This ominous image so terrifies the Director that he runs away. The Father, Mother, and Son then come on stage and form a tableau which expresses their unresolved drama. The Stepdaughter

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[1]Bermel, Contradictory Characters, p. 143.

does not join them, and leaves the theatre through the auditorium.[1] She pauses twice to look back and laugh at the Characters on stage who remain frozen in their tragic attitudes. Then she passes through the lobby, her cynical laughter still audible. In Six Characters in Search of an Author, Pirandello uses all the spaces of a theatre—stage, backstage, auditorium, and lobby—in his dramatization of the art and act of creating theatre.

Why does Pirandello thrust the action of these two plays into the auditorium and lobby of the theatre. He derails illusionism in the plays and demonstrates how the spatial characteristics of theatre can be used by the playwright. According to Roger Oliver, Pirandello considered the theatre

> an artifice that shows the audience certain insights into life while remaining separate and clearly discernable from it.[2]

To show the audience how life and theatre interact but yet remain clearly separate from one another, Pirandello has his actors occasionally bring the performance of the play right into their midst.

Scenic Shows

The scenic show operates almost as a performance in itself, apart from its contribution to the play's dramatic action. The identification

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[1]In Eric Bentley's translation of Pirandello's revised version of this play (see Bibliography), the Stepdaughter—along with the other Characters—also enters through the auditorium.

[2]Roger W. Oliver, Dreams of Passion: The Theatre of Luigi Pirandello (New York: New York University Press, 1979), p. 120.

of the scenic show as theatrical artifice is maintained no matter how it is incorporated into the play nor what purpose it serves. The examples which follow illustrate how theatrical conventions associated with scenery, props and stage lighting were used. Later examples demonstrate the use of conventions which organize stage space and those which denote the passage of time during the performance of a play.

Jean Cocteau is a leading exponent of the direct and playful use of scenic artifice in drama. In Orpheus, the pompous police Commissioner is unaware that he is interrogating the plaster bust of Orpheus. When he finally makes the discovery, he refuses to accept the magical nature of the performance he has witnessed. Here Cocteau creates an analogy to those audiences who refuse to accept the innovative concepts and experimental techniques of the theatre.

David Grossvogel states that Cocteau endows the objects he puts on stage with a life and vitality often denied to his characters.[1] This would certainly hold true in the scene between the obtuse Commissioner and the playful plaster bust.

The scenic show in Orpheus is contrived by the playwright as a performance of theatrical artifice, and he leaves little doubt about who is putting on the show when the head on the pedestal identifies itself to the Commissioner as Jean Cocteau.

The scenic show in Shvarts's The Dragon also features a severed head—three of them, in fact; and the playwright has the heads put on

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[1]David I. Grossvogel, 20th Century French Drama (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970), p. 59.

a show before they are detached as well as after. The heads belong to a cruel Dragon who holds a town captive until he is killed by Lancelot, "a distant connection" of the famous knight errant (p. 10). Shvarts's satiric fable demonstrates how tyrants and power-seekers control a people, and sap their will to resist.

Shvarts's play depicts the Dragon's tyranny—both its reign and its demise—is a theatrical performance. The Dragon puts on a scenic show with its three prop-like heads, displaying them one at a time or all together. The heads can be taken to personify tyranny's three agencies of power and control over a captive people: the army, the bureaucracy, and the figurehead ruler. The first head the Dragon shows belongs to a "man of military bearing" (p. 8). He then switches to a "serious, self-controlled, narrow faced" head (p. 10); and later to the head of a "deathly pale old man" (p. 30). Before the battle with Lancelot, the Dragon puts on a show with all three heads—now grown gigantic and ferocious, to terrorize his adversary. "Admire me before we begin to fight," the Dragon demands (p. 41).

The Dragon's three heads—cut off by Lancelot during the airborne battle—fall into the town square. Their pleas for water are ignored by the Quisling Burgomaster, who is moving with haste to fill the power vacuum. Only the wounded Lancelot gives each head a drink before it expires.

The first scenic show put on by the three heads is a display of the Dragon's brand of tyranny, while their last scenic show dramatizes the destruction of the tyranny's apparatus. Each head, speaking for

a particular agency of tyranny, bemoans its fate in a characteristic fashion. The military blames its downfall solely on tactical errors: "If I had only used my second right paw." The greedy and corrupt bureaucracy ponders its abandonment by a populace which had so recently been forthcoming with favors and bribes; and the head representing the old dictator or ruling clique laments the absence of "at least one truly loyal follower" (pp. 48-49). The dialogue of the dying heads satirically reveals the tendency of tyranny to attribute its defeat to betrayal rather than to the earned hatred and rejection by its victims.

Mayakovsky was a graphic artist as well as a playwright, and he endowed his plays with strong visual elements. These were meant to evoke and excite in much the same way that he used words in his plays. In the three plays that Mayakovsky wrote about the aftermath of the Russian Revolution, he uses scenic effects to help express his view of the Revolution, as he sees its goals corrupted by the new Soviet bureaucracy. The jubilation of Mystery-Bouffe gives way to growing skepticism in The Bedbug, and then erupts into scathing cynicism in The Bathhouse. The Communist utopia promised "tomorrow" in the first play is postponed for fifty years in the second, and then to the year 2030 where it is practically out of reach, in the third.

In each of these plays, Mayakovsky uses scenic show to help create the utopian world he first envisions, but eventually comes to doubt. The locomotive and steamship materializing out of the clouds in Mystery-Bouffe (p. 119) is only a scenic show, the author tells us; promising that "tomorrow, reality will replace this theatrical trash" (p. 137).

Voting in the efficiently organized Communist world of the future is made into a scenic show in The Bedbug, as prop arms and hands register the results of a world-wide referendum (p. 170). Finally, the inaccessibility of the Communist utopia is scenically represented in The Bathhouse, by the pyrotechnical displays attending the appearance (p. 239) and departure (p. 263) of the time machine.

Mayakovsky's involvement in the staging of his plays included the selection and guidance of the scenic designers. For Meyerhold's production of The Bedbug, the playwright divided the chores between a team of designers. He personally approved the set and costume designs, and supervised the acquisition of the props.[1] As a playwright, Mayakovsky seemed comfortable in the world of the theatre—in control of its performance conventions, and applying them with equal assurance both in the writing of his plays and in their theatrical production.

In Tonight We Improvise, Pirandello openly puts on a scenic show to both illustrate and criticize the use of scenic illusion in the performance of drama. Pirandello has Dr. Hinkfuss, the character who portrays the stage director, arrange a scenic tableau on stage during the Interlude section of the play. The tableau represents "an airfield at night, under a magnificent starry sky" (p. 47). Everything is small in order to convey a birds-eye view of the airfield. Every detail is realistic: buildings with lit windows, miniature airplanes, and even the roar of an airplane engine.

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[1]Woroszylski, Life of Mayakovsky, pp. 441-442.

When the scenic effects have been completed to his satisfaction, Dr. Hinkfuss tells the actual audience in the theatre that he has demonstrated how a scenic show is put on right under their very eyes and even with their "collaboration" (p. 48). Pirandello here points out that illusionist effects in the theatre work only because the audience accepts them.

By openly putting on a scenic show, Pirandello reveals the artifice behind illusionist effects in the theatre. He demonstrates how displays of scenic illusion interfere with the performance of drama, and how these scenic shows can become separate performances apart from the dramatic action of the play. He suggests that scenic shows are used because they offer the theatre an easy way to entertain and please audiences.

Hinkfuss characterizes the theatre as "a gigantic machine" that hungers to be nourished by playwrights who will consent to feed it the kind of plays it thrives on (p. 48). Bulgakov, in The Crimson Island, similarly portrays the theatre by showing it overwhelm poor Dymogatsky's play with its scenic conventions and scenic shows.

During preparations for the rehearsal of Dymogatsky's play "The Crimson Island," a piece of scenery depicting a smoking volcano is ordered moved by the director's assistant. In response, "the volcano moves modestly to the side" (p. 258). Although we quickly learn that the unseen stagehand Volodya is behind the shifting of scenery, the scenic artifacts start to act on their own volition—as performers responding to direction and cues. A moment after the volcano's move, "a banana tree descends softly from the sky and lands on Dymogatsky." While

obviously an accident, the crushing of the playwright by the scenic piece foreshadows the fate he will suffer in the theatre.

The hectic, last-minute scramble to begin the rehearsal—the actors dressing and making up, the orchestra assembling and tuning up—also involves the scenic elements. In response to the assistant-director's request for the backdrop, one showing a Gothic cathedral "creeps down" into position. Obviously wrong for the play, it quickly goes up and is replaced by a proper backdrop, which makes "a gloomy noise" as it descends (pp. 264-265). While we know that Volodya is pulling the strings, the scenic artifacts, nevertheless, seem to imitate the temperamental characteristics of the actors.

Within the run-through of "The Crimson Island," Bulgakov shows us scenic artifacts performing on cue—like actors. For example, when Farra-Teytey warns that the volcano is glowing "with an ominous flame," such a glow materializes over the scenic piece (p. 270). And when Sizi-Buzi orders that a cup of "foreign firewater" be given the natives, the opened barrel immediately spurts "a blue flame" (p. 279). However, the most impressive response to cue by scenic artifacts follows Kiri-Kuki's orders to "redress" the natives in the color of revolution. Their white feather instantly falls off, "and crimson ones grow upon their heads." The conversion of the natives even affects their lanterns, which "instead of white, begin to burn pink" (pp. 288-289).

Bulgakov ends his play with an outburst of scenic artifice, as a final reprise of his theme. "Fiery letters," advertising "The Crimson Island," flare up on the scenery and in the audience, to once again demonstrate the crude and vulgar energy of the theatre (p. 347).

From its earliest period, the theatre has developed conventions of space and time to facilitate the performance of drama. In the Greek theatre, characters entering from one side were seen as coming from the immediate locale of the play, while characters coming from distant places entered from the other side. The opening Chorus of Shakespeare's Henry V challenges the space and time conventions of the Elizabethan theatre to "hold the vasty fields of France," and turn "the accomplishment of many years into an hour-glass." And the imaginary fourth wall of the stage still remains a spatial convention for realistic drama. The last group of examples in this chapter will show the playwright creating a scenic show with performance conventions of space and time.

In the Epilogue to The Mother, Witkiewicz manipulates the scenic conventions which govern stage entrances and exists. Gerould and Durer point out that in this portion of The Mother, "all spatial-temporal relationships have been deranged."[1]

To dramatize the derangement of spatial relationships, the playwright pits one set of conventions for entrances and exits against another. Leon's opening speech to the audience activates the spatial conventions belonging to presentational theatre's version of the stage. However, his announcement that the Epilogue takes place in a room without doors or windows (in which he and the other characters are confined) opposes the presentational-stage conventions with those of illusionistic stage performance. The Unknown Woman, like Leon, submits to the

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[1]Witkiewicz, The Madman and the Nun, p. 114.

realistic conventions while recognizing the presence of the other; she tells Leon his long speeches bore the audience (p. 155).

The two sets of stage conventions which operate in the Epilogue to The Mother underscore the notion of the plurality of realities inherent in Witkiewicz's play. The entrance of Calfskin and the six workers by a tube descending from above (p. 160), and Leon's exit—pushed down the stage trapdoor (p. 162), demonstrate the conventions of pure stage artifice. The escape of the other characters through a secret door employs a spatial device of illusionist stage presentation.

The two different conventions governing entrances and exits parallel the two different dimensions of space (and time) which exist simultaneously in the Epilogue. The scenic show, of which these stage conventions are an integral part, is actually being put on by the playwright himself. He slyly tells us so through the Unknown Woman's declaration that, "the whole thing . . . has been brilliantly put on, although no one knows by whom" (p. 157).

E. E. Cummings puts on a scenic show in Him with the invisible fourth wall convention of the illusion of reality type of stage presentation. The playwright rotates the room setting of the Him and me scenes so that the invisible wall of the first scene between them becomes visible as a side wall, then as the back wall, and other side wall; returning to its original position as the invisible wall in the last scene of the play. Through a clockwise rotation of the room setting, each of the three visible walls in the first him-me scene takes a turn in becoming the invisible wall separating the stage from the audience.

The supposed purpose of the transparent wall of the stage is to enhance the illusion of reality of the stage picture, but in Him Cummings unmasks the convention as merely another form of scenic artifice. Me's primping in an invisible mirror in the first him-me scene, and Him's exit through an invisible door at the end of their third scene, combine with the rotating walls to show that the invisible fourth wall is actually part of the scenery; and when Me demolishes the fourth wall at the end of the play—by acknowledging the audience—the convention is properly seen as scenic artifice. Cummings turns this hallowed convention of the illusionistic theatre into a scenic show to undermine "the notion of a play as a literal representation of reality" (p. 333).

In Christmas at the Ivanovs', Alexander Vvedensky uses performance conventions of time—from the logical to the highly absurd—to ridicule the use of such conventions in the theatre. The nine scenes of the play are numbered consecutively even though the play is divided into four acts. Here the author reminds us that act and scene divisions are time conventions of drama, and regardless of what dramatic time sequence the arrangement of scenes represents, the scenes follow one another consecutively in performance time on the stage. On this logical note, Vvedensky introduces the absurdist scenic show that he has created around the relationship of dramatic time conventions to those of stage performance time.

Vvedensky compares the play's dramatic time with its performance time according to aspects of time common to both: sequence and duration. He shows the play's dramatic time sequence to be compatible with the

order of the scenes; even allowing for such conventions as flashbacks (scene 4), and simultaneous scenes (1 and 2, 5 and 6, 7 and 8). The play's sequence by dramatic time is charted by a clock constantly in view on stage, which records when a scene begins and when it ends. The clock doesn't actually keep time; it only locates each scene in the dramatic chronology of the play. Such a clock and its time keeping is, of course, conspicuous scenic artifice.

However, the duration of each scene as indicated by the clock's hands incongruously juxtaposes the two time conventions. Scenes which actually take five to ten minutes show one to three hours of elapsed dramatic time. Applied to duration, the clock's scenic show mocks the conventions of dramatic time in relation to performance time.

The play's most absurd contrast between drama-designated time and theatrical performance time lies in the age-behavior ratio of the seven "children." From Petya who is one year old to Misha and Dunya who are seventy-six and eighty-two, respectively, all the "children" behave as precocious adolescents.

The final juxtaposition of dramatic and performance time finds them once again compatible. As everyone dies in the last scene, the face of the clock on stage is blank. When dramatic time runs out, the clock tells us, so does performance time.

In Act II of Ondine, Jean Giradoux puts on a show with time conventions of drama and stage performance in order to satirize the well-made play, ultra-realism, and theatre producers who cater to the whims of the public. The playwright attacks these targets through the character

of the Illusionist who conjures up spectacles for the entertainment of the King's court. Responding to requests from the Lord Chamberlain, the Illusionist arranges encounters between Hans and Bertha many months before they would take place in the normal course of events. The prelude and performance of these leaps ahead in time direct the playwright's ridicule to the intended recipient. These time leaps both advance the plot of the play and create an inner theatrical performance which satirizes the time conventions of the well-made play.

Giraudoux satirizes the meticulously prepared plot events in the well-made play through the outlandish coincidences that the Illusionist arranges to bring about an "accidental" meeting between Hans and Bertha. Involved are a halberdier slipping on a banana peel and a falcon being diverted by a gazelle. The Illusionist has the banana and gazelle—normally unknown in these parts—coincidentally supplied by a visiting envoy from Africa. To ridicule the intricate dramaturgy of the well-made play, Giraudoux, through the Illusionist, makes a spectacle of the familiar dramatic time convention—the chance meeting.

The playwright further spoofs the well-made play by having the carefully arranged meeting between Hans and Bertha misfire, requiring the performance to be repeated. The second time around, Hans in pursuit of his dog and Bertha in pursuit of her bird collide, and the scene which normally would take place in six months takes place before the concealed Chamberlain and courtiers (p. 209).

Giraudoux also satirizes ultra-realism in theatre performance by showing the audience aging as the play advances in time. The

Illusionist accedes to the court's desire for a preview of another inevitable encounter between Hans and Bertha, but the scene is interrupted by an alarmed Chamberlain who has suddenly sprouted a beard. It is, the Illusionist explains, eight months later, and the Chamberlain has grown a beard. When the courtiers demand to see the scene in which Hans ultimately betrays Ondine, the Chamberlain, to his horror, finds himself bald and toothless. Again the Illusionist explains that time has passed to bring about the event—this time five years—and asks if the performance should continue. "No," the Chamberlain exclaims, and calls for an intermission to end the Illusionist's—and the author's—Act (p. 232). Through the Hans-Bertha scenes of this Act, Giraudoux puts on a show of time conventions used in theatre performance. In the first Hans-Bertha scene, its performers miscue and have to begin again. In their second scene, Hans and Bertha stop for an audience (the Chamberlain's) interruption, and then continue their performance after the interruption ends (p. 21).

Theatrical producers and managers who put on only what the audience wants—regardles of quality—are satirized in Act II of Ondine. At the opening of the Act, the Superintendent of Royal Theatres explains the secret of his success.

> Each Theatre . . . is built for one play and one play only. The whole secret of management is to discover what that play is. . . . For years I managed a theatre which bumbled along miserably with the classics until suddenly one night it found its joy in a bawdy farce with sailors. (p. 204)

The Illusionist who stages scenes of the future at the request of his audience personifies, in Giraudoux's satire, the theatrical producer who cynically caters to the whims of his audience.

The dilemma of the producer trying to fathom and satisfy the tastes of his audience is satirized when the Illusionist asks the insatiable courtiers which scene in the play they want to see next. Their choice of scenes—all from other plays, the Illusionist has to tell them—run the gamut of the theatrical preferences of Giraudoux's audience. One wants melodrama: "The scene in which the knight in the nick of time saves Bertha from the dragon." Another wants romantic tragedy: "The one in which Hans unlaces the helmet of the knight he has killed and it is the Lady Bertha." And a third prefers slapstick farce: "The scene in which he knight, while twirling a ball on his nose—" (p. 212). For his part the Chamberlain admires the well-made play, and wishes that life would unfold with "the concision and logic that a good play requires" (p. 208).

When we witness the Illusionist conjuring up his entertainment spectacles, we naturally are aware that it is the playwright himself who is manipulating the time conventions of drama and theatrical performance. He is doing this for two reasons: one apparent and one implied. The satire on certain dramatic styles and theatrical practices is hard to miss; but the playwright's other reason is only hinted at through the chamberlain, who declares:

> . . . life is a very poorly constructed play. As a rule the curtain goes up in the wrong places, the climaxes don't come off, and the denouement is interminably postponed. . . . (p. 208)

Giraudoux first expresses through a buffoon the premise that he later dramatizes through the Illusionist: that the playwright cannot slavishly copy life, but must rearrange its events in order to create drama.

When the playwright incorporates theatrical performance conventions of time, space, and scenic artifice into his play, the resulting spectacles and scenic shows allow the playwright to determine the nature and degree of the play's theatricality. The examples of theatricalism in this and the four preceding chapters are connected mostly to the performance conventions of the legitimate theatre—the theatre form which exclusively produces drama. In tapping these performance conventions, the playwright demonstrates that the theatre can be a source of dramatic creation as well as a consequence of it.

CHAPTER VI

MINING THE POPULAR ENTERTAINMENTS

The avant-garde playwrights of this period could assume that most European audiences had some knowledge of the contemporary forms of the variety stage, circus, carnival, the movies, and radio broadcasting. The French Grand Guignol had achieved sufficient notoriety to be known to theatre audiences of other European countries, and the American carnival form, the Wild-West Show, was known to many Europeans of the inter-war period, either through earlier tours of such shows or through a general interest in American cowboy folklore.

Performance conventions of the popular entertainments differ from those of the legitimate theatre in that there is less emphasis on the content of the convention and more on the technique and style of its execution. Whereas the performance conventions of the legitimate theatre serve principally to enhance the presentation of the play, the conventions of the popular entertainments exalt the skill, daring, and elegance of the performer. The emphasis is on thrills, novelty, and unusual technical prowess. Nevertheless, the avant-garde playwright found many ways to adapt these characteristics and conventions to his play. Examples are arranged according to the form of popular entertainment which supplied the performance convention.

Grand Guignol

In form and content, Grand Guignol is a popular entertainment closely related to the legitimate theatre. From the turn of the century through the twenties and thirties in France, Grand Guignol consisted of a bill of short horror plays, whose themes were "death, crime, and insanity . . . tempered with sex, vengeance, and torture."[1] The plays were realistic in setting and circumstance, with intricate scenic artifice which graphically portrayed onstage violence and heightened the mood of horror. Scenic effects included melodramatic lighting, exaggerated sound effects, and specially devised props, make-up, and scenery. Trick props and scenic machinery were used to create the illusion of murder, torture, and dismemberment; while special make-up was used to show the gruesome results. Grand Guignol depended on precision and coordination of performance. Performers had to be both "actor and sleight-of-hand artist," who could portray emotions, and at the same time execute the tricks producing the scenic effects.[2]

Many of the plays examined in this study contain killings and maimings, but the spirit of Grand Guignol exists only in those plays which put on a show of the ghastly and gruesome nature of the violent act. Witkiewicz's grotesque parodies, in particular, offer examples of torture and murder which mimic the conventions of Grand Guignol. In The Pragmatists, Von Talek smashes Masculette's head with a large

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[1]Frantisek Deak, "Theatre du Grand Guignol," The Drama Review, March 1974, p. 39.

[2]Ibid., p. 42.

hammer. In the following scene Masculette's corpse sits on the sofa, until commanded by the mysterious Mummy to rise, fall to the floor, and crawl out the door.

The shocking murder and grotesque disposition of the corpse affords a view of the play's main adversaries. Von Telek, the worshipper of strength, and would-be "absolute dictator" (p. 29) kills Masculette as she pleads for his love and protection. Plasfodor, the self-absorbed, but emotionally dead artist, can only react to the crime by complaining that Masculette made his cup of chocolate "too sweet today" (p. 31). Von Telek and Plasfodor enter as the corpse of Masculette crawls out the door. "They step over the corpse without noticing it" (p. 32). The Grand-Guignol-like episode reveals the similar reactions of the disengaged intellectual and the ruthless opportunist to life and death.

There is no way of knowing for certain whether Witkiewicz deliberately intended to mimic the Grand Guignol in Masculette's murder. What can be ascertained in this and the other examples of the group, is that the playwright was putting on a show with theatrical performance conventions related to Grand Guignol. Witkiewicz also uses the Grand Guignol convention of off-stage cries and groans in The Pragmatists. In the play's final scene, the terrifying Mummy leads a seemingly helpless Plasfodor and Mammalia off-stage. After a few moments we hear "a frightful scream from Mammalia, as if all her skin had suddenly been torn off at once, and then some unintelligible cries and gibbering from Plasfodor" (p. 35). Mammalia's scream is particularly shocking because she had been totally mute until this moment in the play.

Witkiewicz's adaptation of Grand Guignol techniques is quite evident in The Madman and The Nun. The locale of the play is described as "a cell for raving maniacs" in a lunatic asylum (p. 11). Daniel Gerould, in Witkacy, points out:

> The Paris Grand Guignol in the first decade of the twentieth century specialized in short plays of insanity and violence in settings such as doctors' offices and mental institutions, and Witkacy often turned to popular literature of the guignol variety for many of the externals of his plays, particularly their sensational devices.[1]

In The Madman and The Nun, the madman-poet Walpurg kills the psychiatrist Dr. Bidello in a grotesque way: he seizes the doctor by the hair and strikes him on the head with a pencil (p. 23). Walpurg's revolt and his murder of one of the asylum's directors recalls the plot of a famous Grand Guignol play first performed in 1903—André de Lorde's Le Système du Docteur Goudron et du Professeur Plume. In this play the inmates take control of the insane asylum and horribly murder its director.[2]

Witkiewicz appropriates a trick stage-effect characteristic of the Grand Guignol, and uses it in Walpurg's act of hanging himself. Making a noose of his straightjacket, Walpurg moves as if to jump off the table. At that instant the curtain falls and a dummy representing the hanged Walpurg is quickly substituted. The curtain rises to reveal the gruesome sight of a hanging body (pp. 28-29).

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[1] Daniel Gerould, Witkacy: Stanislaw Ignacy Witkiewicz as an Imaginative Writer (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1981), p. 218.

[2] For an English translation of this play, by John Towsen, see The Drama Review, March 1974, pp. 44-52.

Two of Witkiewicz's protagonists—Florestan Snakesnout in The New Deliverance, and Leon Eely in The Mother—meet an end which mimics the Grand Guignol exhibition of torture and gruesome murder. Florestan is tortured by Six Thugs wielding pincers, hammers and a blow-torch (p. 111). Leon is suffocated by Six Workers until he disappears from view (p. 162). (Actually the actor is slipped down a trap door in the stage while he is hidden from the audience.) The two victims share certain similarities: each has caused the death of his mother, and each suffers his fate at the hands of six torturers or assassins.

The last Act of Witkiewicz's The Shoemakers features the multiple killing of Sajetan, and the torture of Scurvy. The garrulous old shoemaker is hit on the head with an axe (p. 275), shot through the ear (p. 277), and then again in the belly (p. 279); but keeps on talking throughout these assaults, refusing to die. Scurvy's torturer, the Duchess, feeds him pills to give him "inexhaustible sexual power so you'll be eternally unsatisfied" (p. 268). The pills increase Scurvy's already unbearable lust for the Duchess, whom he can't get at because he has been chained like a dog to a tree trunk. During the rest of the Act Scurvy howls in a torment of unsatisfied sexual desire, until his heart and—as the Duchess speculates—"probably everything else" bursts (p. 287). In The Shoemakers, as in the other plays examined, Witkiewicz creates a grotesque parody using techniques of torture and murder which are the trademark of Grand Guignol.

The principal characters of Gombrowicz's Ivona, Princess of Burgundia want to kill the play's heroine because she makes them all feel

terrible guilt. The King proposes strangling her or frightening her to death, while the Queen is preparing to poison Ivona. As the two argue about how to kill Ivona, their son the prince enters with knife in hand, and a basket presumably to dispose of the body (pp. 63-72). The royal Chamberlain dismisses all these methods as too base, and comes up with an acceptable way for royalty to kill: give a banquet and browbeat the timid girl into eating fish filled with bones. As the terrified guests watch, Ivona chokes to death on a fish bone.

Grand Guignol conventions emphasize the form of the violence as well as its criminality. The more devilish the conception and bizarre the execution, the greater the effect on the audience. In Gombrowicz's play the meek, submissive Ivona is the epitome of the helpless victim. While the other guests are openly warned not to eat the fish, Ivona is easily bullied into eating her portion, and then is virtually commanded by the King to choke to death on it.

> KING: (Gets up, points menacingly to IVONA) She has choked. A bone in her throat. A bone, I say. (p. 81)

Too timid to disobey, Ivona chokes to death. The utter defenselessness of the victim coupled with the ghastliness of the method link this murder to the conventions of the Grand Guignol. However, since Gombowicz's goal in the play is satire, these conventions have been adapted to a new purpose.

The Variety Stage

The playwright of the between-wars era and his audience had variety entertainment which included music-hall, vaudeville, and burlesque.

The three genres bore many similarities, the most notable that each was usually performed on the stage of a theatre-type building. Music-hall and vaudeville are nearly identical in basic form and performance conventions; burlesque has forms and conventions uniquely its own.

Music-hall and vaudeville were so similar during this period that it is often impossible to discern which form supplied the convention used by the avant-garde playwright. It is always much easier to pinpoint the burlesque convention. The only real distinction between music-hall and vaudeville lies in the national origin of each. The term music-hall, as a description of variety entertainment, originated with the British and was widely used in other European countries during the inter-war period. Vaudeville was the name given to such entertainment by American practitioners.

The earliest music-hall was built by Charles Morton, around 1850, to house entertainment for the patrons of his tavern the Canterbury Arms in London. During the next ten years many such music-halls were built adjoining taverns. The chairman or master of ceremonies of the program of songs, dances, and comic routines was usually the tavern proprietor; and the performers in early music-hall were amateurs. By the turn of the century, music-hall was an established form of popular entertainment in Britain, completely professional and housed in theatres. A bill of acts at that time might contain several comedians and comedi-ennes, dialect comedians such as negro and Irish, serio-comics (females who did sad-funny routines), baritone vocalists, jugglers, a midget act, and female dancers who might be billed as "transformation" dancers

or "American Serpentine" dancers.[1] Between the two World Wars, stars of American vaudeville, such as Sophie Tucker, played the famous London music-halls the Hippodrome and the Palladium.

American vaudeville was born in 1881 at Tony Pastor's Fourteenth Street Saloon in New York City.[2] His was the first saloon to provide a bill of variety entertainment meant to play to female as well as male audiences. Before this, variety theatre in America featured an explicitly raw form of what was later to become burlesque, and intended only for male audiences. Like its British counterpart, vaudeville flourished in the early decades of the twentieth century. Performers toured America, playing in big cities and small towns. Programs balanced comic sketches and routines with song and dance numbers, and included novelty acts such as magicians, jugglers, and ventriloquists. The demise of vaudeville was marked by the closing of New York City's Palace theatre in 1932, although some theatres continued to operate after this date.

Burlesque in the United States had its origin in a form of variety theatre entertainment which featured "filthy dialogue, libidinous scenes, licentious songs and dances."[3] Around 1900 Burlesque was cleaned up somewhat and assumed the form that it maintained during the inter-war years. In its "clean" form Burlesque consisted of low comedy skits

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[1]M. Willson Disher, Music Hall Parade (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1938), p. 23.

[2]Douglas Gilbert, American Vaudeville, Its Life and Times (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1968), p. 10.

[3]Irving Zeidman, The American Burlesque Show (New York: Hawthorne Books, Inc., 1967), p. 245.

and routines built around the theme of sex and seduction, and minimally clad females performing sexually suggestive dance movements. In 1920 the striptease was introduced and became the main attraction of the burlesque show. Burlesque's stars were the stripteasers, but "top banana" comics gained fame in Broadway's lavish reviews of the period and in the movies. Burlesque in Europe operated under the name Follies—the most famous and elegant version being the Folies Bergères in Paris. Some cities of the United States banned burlesque in the 1930s, but this form of variety theatre managed to survive into the post-World War II era.

Avant-garde playwrights found many performance conventions to draw upon in the European and Amerian versions of variety theatre entertainment. Examples of how playwrights used these conventions are arranged under subheadings which identify the principal performance forms of the variety stage.

Comedy sketches

These are short, self-contained comedy scenes with three or more characters. Plot construction and character delineation were sparse, and the humor relied on a basic situation and its subsequent incidents. Donald Oliver states that "the only rule governing them was that they end with a blockbuster laugh."[1]

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[1]Donald Oliver, The Greatest Revue Sketches (New York: Avon Books, 1982), Preface, p. xiii.

The Magic Chair (1917) is a one-act comedy by the Hungarian playwright Frigyes Karinthy, which uses the format of the vaudeville sketch to ridicule the hypocrisy and profiteering of the bureaucracy. The core of the sketch is the revenge of a genius inventor upon the bureaucracy that neglected him. All the comic incidents of the skeletal plot stem from the fact that the inventor has planted a chair in the office of the Secretary of State which is endowed with the power to make anyone who sits in it speak the truth.

The play begins with a demonstration of the chair's power, so that the audience can gleefully anticipate the fate of anyone who sits in it. This is followed by a series of comic turns in which each stock character begins by telling characeristic lies aimed either at inflating his importance or concealing his true activities and feelings. In the first incident, the official who refused to issue a patent to the Genius sits in the magic chair in the midst of flattering the Secretary of State. Instantly the flowery praise turns into horrendous insult. Shocked out of the chair, the terrified petty official is further comically confused when the Secretary of State replaces him in the chair and proceeds to confirm the accuracy of the insults expressed (pp. 298-299). The incident which immediately follows is a repeat of the flattery-turned-to-insult pattern, as the Secretary of State sits in the magic chair while speaking on the telephone to his superior the Cabinet Minister (pp. 300-301).

Karinthy follows the vaudeville sketch's practice of packing in as many variations of the basic joke as possible. In rapid succession

the magic chair reveals a pretentious journalist as a vulgarian, the Cabinet Minister as a swindler, the wife of the Secretary of State as an adulteress, and an eminent physician as a quack. Each incident is a bead strung on the playlet's slender plot thread, and the characters are all the familiar stereotypes required by the vaudeville sketch format. The comic surprise resulting from each encounter with the magic chair is anticipated, but nonetheless delightful in its manifestation.

Scene V of Vvedensky's Christmas at the Ivanovs' is constructed around a situation smacking of a vaudeville sketch; an insane asylum where the doctor in charge is apparently as crazy as his patients. The Doctor's first encounter is with an Attendant who is as deranged as his boss. Next he conducts a zany examination of a new patient, in this case the Nurse who has cut off the head of one of the Ivanovs' children in a previous scene. She readily admits her insanity, but the Doctor declares her thoroughly sane, and orders her to "go have yourself executed" (p. 177). Vvedensky uses a stock vaudeville situation to underscore a central concern of the play: the difficulty of accurately determining who is mad and who is sane.

E. E. Cummings mixes "surrealist techniques with vaudeville skits" in Him, to illustrate the playwright-hero's "exploration of his own medium," and to parody vaudeville and similar forms of popular entertainment.[1] The Second Act of Him is made up of vaudeville and burlesque skits which represent the play created by the playwright who is the main character of Him's play.

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[1]Dukore and Gerould, Avant-Garde Drama, p. 333.

Scene 2 parodies the timeworn comic situation of the drunks on their way home after a big night out. The "corpulent middle-aged men" who stagger on stage present three caricatures of drunken monomania. Through their comically slurred speech we learn that the first drunk is looking for a racquet to play tennis, the second only wants one more drink, while the third is trying to avoid any trouble with the police. They encounter an ugly spinster whose own monomania is to be taken advantage of by a man. To her utter disappointment the first drunk only wants her candle which he thinks is a tennis racquet, and the third drunk mistakes her for a policeman, because she is wearing black pajamas, and profusely apologizes for the behavior of the first. In this scene, Cummings exploits the basic conventions of the standard vaudeville sketch: its stereotyped characters, stock situation, and slapstick incidents.

In the vaudeville sketch which comprises Scene 6 of the second Act, Cummings parodies these same conventions, but adds a surrealist ingredient: the terrifying mystery of the unconscious. This scene pits a caricature of the elegant English toff against two stereotypes of the dumb New York cop. In consecutive incidents each cop character performs a similar routine of comic belligerency and suspicion over the huge trunk carried on the back of the Englishman. In response to the first interrogation, the Englishman matter-of-factly identifies the staggering burden as "my unconscious" (p. 377). When the first cop investigates the contents of the trunk, he recoils "as if from an inconceivable horror," and falls dead. The same fate befalls the second cop. In spite of its macabre elements, the scene contains sufficient

slapstick—particularly in the maneuvers of the cops—to identify it as a parody of a vaudeville sketch.

The two sketches described combine with the other vaudeville and burlesque routines of the play's second Act to theatricalize Him's concern with his role as a playwright. These sketches and routines also illustrate E. E. Cummings's conception of the role of popular entertainment in dramatic creation.

As Cummings does in Him, Brecht devotes a large portion of A Man's a Man to a bill of vaudeville sketches. The bill is made up of six "Numbers," each introduced by Uriah Shelley—the soldier who is masterminding the transformation of Galy Gay to Jeraiah Jip. In the context of the play, it is his show being put on; he performs as its master of ceremonies, just as Him introduces the acts of his variety show.

Uriah announces the title and basic situation of each Number, in imitation of European music-hall masters of ceremonies. The titles articulate and the sketches enact the progressive stages of Galy's entrapment in a plot designed to force him to relinquish his original identity. Each of the Numbers, with the exclusion of the Fifth, simulates the simple plot and stock characterization of the vaudeville or music-hall sketch, and each Number echoes the basic situation dear to variety show audiences—the slick operators and their dupe.

The first stage of the entrapment is to get Galy to sell a British Army elephant to Widow Begbick. Brecht borrows a familiar variety show routine to construct the elephant, placing two of the conspiring soldiers under a blanket. The one up front holds a trophy elephant's head, while

the soldier in the rear periodically empties a whiskey bottle to simulate the elephant's passing water. Galy is horrified at the sight, and the point of the first sketch is to convince Galy that this concoction is truly an elephant.

The basic format of the vaudeville sketch is the ripe situation which explodes into incidents of comic surprise and slapstick humor. In the second Number, Galy is set-up for his entrapment, as the illegal deal arranged in the first sketch is consumamted. Here Brecht adapts two elements of the "fleecing the sucker" type of vaudeville sketch: the preposterous business deal and the sucker's cooperation in his own fleecing. The dupe's greed renders him gullible to the scheme and blind to the obvious flimsiness of its machinations. In the second Number, Galy goes through with the deal, having reassured himself of the authenticity of what he is selling. "An elephant's an elephant, especially when bought," he declares (p. 116). The Second Number also contains a development typical of the vaudeville sketch: a rapid succession of surprises disconcerting to the dupe. Galy is the victim of a mock arrest for selling an army elephant. When the contraption falls apart to reveal the soldiers inside, Galy is arrested again for selling a fake elephant.

In the five numbers of Scene 9 which deal with Galy's entrapment, Brecht presents the serious issue of the "metamorphosis of a living human being" in the form of vaudeville sketches (p. 103). This reflects the influence on Brecht of the variety stage comedian Karl Valentin. It may have been in Valentin's work that Brecht saw how "a simple and

one-dimensional plot can get across an extremely complicated generalization to an audience."[1]

Comic bits and routines

Bits are unexpected comic turns injected into an ongoing act, either as physical slapstick or vigorous verbal exchanges. Bits can also be introduced as segments of a running gag—sight or sound—superimposed upon a larger routine. Comic routines are humorous talking acts performed by one or two people. Single acts include comic monologues, impersonations of celebrities, ethnic and dialect acts, and crazy-comic routines. Two-person routines are usually performed by teams consisting of a comic and a straight man, which operate within an established format and style. The bit and the routine are essentially similar in content and performance style, the major difference being that the routine is a longer, more developed and sustained entity.

Witkiewicz incorporates a vaudeville-style bit into The Shoemakers, to foreshadow the take-over by totalitarian forces which occurs at the end of the play. The bit involves a surprise that grows out of the use of a prop. The Hyperworkoid enters with what he declares is a bomb. As he throws it to the ground the other characters present scream and scramble in panic. When the bomb doesn't explode, the Hyperworkoid picks it up and demonstrates that the supposed bomb is really a thermos full of coffee. He informs the others that what has just taken place

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[1]Denis Calandra, "Karl Valentin and Bertolt Brecht," The Drama Review, March 1974, p. 86.

is "one of those symbolic comic routines" which are quite familiar to theatregoers (pp. 276-277).

When comic bits are part of a larger routine, they often are placed at the end as the final comic punch. Scenes 7 and 8 of Goll's Methusalem are parodies of eighteenth century domestic tragedy, and each ends with this type of blackout. A daughter's confession of her out of wedlock pregnancy is the theme of the first parody, and as the truth finally dawns on the naive mother, Goll has her perform a version of the delayed response vaudeville bit. Uttering her cry of pain, she delays her dead faint until she has carefully wiped the foot of the glass she is holding and puts it down on the table. Only then does she allow herself to groan and collapse. Goll uses this bit of slapstick to spoof the bourgeois German matron's dedication to cleanliness and order no matter what the circumstance.

The bit at the end of the Duel Scene—between the girl's avenging brother and the Student who dishonored her—is also a slapstick fall. Shot by the brother, the student apparently falls dead. We see his soul—symbolized by an overcoat—leave him and float upwards. Thereupon the student stands up again, and asks the brother to "say hello to your sister for me." Tipping his hat, the student jauntily departs, ending the scene (pp. 106-107). This vaudeville bit underscores the play's satirical contention that one can function quite well without a soul in this materialistic society.

One version of the running gag consists of a series of similar incidents periodically planted in an on-going routine, with the last

sprung as a comic surprise. Bulgakov uses this type of vaudeville bit in the Prologue section of The Crimson Island. The telephone rings repeatedly in the theatre director's office, interrupting him in the midst of a heated discussion with his assistant. The exchange between them is itself a vaudeville routine in comic frustration. Each telephone caller is apparently asking for complimentary tickets, and the overwrought director refuses each request with rapidly mounting annoyance. When the telephone rings again catching the director at a particularly frustrating moment with the assistant, he merely shouts his refusal at the telephone without picking up the receiver; whereupon the telephone immediately stops ringing. This vaudeville bit introduces the author's premise of his play: that the theatre and its conventions are crude and exploitative.

Shvarts's The Naked King contains several examples of the comic bit constructed in related segments. One particular kind operates by establishing a certain reality, and then comically upsetting that reality when circumstances seem to indicate its reappearance. The Princess is serenaded by two bearded Gendarmes who then ask her to pull their beards as hard as she can. The beards fall off revealing her lover and his friend, who are forced to disguise themselves to remain in the palace (pp. 161-162). In a later incident, the Princess is confronted by the bearded Prime Minister immediately after she has heard the voice of her lover serenading her again. Naturally assuming the Prime Minister's white hair and beard to be her lover's current disguise, the Princess energetically pulls on the terrified old man's beard expecting it to

fall off as before. When the beard fails to give way, she tugs at the hair and removes the Prime Minister's wig, revealing his baldness (p. 185). This bit of slapstick contributes to the play's exposure of pretense and false appearance.

Shvarts is very adept at exploiting the running gag. Ideally this bit requires the same comic turn repeated under various circumstances. Early in The Naked King, the Ladies of the Court encounter a young swineherd who has named his pigs Duchess, Countess, and Baroness. When the court Lady of that title overhears him threatening to cut the throat of the similarly named pig, she faints dead away. She recovers only to faint again when she hears the swineherd explaining to the Princess why Baroness is ready for slaughter. "Why is that lady doing somersaults all the time," the perplexed swineherd asks (p. 144). Then the Ladies of the Court encounter their zany King who announces his plans to burn them in a bonfire. This time the Ladies faint en masse. Ordering them to their feet, the King adds cutting off their heads to burning them alive. When this threat has no effect, the King adds the threat to "cut off your salaries" (p. 150). More shocked by this, the Ladies again faint dead away. The Ladies of the court represent pretentious yet fearful officialdom, and Shvarts uses a string of vaudeville bits to ridicule their behavior.

Shvarts also uses verbal cross-fire bits in The Naked King. These are brief and rapidly executed exchanges of nonsensical repartee which frequently pepper a vaudeville routine. The scene in which the King threatens to marry the Princess to a neighboring monarch erupts into a cross-fire bit:

PRINCESS: I'll pull out his whole beard.
KING: He doesn't have one.
PRINCESS: I'll yank out all his hair.
KING: He's bald.
PRINCESS: Then I'll knock out his teeth.
KING: He has false teeth. (pp. 149-150)

Whereas comic bits rely on surprise for their effect (even the running gag segments are unexpected as to when and in what form they will occur), the vaudeville routine derives the comic effect from its predictability. Once the pattern of verbal give and take, or physical slapstick is established, the humor then rests on the repetition of the basic format with variations. In this respect, the cross-fire bit is an embryo comic routine.

Goll's Methusalem contains two variations of a mechanical-man comic routine. One is performed by Methusalem's son Felix, who represents "modern mathematical man" in the author's scheme of the play (p. 90). Felix wears an expressionist version of the nut-comic's typically outlandish get-up, consisting of a telephone speaker and receiver for his mouth and nose, and a typewriter for a hat. All this is topped by antennae which light up every time he speaks; his speech consisting of a metallic recitation of stock market quotations and current news items, continually punctuated by the phrase "Allo! Allo!"

Goll uses the vaudeville comic's routine to parody the telegraphic style of expressionist dialogue, and to satirize the modern methods of bourgeois materialism. Consistent with the vaudeville comic's conventions, Felix quickly establishes a basic pattern which is repeated, while at the same time sufficiently varied. His "Allo, Allo," is an

example of the comic's signature phrase, which is used for instant and universal recognition.

The other mechanical-man comic routine in Methusalem represents Goll's satire of the mechanization and debasement of humor in a materialistic bourgeois society. A character called the Joke Box, dressed in the top hat and tails of an elegant music-hall performer, recites stock jokes in a mechanical voice, animating them with little robot-like steps and arm movements. The routine begins when Methusalem winds up the Joke Box, and "inserts a coin between his lips" (p. 84).

Ironically, the Joke Box performs a second routine immediately following the murder of Methusalem by the revolutionary mob. Activated by someone in the mob, the Joke Box clatters forward and begins performing over Methusalem's corpse—its repertoire of crude jokes a fitting eulogy to the slain bourgeois. As the Joke Box plods through its stale routine the mob scatters, creating the image of a bad performer being deserted by his audience (p. 111).

The character of the Governess in The Naked King performs a comic dialect routine. Whereas she speaks the language of the text—English in this translation—she nevertheless arranges the syntax of her dialogue into a form of fractured German. The Governess treats everyone as if they are unruly children, even ordering palace bureaucrats to "take the hands the pockets out of" (p. 1550. The comic Prussian routine performed by the Governess underscores the play's ridicule of regimentation.

In the Second Act of The Infernal Machine, Cocteau uses a comic monologue to draw a parallel between Thebes of the Oedipus myth and

Europe of the 1930s. A Theban matron unknowingly encounters the Sphinx (who is in the form of a young girl) and unburdens her troubles. Her recitation of all that is wrong with Thebes comically mirrors the social unrest and political corruption in France and much of Europe. The matron's yearning for a simple solution in the form of a dictator-rescuer must have struck a familiar chord in audiences of the 1930s. The talking routine performed by the Theban matron is aimed directly at the audience. Her lack of awareness of the true significance of her monologue (the Sphinx hardly intervenes) and her blithe ignorance of the true identity of her onstage listener heighten the comic effect of the routine.

Ghelderode states in The Ostend Interviews that he "borrowed from the music hall" for The Death of Doctor Faust.[1] In Third Episode of the play, Faust and the Actor Faust perform a rapid-fire verbal routine in the style of a team of comics. The subject of the exchange is typical of a music-hall or vaudeville routine: who actually seduced the girl—in this case Marguerite. The crux of the routine is comic misunderstanding: each is talking about a different Marguerite. Using the abrupt patter of a team of comics, Faust and the Actor Faust fruitlessly argue about where and when the seduction of Marguerite took place (p. 141).

The humor of the two person talking routine in vaudeville lay in its repeated verbal patterns, recurring key words or phrases, and the variations of the predictable response. Kharms uses this type of routine in Elizabeth Bam to poke fun at the widespread dishonesty

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[1]Michel de Ghelderode, "The Ostend Interviews," in Seven Plays, vol. 2, ed. George Hauger (New York: Hill & Wang, 1964), p. 96.

fostered by the New Economic Policy in Russia during the 1920s. Trying to avoid her unjustified arrest Elizabeth turns the prosecutors against each other. Their argument reaches its climax in this exchange:

SECOND VOICE: . . . tell me, am I a crook?
FIRST VOICE: Forget it, will you?
SECOND VOICE: What, according to you I am a crook?
FIRST VOICE: Yes, a crook!
SECOND VOICE: Oh, so according to you I am a crook. . . . (p. 121)

In The Shadow, Shvarts turns the fear and suspicion of the bureaucracy into a vaudeville routine. The Prime Minister and Finance Minister of the mythical kingdom (which can be seen to represent Soviet Russia, Fascist Germany, or any totalitarian regime) hold their conference in a park to avoid being spied upon. While pretending to play chess they converse in a comically cryptic language designed to thwart eavesdroppers. The exchange parodies the rapid-fire one-liners of the vaudeville team.

PRIME MINISTER: Health?
MINISTER OF FINANCE: Awf.
PRIME MINISTER: Business?
MINISTER OF FINANCE: Very ba.
PRIME MINISTER: Why?
MINISTER OF FINANCE: Competi. (pp. 411-412)

Giraudoux uses the vaudeville routine of the predictable response in the Second Act of Ondine. The routine is in the form of giving a lesson, and is adapted from a format frequently used by teams of vaudeville comics. The Chamberlain attempts to instruct Ondine in the politic way of responding to questions by people in authority who are plainly seeking flattery. Ondine's first responses contain her frank opinions. The Chamberlain corrects Ondine and then tests her again, only to receive answers more bluntly truthful than the first. In this routine, the Chamberlain performs as straight-man, by asking the questions which

set up Ondine's humorous comments. Since we are already familiar with Ondine's outspokenness, we delightfully anticipate her replies; and the Chamberlain's consternation and frustration serve to augment the comic effect. The function of the straight-man in the vaudeville comedy-team was not only to prompt the comic's laugh lines but also to extend the laugh by his reactions.

Song and dance numbers

These could be performed either as solos or by teams. Songs and dances might appear on a vaudeville bill as separate acts or might be combined into a single act. Sometimes song and dance numbers are interspersed with comic bits or verbal pattern routines. The songs range from the comic (which contain bawdy, satirical or topical lyrics) to sentimental ballads. The dances feature tap, soft-shoe, jazz-dancing, and semi-balletic numbers.

Ghelderode incorporates song and dance numbers into Christopher Columbus. The singing act occurs when "Visquosine, the famous siren with the voice of the Atlantic" appears mid-voyage at a porthole, and asks Columbus's permission "to render the hits from my repertoire in honor of your gallant crew" (p. 163). The siren is portrayed as an aging music-hall chanteuse desperately trying to remain seductive. She sings her naughty song in a raucous voice, foolishly "gurgling and ogling." Columbus throws coins at her and orders her away. She reciprocates by squirting a mouthful of water at Columbus, thus ending her song number with a bit of slapstick. In her grotesque song number Visquosine personifies the vulgarly sentimental society which Columbus is trying to escape through his voyage.

A popular vaudeville dance number features a solo performer dressed in a sailor suit, who dances a version of the sailor's hornpipe. He frequently includes a salty comic-patter audible over the background music. Ghelderode uses this performer to personify the figure of death, who visits Columbus in jail (p. 173). Dressed in a naval uniform, Death dances a hornpipe as he beckons Columbus to "come aboard" and sail with him to "the infinite."

Ida, the overly romantic daughter in Goll's Methusalem, speaks throughout the play in dialogue that parodies the lyrics of sentimental ballads:

> It was raining stars . . . the birds sing green garlands (p. 88); I danced through the streets . . . in my heart the bluebells were ringing (p. 93); the trees are floating for joy. (p. 101)

Goll constructs Ida's confession of love for the Student as a variety-stage song number. Ida is the lead singer, and her aunt, grandmother, and maid perform as the chorus. Ida's declaration and the response of the chorus are sung to the tune of "a well-known melody" (p. 89). The performance is a satire on bourgeois sentimentality.

The Trouville Bathing Beauty performs her dance number to the delight of the wedding party in Cocteau's The wedding on the Eiffel Tower. When she finishes, she goes off "hopping and throwing kisses" to her admirers (p. 105). In response to demands for an encore, one of the two human Phonographs who recite all the dialogue for the mimed and danced routines in the play, announces that

> the lateness of the hour forbids my presentation a second time of that popular number: The Trouville Bathing Beauty. (p. 106)

In his Preface to the play, Cocteau stated that the two human Phonographs at the left and right of the stage were meant to be "like the compère and commère who act as masters of ceremonies on our music-hall stage . . ." (p. 95). The author goes on to advocate wider exploitation of indigenous "popular material," and further theatrical experiments in which "dance, acrobatics, mime, drama, satire, music, and the spoken word combine to produce a new form" (p. 98).

The unique style of negro entertainers often influenced white performers to don blackface and mimic negro routines. While white and negro performers rarely teamed up in a routine, it was possible to see whites in blackface and negro entertainers appearing on the same vaudeville bill. Ghelderode in Pantagleize and Cummings in Him parody the mixture of negro and white performance styles.

When the negro valet Bamboola breaks into dance to express his joy over the coming revolution, he orders Pantegleize to join him in celebrating their imminent equality. Pantagleize becomes so caught up that he imitates Bamboola's negro dance style and speech pattern (p. 158). Ghelderode uses the image of a white performer grotesquely copying a black one to illustrate the differences in motivation and style between the two races.

This routine is repeated at the cafe of the revolutionaries. Bamboola orders them to join him in a "Hottentot dance,"[1] to signify that after the revolution, his race will call the tune that the white

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[1]Although designated as a native African dance, it is probably meant to be performed as some sort of Jazz dancing popular in the 1920s.

man dances to. The other revolutionaries humor him and mechanically perform the routine (p. 161). Bamboola is, as George Hauger points out,

> the unsentimental portrait of the negro whom it is easy to declare one's brother, but difficult to accept as such.[1]

The Frankie and Johnie musical number in the Second Act of Him combines negro and white performers in black-face. The number begins with the mock performance of a minstrel show (the original black-face variety-stage entertainment), in which the fate of Johnie at the hands of Frankie is comically mourned. This routine expresses Him's fear that his love for Me could lead to his death as an artist. The minstrel performer in black-face represents Him throughout the number.

The ballad of Frankie and Johnie is played and sung by a jazz band on stage. The performance is interrupted by a self-appointed censor in the audience who leaps upon stage. The intruding Personage nearly bullies the black-face performer (representing Him) into submitting to censorship. This talking-routine in the musical number shows Him's inner conflict as an artist: between his desire for popular acceptance and his need for aesthetic freedom.

The black-face performer is rescued by a negro performer who identifies herself as the Frankie of the ballad. The negress Frankie is then identified with the character Me. Cummings juxtaposes the black-face and negro performers as a parallel to the relationship between

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[1]George Hauger, "Notes on the Plays of Ghelderode," Tulane Drama Review, September 1959, p. 20.

Him and Me. The white masquerading as a black reflects Him's penchant for role playing and the instability of his identity, whereas the negress performing as Frankie personifies the essential realness of Me.

Novelty acts

This type of vaudeville or music-hall act featured performances by magicians, illusionists, clairvoyants, hypnotists, and ventroloquists. The performance conventions of these variety-theatre acts were used to indicate supernatural events in plays.

Diamotoruscant in The Death of Doctor Faust employs his abilities to mesmerize human beings and create illusions for them, in an effort to convince the patrons of the tavern that he is an authentic devil. They react by applauding his talents as a "music-hall artiste" (p. 107). Ghelderode uses the novelty acts of the music-hall to represent the modern world's perception of the supernatural.

The illusionist in Giradoux's Ondine performs magic-show and vaudeville hypnotist tricks. In the magician's act, the Chamberlain unwittingly serves as the Illusionist's assistant by pompously declaring the difficulty of producing a given image, only to have the Illusionist immediately conjure it up. Thunder and lightning, a cloud of smoke which deposits flowers on the stage, and a nude Venus are the images requested by the Chamberlain and produced by the Illusionist (pp.205-206). The Second Act of Ondine contains this vaudeville-like routine and the comic routine between the Chamberlain and Ondine. This Act of the play is satirical in contrast to the essentially lyrical quality

of the First and Third. The Second Act shows the machinations and falsity of mankind, whereas the play's other Acts portray the untainted realm of nature. Giraudoux characterizes the world of man in the Ondine saga through vaudeville or music-hall routines.

Bulgakov injects a ventriloquist's act into The Crimson Island to poke fun at the illusionism in theatre production. Metelkin the stage-manager is given the job of manipulating and speaking for a parrot that is used in the inner play. He takes this opportunity to ridicule and insult certain actors during their performance, by attributing these remarks to the parrot (p. 298). The funniest routine, however, occurs when Savva the censor, upon his arrival at the theatre, jokingly greets the prop bird. Anxious to curry favor with the tyrannical official, Metelkin has the parrot answer in a stream of communist slogans. Savva is so terrified he falls down and barely resists crossing himself (p. 322).

A copper pot is the prop used by Christian in his ventriloquist act in The Naked King. He stages the act to distract the Princess's guardians, the Ladies of the Court, so that she may be wooed by Heinrich (p. 146). In his routine, Christian convinces the Ladies that the pot's nose can sniff out and reveal all the scandals taking place at court. This is another example of Shvarts using a vaudeville act to portray the stupidity of officialdom in The Naked King.

Cocteau depicts supernatural events in Orpheus as the routines of a vaudeville magician. The playwright prepares us for this novelty act by describing the play's setting as "reminiscent of a magician's parlor."

The first magic routine is a levitation act which Heurtebise performs with what appears to be the unwitting assistance of Orpheus. Heurtebise is standing on a chair when Orpheus enters the room and casually removes the chair leaving Heurtebise suspended in mid-air. Then Orpheus returns the borrowed chair by sliding it back under Heurtebise's feet. Throughout the routine, Orpheus behaves as if nothing unusual is happening. Is Cocteau showing that the poet regards the magical in life as a normal occurrence? Eurydice, however, proclaims the talent of Heurtebise: "You're a magician!" (p. 116).

The other magic routine in Orpheus is the transformation of the soul of the poisoned Eurydice into a dove. The routine is performed by Death, in the figure of a formally attired woman, who makes her spectacular entrance through the mirror on stage. Employing familiar devices of magic-act showmanship, she is blindfolded by one assistant, while another borrows a watch from a member of the audience to verify that the transformation is performed in the prescribed time. As the drums roll, and an assistant gestures enigmatically, Death effects the transformation. When the drum roll abruptly stops, Death rushes into Eurydice's room and returns to the stage with a dove. The magic routine ends as the live bird is allowed to fly off (pp. 120-125).

The examples above show how avant-garde playwrights used the various novelty acts of vaudeville. Ghelderode, Giraudoux, and Cocteau use routines of the magician, illusionist or hypnotist to portray the supernatural. Bulgakov and Shvarts use the pranks of the ventriloquist to deflate the vanity of officialdom.

Burlesque skits

While the striptease was unquestionably the main attraction of burlesque during the 1920s and 1930s, the sexually suggestive comic skit was also very popular with audiences. These skits were broadly slapstick and consisted of double-entendre gags, raw seduction attempts, and tantalizing displays of female body movement and exposed flesh.

E. E. Cummings describes the setting for Act II, Scene 8 of Him as "The Old Howard's conception of a luxurious Roman villa" (p. 382). The Old Howard was a famous burlesque theatre in Boston during the inter-war period. Cummings uses the conventions of a burlesque skit to create a politial satire on European Fascism at that time. With screaming-fairy routines, smutty gags, and raunchy double-entendre, Cummings shows the Italian dictator Mussolini strutting amidst his coterie of homo-sexuals. The playwright uses the burlesque skit to ridicule the virile but fraudulent public posturing of the dictator and his henchmen.

Ghelerode simulates a burlesque seduction-skit in Christopher Columbus. A well-worn convention of this skit has the female target enter and cross the stage until she is stopped short by her would-be seducer. In Ghelderode's play, Columbus stops a woman who "enters and begins to cross the stage." What follows strongly resembles the slap-stick comedy of a burlesque seduction routine. Columbus calls the woman his mother and kisses her goodbye, only to return and kiss her goodbye again, this time as his sweetheart. She responds with wisecracks to Columbus's advances, and on his third farewell kiss--this time to his homeland--the woman turns the tables and becomes the sexual aggressor.

This is a frequent ending to the seduction skit (p. 159). Ghelderode uses the form and conventions of the burlesque skit to show Columbus cutting all ties to the society he is attempting to escape through his voyage. The woman represents all the female associations he leaves behind: mother, sweetheart, country.

Goll uses another form of the seduction skit in Methusalem. The principal convention of this skit is the competition between several would-be seducers for the same girl. Goll incorporates two such skits in Methusalem, one in Scene V and the other in Scene IX.

In Scene V, Methusalem's daughter Ida is the unresisting object of the Student's seduction attempt. However in a spoof of the Freudian inner conflict, Goll represents the Student by his Ego, Superego, and Id; each portrayed by a separate actor. The comedy of the seduction skit lies in the conflicting tactics of the three would-be seducers. Ego is too conscious of his poverty to try, Id can't find the right moment to "fling her to the turf," and Superego is such a smooth talker that he doesn't find time to attack Ida. The three seducers represent the three sides of the Student's nature: the realist who hopes to come into money either through revolution or marrige into the bourgeoisie, the hostile aggressor who takes what he wants by force, and the phrase-maker who masks his true intentions with slogans and cliches.

The second seduction skit in Methusalem pits the Student against Methusalem, with the manufacturer's mistress Veronica as the foil. In this version of the seduction skit, one seducer tries his luck and then retires to let the other one have a go at the girl. The Student

and Veronica play the first seduction attempt in elegant double-entendre. When the Student leaves the field to Methusalem the tone of the skit changes radically. Methusalem "immediately puts his hand down her bra," and then "opens her blouse all the way down" (p. 108). The slick talker has given ground to the baggy-pants comic. Goll's comparison of Veronica's two would-be seducers demonstrates that although the revolutionary Student and the bourgeois Methusalem differ in style they both want the same thing: wealth and power.

Mayakovsky incorporates a burlesque chorus-line into The Bedbug to satirize Prisypkin's corrupting influence on the prudish communist society of the future. Unfrozen after fifty years, Prisypkin teaches everyone who comes in contact with him all the old habits and routines forbidden now by the communist rulers. He has shown workers how to get drunk and miss work, he has introduced young women to the pangs of love, and he has taught dogs to beg for table scraps. As thirty Chorus Girls dance on stage provocatively kicking their legs into the air, the epidemic of corruption is declared to have reached its apogee (p. 181).

In The Naked King, Shvarts uses a version of the burlesque seduction skit to mock those bumbling schemers who people the bureaucracies of Europe. The skit begins as twelve young girls carrying feather beds enter. Although their errand is innocent—they are delivering the bedding to the Princess—the sight is ripe for a burlesque seduction skit. A palace official approaches one girl to enlist her in a conspiracy against the Princess. Interpreting his intimate manner as attempted

seduction, the girl punches the Minister in the ribs. Trying his wiles on a second girl he receives the same response. The twelve girls then push their accoster aside and go on their way. Shvarts uses a burlesque skit whose basic gag is misunderstood sexual intentions to portray the comic ineptitude of the bureaucracy (p. 156).

The burlesque skit as well as the other variety-stage routines examined use comic forms that can be traced to the Commedia dell'arte, so any playwright who adapts Commedia traditions might arrive at comedy similar to that found in the popular entertainments. What distinguishes the examples in this chapter as theatricalism is their clear link to specific performance conventions of the playwright's contemporary variety theatre.

Although the playwrights may have derived their business from variety and vaudeville, many of the popular routines go back, not only to Commedia lazzi and burle, but further back to Plautus and other early playwrights. Thus, these inter-war routines may represent the Theatre returning to the theatre in new guises and updated forms.

Circus Acts

The circus proved to be a plentiful reservoir of theatricalism for the avant-garde playwright of the inter-war years. In the performance conventions of the twentieth century circus they discovered fresh methods of characterizing an action, delineating a protagonist, illuminating the world of the play, and underscoring a theme. This was a remarkable achievement in dramaturgy inasmuch as the circus is predominantly a non-verbal entertainment medium.

The circus occupied a special place in the artistic avant-garde of the inter-war years. Dukore and Gerould note that the "highbrow arts" of the between-wars period cultivated the circus as "a source of inspiration."[1] Modern painters—such as Georges Rouault in France and Walt Kuhn in the United States—depicted circus performers. In Russia of the 1920s, the "whole young generation of Soviet artists . . . were in love with the circus."[2] No wonder that avante-garde playwrights of the period incorporated performance conventions of the circus into their plays.

The principal categories of circus performance are clowning, animal training, and acrobatics. These were established in the first version of the modern circus—the Ampitheatre Riding Ring, built by Philip Astley of England in 1770. The featured animal act of this circus was horsemanship, and the program also included clowning, acrobatics, and "other circus-type skills brought from ancient to modern times," such as juggling and exhibitions of strength.[3] Spreading through Europe and then to the United States, the modern circus was organized around the three main categories of clowning, animal acts, and acrobatics, augmented by juggling and strong-man acts.

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[1]Dukore and Gerould, Avant-Garde Drama, p. 334.

[2]Daniel Gerould, "Eisenstein's Wiseman," The Drama Review, March 1974, p. 71.

[3]Hovey Burgess, "The Classification of Circus Techniques," The Drama Review, March 1974, p. 66.

Examples of theatricalism derived from the circus are arranged under the three main genres of performance, followed by those drawn from the less featured circus acts.

Clown acts

The modern circus clown is descended from the "zanni" character of the Commedia dell'arte. A typical Commedia scenario included two "zanni"—one clever and one stupid. This set the pattern for the two major clown types—the scheming mischief-maker and the gullible child-like clown. Avant-garde playwrights fashioned characters from each of these types, and exploited the performance conventions which determined their behavior.

The Clown Act in The Baden Play for Learning is a complete dramaturgical unit within Brecht's play. Its circus identity is established by the summons to "observe our Clown Act," and by the play's reference to the "three circus clowns" who perform in the Act (p. 181). In the Clown Act, Brecht sets two cunning and malevolent clowns onto a very gullible clown called Mr. Smith. The malevolent clowns pretend to be curing Mr. Smith of his physical afflictions, but are actually dismembering him. Mr. Smith is very big, so the other clowns are cutting him down to size to render him harmless.

Each step of the dismemberment is explained to Mr. Smith in grotesque clown-logic. For example, as one dismembered limb puts stress and pain on another, Mr. Smith is advised to have the new source of discomfort cut off. The Clown Act proceeds in this ludicrous cause

and effect pattern to its inevitable conclusion: the mammoth Mr. Smith eventually lies reduced and helpless at the feet of the scheming clowns.

The lesson of the Clown Act is that "man does not help man" as he claims to, and therefore no man should "count upon help" (pp. 186-187). Lee Baxandall points out the Clown Act's Marxist implication "that Smith is the proletariat, vast in potential power but victimized again and again until it is helpless."[1] Brecht makes a warning often found in his learning plays explicit here: that man must understand exactly what he is agreeing to lest he acquiesce to his own destruction.

Mayakovsky also uses a clown's routine to dramatize the plight of the proletariat. The Russian playwright wrote The Championship of the Universal Class Struggle (1920) to be performed by circus clowns in a circus arena. Mayakovsky collaborated with the famous circus clown Vitaly Lazarenko in the play's composition; and the form of the one-act play—a clownish wrestling match—is believed to have been suggested by Lazarenko.[2]

The play's scenario is in three parts. The first two contain a slapstick free-for-all between clowns who represent the leaders of Western capitalism (Lloyd George, Woodrow Wilson, French Premier Millerand), and Communism's Slavic foes (General Wrangel, Marshal Pilsudski, a war profiteer and a Menshevik). The clownish tripping, biting,

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[1]Lee Baxandadell, "B.B.'s J.B.," in Brecht, ed. Erika Munk (New York: Bantam Books, 1972), p. 175.

[2]František Deák, "The AgitProp and Circus Plays of Vladimir Mayakovsky," The Drama Review, March 1973, p. 52.

and hair-pulling in this round of the wrestling match portrays the petty and vicious squabbling going on between the Red Army's enemies during the civil war. The entrance of world champion Revolution (performed by Lazarenko) opens the third round. The other clowns are reluctant to take him on, but Lloyd George is persuaded to wrestle Revolution and the match ends in a draw. At the time of the play's writing, the war between the Red Army and the Western-supported White Army was not yet resolved.

Ivan Babichev in Olyesha's The Conspiracy of Feelings is a version of the malevolent, mischief-making clown. Ivan's clownish malevolence is directed mainly against his brother Andrei, who represents the kind of society Ivan plots to undermine. However, the conflict between the brothers demonstrates Olyesha's theme in the play, that the "revolutionary battles of the past have become a pillow fight among clowns."[1]

Ivan sees himself as a clown. "Take a good look at me," he orders his followers in the play. "The bags under my eyes hang down like violet stockings" and my "derby's begun to look like an Easter cake" (p. 246). The malevolent clown Ivan performs many of his routines with the child-like clown Kavalerov. "Look what you've turned out to be," Ivan tells Kavalerov, "a clown, a little boy who never grew up . . . you with your big red nose" (p. 238).

At the beginning of The Death of Doctor Faust, Ghelderode tells us that Faust is "to appear to the spectator as a clown to whom a

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[1]Dukore and Gerould, Avant-Garde Drama, p. 205.

tragedian's role has been entrusted" (p. 99). Faust tells the audience that he is in search of his real self: the self he has always pursued as if it were a shadow. He then clownishly mocks this pursuit by chasing his own shadow around in a circle (p. 100).

Faust's apprentice Cretinus is also described as a clown in his first appearance (p. 102). His clown routine occurs when he is suddenly confronted by two identical Fausts (Faust and the Actor Faust).

> Cretinus gives a jump, feels his forehead, comes forward again, and stretching out his neck, looks from one Faust to another, then quietly collapses on the floor. . . . (p. 139).

This clown routine is immediately followed by a dumb show between the two Fausts, which Ghelderode describes as "a clownish scene" (p. 140).

After Faust's death, Cretinus performs a grotesque imitation of his master. Ghelderode frames his theatricalist version of the Faust legend with Faust's tragic-clown solo in the play's Prologue and Cretinus's macabre buffoonery at the end. David Grossvogel notes the relationship of clowns and buffoons.

> both are an embodiment of tragic irony, whose grim ambiguity is heightened by their participation in the dramatic ceremonial.[1]

Grossvogel suggests that Ghelderode applied clown's conventions to The Death of Doctor Faust because the clown has a gift for renewing "experiences that have a standard form already."[2]

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[1]Grossvogel, 20th Century French Drama, p. 264.

[2]Ibid.

Pantagleize is Ghelderode's consummate clown-character. In his "Epitaph for Pantagleize," Ghelderode refers to him as a clown and a fugitive from the circus.[1] Pantagleize describes his activities in the play as if they were a clown's routine.

> My girl friend is a monkey at the Zoo. She is called Cleopatra, and has fleas, and eats half of my food every midday. In return she grimaces abominably at me. And I love her. (p. 153)

Rachel the revolutionary firebrand mistakes Pantegleize's clownish behavior as a cover for what she believes are his subversive activities. She praises his performance.

> You were too natural, too naive, too stupid. You played your part marvelously. You are still playing it. (p. 182)

Pantagleize's supposed revolutionary activities are seen for what they really are by the military tribunal that condemns him to death: as the actions of "a clown" (p. 216).

Pantagleize performs several clown routines with his nemesis, the policeman Creep. One portrays them both dodging gunfire in the street, and includes familiar clown knock-about such as lockstep pursuits, sudden collisions, Pantagleize hiding behind Creep, and a finale in which Creep drags off Pantagleize (pp. 206-207). Panatagleize also performs a poignant though macabre clown routine with the corpse of the murdered Rachel. Assuming that she is merely asleep, he seizes the opportunity to tell her of his love and to paint an idyllic picture of their future. When he realizes that she is dead, he is terribly embarrassed, as if he had

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[1]Michel de Ghelderode, "Epitaph for Panatagleize," in Seven Plays, vol. 1 (New York: Hill & Wang, 1960), pp. 146-147.

seen Rachel in an unflattering light. Apologizing, he politely and quickly leaves. The scene is reminiscent of a clown routine in which the clown ardently woos a female mannequin, and when he discovers that the object of his affection is a dummy, he bows out still treating her like a lady (pp. 199-202).

Goll uses a clown routine in Methusalem to show the police doing the bourgeois industrialist's dirty work. Besieged by a mob, Methusalem pushes a button which opens a large safe. Out spring six clownish policemen who promptly disperse the mob. Then the cops bring a commode on stage, pull down Methusalem's pants, ceremoniously seat him on the toilet, and then stand by "stiff and respectful" as Methusalem turns his rear to the audience and farts (p. 92).

Goll conveys political satire through a clown routine. Six cops emerging from Methusalem's safe convey the image that the police are his personal possessions, and at the same time reminds one of the routine in which numerous firemen-clowns seem miraculously to emerge from a tiny fire engine. When Methusalem contentedly farts in the face of society, he is imitating the clown's naughty affront to the audience.

Patrick, one of the protagonists of The Mysteries of Love, also performs a naughty-clown routine. When Leah hands Patrick "a basket filled with small dogs," he immediately "throws both dogs and basket into the audience" (p. 232). Of course, the dogs will turn out to be made of rubber, and the audience's initial shock or surprise will quickly turn to laughter. Mock abuse of the audience is a familiar clown stunt. Leah excuses Patrick's clownish behavior when she tells the audience:

"I love Patrick . . . I love the clown" (p. 233). Coming early in the play, this clown stunt sets the tone for the kind of childish tantrum that Patrick will continue to throw. And the audience's usual tolerance of the circus clown's outrageous behavior is paralleled by Leah's tolerance of Patrick's abusive and outrageous behavior throughout the play.

Some clown acts included small or domesticated animals, which were trained to perform with the clowns. Such an act might be a version of the "monkey see—monkey do" routine. Obey uses this type of clown routine in Noah, to discredit Ham's rational skepticism.

As the ark drifts helplessly, Ham upbraids Noah and the family for their naive faith in God. Ham is unaware, however, that a monkey is imitating his gestures and acting out his admonitions. When Ham scolds the girls for sitting around sucking their thumbs, the monkey sucks his thumb; and when Ham shrugs his shoulders in disgust and puzzlement at everyone's laughter, the monkey copies him. The clown routine ends as an exasperated Ham goes down the hatch of the ark, "followed by the monkey, who salutes him" as he goes (p. 37). Obey uses a type of clown act in which animals point up the foolish behavior of humans by imitating it. This routine serves Obey's fable, in which God's simpler creatures are shown to possess a wisdom often superior to man's.

Diamotoruscant in The Death of Doctor Faust turns a religious zealot's bout with the devil into a clown's boxing routine. Diamotoruscant strips the zealot of his prophet's mantle to reveal him clad in a woman's corset and bloomers. A clown-policeman enters, boxes with the Prophet, knocks him out and carries him off (p. 108). The Prophet's

quest for glory as an adversary to the devil is ridiculed, as Diamotorus-cant transforms him into a clown and reduces his crusade to clownish combat.

Cummings includes a circus clown act along with the vaudeville and burlesque routines which comprise Act Two of Him. In Scene 7, two clowns separately promenade around the stage, each carrying six balloons. They meet six times and exchange six sets of nearly identical remarks, which they punctuate each time by exploding one of each other's balloons. Their nonsensical verbal exchanges contain abbreviated references to happiness, business success, marriage, children, infidelity, and divorce.

The clown routine in Him represents part of the "artist-hero's exploration of his own medium, mirroring his concerns" about the nature of playwriting.[1] The parody of the clown act is also a parody of the attempts of inter-war playwrights to dramatize vital issues (such as business ambition, infidelity) through the use of clown routines. More importantly, the clown act mirrors Him's concern that playwrights, for all their dramaturgical devices, are unable to deal adequately with these issues in their plays. Cummings's parody of the clown act is affectionate, and is a tribute to the directness and vitality of the circus clown.

Mayakovsky's Moscow Is Burning is a circus-style scenario, which was written to celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the 1905 Revolution. It features a musical Clown who sings satirical songs and

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[1]Dukore and Gerould, Avant-Garde Drama, p. 333.

accompanies himself by "clinking on a vodka bottle" (p. 71). As Hovey Burgess indicates on his chart of Soviety Circus acts, the musical clown is a traditional routine.[1] Moscow Is Burning is a political satire with the Russian proletariat as its hero. The various circus acts incorporated into the play serve either to glorify the proletariat or to vilify its foes.

The examples above illustrate how inter-war avant-garde playwrights adapted the clown's routines to help delineate the play's protagonist (Faust, Pantagleize); to characterize an action (Methusalem controlling the police, the devil undermining opposition); to underscore a theme (man helping man in Brecht's Clown Act); and to personify the world of the play (Mayakovsky's circus plays). One benefit of using a clown act to portray human folly in drama lies in the audience's usual acceptance of mockery by circus clowns.

Animal acts

There are two major performance conventions that characterize animal acts. One displays the skill and virtuosity of the animal trainer in dominating his beasts. The animal is expected to exhibit ferocity before being subdued. The other convention demonstrates the animal's ability to learn and perform complicated routines. Here, the animal's performance, more than the trainer's, is applauded. The first three examples that follow show the playwright focusing on the trainer's conventions, while the remaining four emphasize the animal's performance.

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[1]Burgess, "Circus Techniques," Drama Review, p. 67.

The animal characters in Obey's Noah are essential for the play's fidelity to its biblical source. Obey parallels their relationship to Noah with the relationship that exists between circus animals and their trainer. The animal's boarding of the ark takes the form of a circus animal-act. As each animal enters, he is tamed by Noah and sent to his waiting cage on the ark. The act's finale features the most dangerous animal in the menage, a tiger. Noah broadly mimes fear, but musters his courage and orders the ferocious beast to its cage (pp. 10-13).

Noah's next animal training act takes place aboard the helplessly drifting ark. Seemingly abandoned by God, Noah musters the animals on deck for a united plea to God for delivery from their plight (p. 48). The last animal act takes place after the ark has come to rest on a barren mountain peak. Noah is immediately deserted by his family and all the animals except the bear. As Noah approaches, the bear opens its arms for what seems to be an embrace; but instead Noah finds himself in a crushing bear hug, from which he barely escapes. For the old animal trainer, a once reliable routine has turned into a nearly fatal encounter. The bear (as well as Noah's sons) has demonstrated how quickly each creature has returned to the old ways, before the Flood (pp. 69-70).

The Third Act of Witwiewicz's The Shoemakers contains an animal training act which casts the Duchess as trainer and Scurvy as a hapless animal being put through his paces. Scurvy is clad in a dog's skin and crouches on all fours, chained to a tree. Dressed in the animal trainer's traditional riding breeches and wielding a riding-crop the

Duchess turns Scurvy into a wild beast through sexual denial. The animal act helps delineate these two protagonists. The Duchess despises men and seeks to demonstrate her domination of them. For his part, Scurvy has willingly performed as a vicious and predatory beast for a number of political masters.

There are two animal training acts in Cocteau's The Wedding on the Eiffel Tower. In the first, a photographer coaxes a runaway ostrich back into his enormous camera, where it resumes its role as the "birdie" every subject is told to watch (p. 112). The second animal training act is one which goes amiss. A lion appears and frightens off the wedding party. The General remains, insisting that the lion is only a mirage because "there can be no lion on the Eiffel tower" (p. 110). He boldly approaches the lion who immediately devours him.

The two animal acts illustrate Cocteau's warning in the play's Preface, not to oppose the marvelous with hardheaded logic (p. 94). In the first animal act the Photographer invokes the marvelous to help him recapture his ostrich; whereas in the second the General invokes logic to control a wild beast and is eaten by the animal.

In the remaining examples, playwrights use animal acts in which emphasis is on the performance of gifted animals. Cocteau uses this type of animal act in Orpheus to theatricalize the play's theme, identified by Dorothy Knowles as "the relationship between the poet and his inspiration."[1] Orpheus's muse is portrayed as a horse which feeds

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[1]Dorothy Knowles, French Drama of the Inter-War Years 1918-1939 (New York: Barnes & Noble, Inc., 1968), p. 52.

the hero poetic phrases letter by letter, depending on the number of times it stamps its hoof (pp. 104-106). This type of animal act is referred to as "learned horse" on Hovey Burgess's chart of circus acts.[1]

The performing animals in Shvarts's The Dragon are integral to the play's dramatic action and theme. In his first routine, Mr. Cat resists Lancelot's efforts to make him perform as a talking cat, which would involve him in the knight's mission to rescue the town from the Dragon. Mr. Cat's initial caution and complacency mirror the reactions of the townspeople (p. 2).

After he allies himself with Lancelot, Mr. Cat performs prodigiously to equip the knight for his battle with the Dragon. On Lancelot's behalf, Mr. Cat puts to use the art of intrigue and the techniques of organization which he has learned from humans (pp. 36-38). As the battle rages, Mr. Cat waits it out with his helper the Donkey. The Donkey is poor company, so Mr. Cat valiantly imitates another human trait, that of trying to accommodate to an uncomfortable situation (p. 39). Mr. Cat's three routines mirror the reactions of the town to tyranny: first, caution and complacency; then, vigorous opposition; and finally, accommodation to the new tyrant.

Vera, the talking dog in Vvedensky's Christmas at the Ivanovs', is another animal who has learned how to perform in imitation of humans. At Sonia's funeral, Vera recites a requiem for the murdered girl, weeping and wailing in imitation of human mourning. Her unusual performance,

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[1]Burgess, The Drama Review, p. 67.

however, goes unnoticed by the human characters in the play. Why, she asks, is no one "surprised that I am talking and not barking" (p. 181). The reason is that Vera's performance is not surprising in the topsy-turvy world of the play, in which characters who are seventy-six and eighty-two years old perform as children—even to speaking baby-talk.

Goll's Methusalem contains a group animal-act which parodies the revolution being fomented by the Student. The animals who participate in "The Revolution of the Beasts" satirize the motives and goals of revolution, and its usual cast of characters. The monkey performs as the messianic intellectual; the parrot parrots the phrases of a humanitarian philosopher, and the dog imitates a religious moralist. Arrayed against the idealists are the militants: the cuckoo is a German Nationalist, and the bear is a Bolshevik. The stag is for any form of violence, and the cat advocates compromise. Each animal's reason for revolt parodies the historical arguments made by humans. Methusalem dozes peacefully through the animals' performance, illustrating bourgeois oblivion to brewing social discontent.

The animal act easily lends itself to characterizing action (Orpheus creating poetry, the Duchess punishing men, the biblical events in Noah); to underscoring a theme (The Dragon, Methusalem); and to illuminating the world of the play (the topsy-turvy world of Christmas at the Ivanovs', and the "marvelous" world of The Wedding on the Eiffel Tower). Although the animal act does not seem to offer as many opportunities for character delineation as does the clown act, Noah, the Duchess and Scurvy are better understood because of their participation in the animal

training routines. As a final note: the presence of animal characters in a play does not create theatricalism unless they perform actions that are easily identified with performance conventions of the circus.

Acrobatic acts

Acrobatic acts in the circus fall into two major categories: aerial acts and those performed on the ground. Each category contains both vaulting and balancing routines.[1] An example of aerial vaulting is trapeze flying, while high-wire walking is a balancing routine. Ground vaulting might be somersaulting or tumbling, whereas walking on stilts is considered a balancing routine on the ground. Acrobatics on horseback may be classified as ground vaulting or balancing, depending on the nature of the routine.

In Moscow Is Burning, which Mayakovsky wrote for performance in a circus stadium, trapeze vaulting is used to glorify the activities of the revolutionary worker-hero, and to ridicule the pursuit of the Czarist police. While the worker nimbly maneuvers on the trapeze the policeman becomes entangled in its ropes (p. 76). Ground acrobatics are also used to characterize the skill and daring of the worker-hero in contrast to the comic ineptitude of the Czarist police. A worker on tall stilts incites a strike while the police fall all over themselves in a comic tumbling routine (p. 76). Another instrument of Czarist tyranny, the mounted Cossack, is portrayed by an acrobat on horseback. His defeat is represented by a spectacular stunt in which the rider performs a dangerous fall from his horse (p. 81).

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[1]Ibid., pp. 67-70.

Diamotoruscant in The Death of Doctor Faust humiliates a detractor by turning him into an acrobat. The Poet is punished for his arrogance by being made to "perform many acrobatic feats and capers" against his will (p. 106).

Metelkin, the stage-manager, makes his first appearance in The Crimson Island by swinging from the stage rigging while inspecting a damaged back-drop. When summoned to the office of the theatre's director, Metelkin deftly drops from the flies and lands in front of his boss (p. 251). Metelkin's acrobatics at the beginning of the play instantly characterize the mixture of craziness and proficiency that theatrical production relies on; one of Bulgakov's themes in the play.

Shvarts's The Naked King contains a parody of the princess and the pea fairy tale. To demonstrate his royal lineage, the tyrannical King sleeps on a pile of 148 mattresses. For his entrance in the morning he descends from atop this enormous pile by floating down under an open umbrella using it as if it were a parachute (p. 172). The acrobatic act characterizes the lengths to which the King goes to prove his inherited superiority. Shvarts uses the parody on the fairy tale to mock the tests of racial purity as they exist in Nazi Germany.

In Noah, Obey parallels ritualistic action to the conventions of circus performance. The event in the play is the family's release from their long confinement in the hold of the ark. Their joyous entrance onto the ark's deck is pantomimed in gestures which simulate the entrance of acrobats into a circus arena. The following are some examples of this parallel.

Japhet is the first to come on deck. He throws off his coat and stands half nude in the bright sunlight. With arms outstretched, he turns slowly around. Then he runs around the perimeter of the deck (pp. 30-31). This pantomime resembles the entering performer who sheds his cape to reveal a skin-tight costume. Basking in the limelight, he slowly turns with arms outstretched to acknowledge the greeting of the audience. Then he takes a turn around the arena.

One by one, members of the family come up through the hatch and greet the sun. Noah lines them up and at his signal they simultaneously drop their capes. Then Noah sends the youngsters bounding around the deck to a beat which he claps out (pp. 32-34). These actions simulate the entrance of an acrobatic troupe and the performance of their routines.

Obey also uses sound to help create a parallel between this sequence in the play and the conventions of circus performance. Japhet's entrance is accompanied by "a fanfare" of crowing cocks, and the entrance of the others is preceded by "low rumblings" suggesting a drum roll (pp. 30-31).

In these and other ways the circus acrobat's performance conventions inspired playwrights to point up the elegance and daring of some actions, and the foolishness of others.

Other circus acts

Juggling and exhibitions of strength follow in importance as circus acts. Juggling involves tossing objects into the air, balancing objects, or manipulating spinning objects. The circus strongman exhibits his

prowess by lifting, balancing, or deforming objects of great size and weight.

In The Death of Doctor Faust, the play's hero mocks his erudition by performing a juggling routine with the celestial globe in his study. Faust spins it, "passes it under his leg, balances it on his head, and contrives many feats with it" (p. 102). The juggling routine theatricalizes Faust's discovery that he has been merely a performer and not a valid personality.

Oedipus in Cocteau's The Infernal Machine performs a circus strongman's routine at the end of the Second Act. Rehearsing for his triumphant entry into Thebes, he experiments with poses and positions for carrying the body of the vanquished Sphinx. He finally settles for the image of Hercules bearing a slain lion.

Cocteau uses familiar conventions of theatrical performance in his interpretation of the Oedipus classic. Hercules, the mythic symbol of strength, becomes a circus strongman in Oedipus's imitation. Indeed, Hercules frequently provided a model for the routines of circus strongmen. Ironically, by entering Thebes in this pose, Oedipus fills the role of strongman-deliverer called for by the Theban matron earlier in the Second Act. His circus-like display of strength serves as contrast to the real strength he will muster later to help him endure his fate.

Mockery of Hercules goes back to Greek mime troupes of the Third Century B.C. Known as Phylakes, these troupes performed burlesques of tragedy, and the adventures of Hercules (Heracles) was a favorite subject.

The circus offered the between-wars avant-garde playwright nearly as many performance conventions as the variety stage. The playwright was able to incorporate these mainly non-verbal conventions into the structure of drama. The conventions endowed the plays which contained them with a special visual expressiveness.

Carnival Shows

The carnival as we know it in this century has its roots in the secular festivals and trading fairs of the Middle Ages. The food and game stalls which line the sides of a carnival midway owe their origin to medieval trader's stalls, and the carnival tent-shows descend directly from the booth-stages of the fairground showmen.

What is unique about this type of entertainment environment—whether in the form of a traveling carnival, periodic fair, or permanent amusement-park—is that "the events are fixed," and the spectator is "completely mobile,"[1] free to organize his own entertainment "event," by choosing from among the many simultaneous and continuous activities.

The events open to a spectator at carnivals and fairs fall into two main categories: those in which he actively participates, and those he only observes. The former category includes riding a merry-go-round or ferris wheel, competing for prizes at game booths or shooting galleries, and having one's fortune told. In the latter category the spectator witnesses a show unique to carnivals and fairs, such as freak

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[1]Brooks McNamara, "The Scenography of Popular Entertainment," The Drama Review, March 1974, p. 23.

shows, puppet shows, girl shows which feature exotic dancing, and thrill shows consisting of sword-swallowers, fire-eaters, etc.

Of the various carnival and fairground shows, the avant-garde playwrights found the performance conventions of freak and puppet shows most applicable to drama.

Freak shows

Human oddities of nature have been featured attractions at carnivals and fairs since the Middle Ages. In his book on Rabelais, Mikhail Bakhtin refers to the "participation of giants, dwarfs, monsters" in Medieval "open-air amusements."[1] The freak show is an established form of entertainment at carnivals in this century.

Traditionally, each freak appears on his own miniature stage or platform, in a setting that amplifies his particular oddity. While the human oddity is displayed a barker explains it in colorful and sensational language. The freak performs either by passively allowing himself to be observed or by actively demonstrating his physical peculiarities.

The spectator's reactions to these human grotesques may include ordinary voyeurism and curiosity, fascination and awe, revulsion and pity, horror and fear, erotic excitement and neurotic identification.

The carnival freak show in Cummings's Him is the final theatrical environment of the hero's long quest for the truth about himself. In

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[1]Mikhail Bakhtin, Rabelais and His World (Cambridge: The M.I.T. Press, 1968), p. 5.

the play's second Act, Cummings had parodied the performance conventions of the circus and variety-stage to dramatize Him's search for himself as an artist, and in the third Act the author uses the freak show to dramatize Him's search for himself as a man.

In spite of the new self-awareness which he has brought back from Paris, Him still lacks the self-knowledge and spiritual rebirth he seeks. Me advises him to go and look for it "where it is" (p. 427). Cummings locates the source of true self-discovery in the performance conventions of the carnival freak-show.

Cummings's freak-show attractions typify the usual carnival assortment: a giant, miniature lady, human needle, tatooed man, wild-man of Borneo and the like. The spectators are Him, the three Miss Weirds, and the variety-stage characters of the inner play. The Barker who guides the spectators to each exhibit delivers his "spiel" in a grotesquely comic vernacular. His description of each freak is a parody of carnival barker's hyperbole.

The spectators respond to the freak-show performances in ways that mock Him's search for true self-knowledge. As guardians of public virtue, the Weird sisters object to the freak's lurid adventures. However, the Barker easily convinces the sisters that the freaks are missionaries. The sexually frustrated spinster of the first vaudeville sketch is fascinated by the snake-charmer's reptiles while professing disgust. The four fairies of the burlesque skit are repelled and titillated by the freak who devours electric-light bulbs. The Englishman who carried his unconscious identity hidden in a trunk on his back is

awed by the Tattooed Man whose body bears a pictorial record of his ludicrous adventures. The freaks comically reflect the fears and uncertainties of the spectators as a prelude to Him's moment of truth.

That moment arrives when Him finally stands before the curtained booth which houses the main attraction of the carnival freak-show. The Barker opens the curtains to reveal Me holding a newborn baby. Him's terrified cry plunges the stage into darkness. As the other freaks in the show had evoked the fears and apprehensions of the spectators, so Him's confrontation with the reality of Me's childbearing and his own spiritual rebirth has evoked similar reactions. In Him, birth and rebirth are depicted as freak-show attractions.

Prisypkin in Mayakovsky's The Bedbug is exhibited at a zoo in the regimented communist state of the future. However, the exhibition is actually a scientific freak-show. The Chairman of the City Council announces it as "a spectacle which . . . contains a deep scientific truth" (pp. 191-192). The zoo Director tells the crowd that Prisypkin "looked almost human," and associates him with a species of humanity that sometimes behaved like animals and at other times like an inferior grade of human being: "beat their wives, swore by false gods" (p. 193).

Prisypkin is a freak in the new communist state because he drinks, smokes, curses: odd habits in a society which no longer tolerates undisciplined behavior. Mayakovsky uses the freak-show to ridicule the clinical view of mankind which he fears is being fostered by an utopian vision of communism. The flawed humanity of Prisypkin has made him a freak in a world not of his making.

In A Man's A Man, Brecht satirizes religious ceremony by equating it with a freak-show attraction. When the drunken Jeraiah Jip is left behind at the pagoda, Mr. Wang puts him on display as a religious oddity. Wang emblazons the entrance to the pagoda with banners and posters advertising the new attraction, thus making it resemble the facade of a carnival freak-show booth. Jip is exhibited in a prayer box with only his head showing. Wang encourages Jip to bang and kick the prayer box; and then Wang collects money from the terrified worshipers at the pagoda (p. 93). The worshipers pay to placate what they are told is an angry god. Brecht draws a parallel between the reactions of the worshipers and people attending a carnival freak-show. Both pay money to be awed and even frightened by what is strange and mysterious in nature.

In the opening narrative to The Infernal Machine Cocteau informs the audience that according to legend nothing specific is known about what took place during that fateful encounter between the Sphinx and Oedipus outside the walls of Thebes. The playwright subsequently supplies his version of the event in the play's Second Act. For the encounter between Oedipus and the Sphinx, the dramatist conjures up images of a carnival freak-show performance—a not unlikely environment for that mythical part-woman-part-beast.

Cocteau introduces the Sphinx in her identity as a young girl, and shows her longing to shed forever her other role as scourge (p. 41). The Sphinx is portrayed as a main attraction among the gods who perform before mortals. Her wish, however, is that she never again has to mount her pedestal to perform as "the enigma of enigmas, the human monster, the bitch that sings" (p. 48).

To end her tenure as featured attraction in this divinely inspired freak-show, the Sphinx must put on one last performance for Oedipus. Taking her place on her pedestal she arrays herself with the prop and costume devices which augment her act (p. 49). So terrifying is this act that she has to reassure Oedipus that it is only "a performance . . . a mere performance" (p. 52).

Cocteau employs the carnival freak-show as a modern matrix for the strange and terrifying in the Oedipus legend. By drawing a parallel between the Sphinx and a freak show attraction, the playwright suggests that a mythic world lurks just beneath the modern one.

In Ivona, Princess of Burgundia, Witold Gombrowicz applies the emotional dynamics which operate between spectator and carnival freak to the relationship between the very powerful and the utterly powerless in society. The latter group is personified by Ivona, an ungainly girl of low social rank, who silently sits and endures all the abuse heaped upon her. She becomes an object of curiosity, annoyance and revulsion to all who look at her. Yet, her passive performance attracts and fascinates spectators.

Gombrowicz creates several parallels between the way the characters in the play react to Ivona and the way spectators react to a grotesque freak in a carnival show. The mixture of revulsion and fascination is present in both situations. The playwright's premise is that the privileged of society cannot help but regard the less privileged as a social aberration. Society's privileged derive part of their sense of well being by comparing themselves with those less fortunate. Prince Philip admits that since first setting eyes on Ivona:

> I have never felt so self-assured, so splendid, so brilliant. . . . Apparently, it is necessary to find someone completely inferior to appreciate one's own excellence. (p. 20)

This reaction is akin to that of the spectator at a freak-show. He feels assured of his wholesomeness through comparison with the freak.

Ivona's mere presence makes everyone in the royal household feel and behave like a freak. To those who look at her, Ivona becomes a mirror of their own imperfections. The Ladies of the court become painfully self-conscious about their physical imperfections and the remedies they take (face-lifts, false busts). The Queen regards Ivona as a personification of the weakness she confesses in her secret verses; and Ivona's toleration of abuse reawakens the King's guilt in the death of a former mistress. Gombrowicz compares these reactions to that of the spectator at a freak-show, who wonders if he appears as grotesque to others as this poor creature on the carnival platform appears to him.

Puppet shows

Marionette booths and Punch and Judy shows were a form of popular entertainment at European outdoor fairs during the inter-war years. The mechanics of the puppet show offered the avant-garde playwright another means of portraying action and delineating character. The marionette dangling on strings or the puppet controlled directly by hand each provide a model of manipulation useful to the playwright; and puppets' imitation of human behavior provide images that help the playwright dramatize the mechanization of human activity.

The Shadow satirizes the machinations that bureaucrats use to gain and consolidate power. The most absurd and grotesque example of puppet-like manipulation is found in the schemes of the Finance Minister. He is portrayed as a cripple whose useless limbs have to be physically manipulated by two valets. The valets carry him everywhere, arrange his body in any posture he desires and move his arms and legs as he orders. The Finance Minister is in effect a human puppet who controls his puppeteers and commands his own manipulation.

In the play's Second Act, he manipulates Julia Juli into conspiring with him against The Scholar. Using charm as his opening ploy, he orders the valets to arrange him in a suitable pose. As Julia appears to hedge, The Finance Minister has his pose changed to one of "extreme amazement," followed by "the pose of extreme indignation" at her outright refusal. He has the valets stamp his feet in anger, and then rewards her capitulation with an embrace manipulated by the valets. Shvarts portrays officialdom as a useless body, propped up by underlings, and dependent on the energy of subordinates to carry out bureaucratic schemes.

The tavern customers in Ghelderode's The Death of Doctor Faust are described as resembling dummies with painted faces (p. 104), and are manipulated by Diamotoruscant, the devil character, as if they were puppets. After having placed the customers into trance-like poses, the devil performs a brief puppet-show routine with one of them. Taking a seated man by the neck, Diamotoruscant stands him up, spins him around, turns him on his head, and finishes by depositing the customer onto a sofa. This act illustrates the devil's ability to control the actions of men.

The identification of puppet-show performance with human behavior was frequently made in plays associated with a style of playwriting known as Teatro del Grottesco. The term was derived from Luigi Chiarelli's "grotesque in three acts" The Mask and the Face (1916). The best known playwright whose work is linked to this style is Luigi Pirandello.

At the beginning of Henry IV, the young men who attend the nameless protagonist and play the role of privy Councillors to his Emperor Henry, complain that they are merely puppets being manipulated by a madman (pp. 383-384). Henry physically manipulates them as if they were puppets, in the council scene of Act Two. He arranges the young men in the poses he wishes them to assume as they sit around the council table (p. 427). Henry also manipulates the visitors who come to cure his insanity. They believe that they are humoring a madman when they agree to play roles in his medieval scenario, but they later learn that Henry has used them as puppets or props (p. 436).

Vitrac takes a performance convention from the Punch and Judy show to illustrate the irrationality of love in The Mysteries of Love. While declaring his love for Leah, Dovic slaps, pinches, bites, kicks, punches, strangles her; pulls her ears, spits in her face, violently shakes her, throws her down, and drags her around by the hair (p. 236). Henri Bergson points out that a pattern of repetitious punishment is characteristic of a Punch and Judy performance.[1]

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[1]Henri Bergson, "Laughter," in Comedy, ed. Wylie Sypher (New York: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1956), p. 106.

Also characteristic is the unexpected eruption of violence. When Patrick and Dovic first meet, the rivals for Leah's affection begin by bandying polite conversation. Without warning they go at one another in a violent and bloody knockdown battle (p. 237). Victrac's use of the Punch and Judy image demonstrates how thin the veneer of civilized behavior really is.

In The Naked King Shvarts shows the evils inherent in a totalitarian state. Over-regimentation has transformed the army from a fighting force into a band of performing puppets. These soldier-puppets, who perform with precision ceremonial functions only, mimic the organized responses that greet the public appearances of dictators. On command they can tremble with awe and veneration (p. 168), faint with excitement and then rise to jump up and down in buoyant expectation (p. 187).

Other carnival shows

Buffalo Bill Cody's Wild West Show was still touring in the first decade of the twentieth century. This wild-west show was known in Europe because Cody's troupe had performed there, and because of a general interest in cowboy folklore. Ghelderode incorporates the performance conventions of this type of carnival show into Christopher Columbus.

Columbus calls the performance with which Montezuma and the Indians greet him a carnival show (p. 167). The characterization is accurate. The historical distortion of this event is typical of the way history was recreated and staged in the wild-west show. Confrontations between Indians and American folk-heroes glorified the white protagonist at

the expense of the Indian. As the Indians perform their native dance for Columbus and his crew, Montezuma prophetically announces that they are celebrating an event which will ultimately lead to the extinction of the Indians as a great people. Similarly, the Indians of the American west acted out their death throes by performing in the wild-west shows of the late nineteenth century.

The wild-west show featured chauvinistic patriotism, mock heroics, displays of marksmanship and other cowboy skills. Ghelderode incorporates these elements into the celebration that relegates Columbus to musty history at the end of the play. Columbus, as his own statue, sadly watches the creation of a new American legend: Buffalo Bill Cody—"the most authentic cowboy of all" (p. 174).

One of the famous performers in Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show was Annie Oakley. Her routine consisted of incredible feats of marksmanship. Brecht incorporates this type of carnival act into the last scene of A Man's A Man. Standing before the impregnable fortress that blocks the advance of the British Army, Galy Gay announces to his audience of fellow soldiers, that he will bring down the fortress with just five shots from his cannon. Then, as Widow Begbick extols the exploit with a patter resembling carnival-show ballyhoo, Galy fires off four shots which accuarately hit their mark. With precise showmanship, Galy withholds the fifth shot to announce that the fortress is beginning to crumble. Then, to the cheers of his soldier audience, he finishes off the target with his last shot (pp. 145-146).

In Him, Cummings uses two carnival-show forms to illuminate Him's self-doubts both as a man and an artist. (I have already illustrated Cummings's use of the freak-show; here the use of the American carnival form known as the medicine-show is demonstrated.) Scene three of the play's Second Act is a monologue by a medicine-show pitchman who harangues an audience with horrifying descriptions of a disease which may afflict them, and then offers his miracle cure for sale. The crowd listens to the performance but does not buy the medicine. As the crowd dwindles, the pitchman harangues them with heightened rhetoric, but still to no avail. The failure of the pitchman to influence the audience, even with the most elaborate use of language, dramatizes Him's doubts about his abilities as a playwright, and his doubts about the ability of drama itself to affect people's lives.

The Movies

During the years between the wars, the movies evolved into one of the most popular forms of theatrical entertainment in America and much of Europe. As a medium for the presentation of drama it strongly rivalled the legitimate theatre. Avant-garde playwrights either incorporated filmed sequences into their plays, or constructed segments of the play's action to simulate the performance conventions found in popular films of the period.

The types of movies which were popular in the inter-war era, as well as the cinematic techniques which were a familiar aspect of these films, were developed in the period between 1900 and the beginning of

the First World War. In France, George Méliès evolved such important techniques as the fade-out and dissolve, and pioneered special-effects cinematography.[1] In the United States, E. S. Porter adapted dramatic situations of the melodrama to movie making; and his film The Great Train Robbery in 1903 laid the groundwork for the type of film which came to be known as the "western."[2]

Between 1908 and 1913, French and Italian film-makers produced large scale spectacles based on historical subjects, which encouraged American directors such as D. W. Griffith to produce this type of film.[3] Griffith evolved a cinematic style which combined action melodrama of the spectacle film with conventions of romantic realism borrowed from the legitimate theatre.[4] This style was copied in many Hollywood films. The years 1912 to 1930 saw the development and rise to eminence of Hollywood's silent-film comedies.[5] Mack Sennett's Keystone Cops and Charlie Chaplin were as familiar to many Europeans as they were to Americans.

The examples under this heading fall into two main groups. The first shows how playwrights included stage directions for filmed sequences to be projected during the performance of their play. The remaining examples show the incorporation of movie performance conventions into

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[1]A. Nicholas Vardac, Stage to Screen (New York: Benjamin Blom, 1968), p. 175.

[2]Ibid., pp. 182-183.

[3]Ibid., p. 205.

[4]Ibid., p. 210.

[5]James Agee, Agee on Film, Reviews and Comments (New York: Mcdowell, Obolensky, Inc., 1958), p. 4.

the dramatic structure of an avant-garde play. The latter will illustrate the use of conventions from popular film styles of the inter-war years, such as silent-film comedy, the romantic melodrama, the horror film, the western, and yet another film genre exhibited in movie theatres: the newsreel.

Goll's Methusalem contains stage directions for three film sequences that show Methusalem's dreams as he dozes in his living room. In the first sequence he is ardently speaking to a woman as they both sit in a restaurant. Through montage, her face changes to that of another woman, and then continues to change from one female visage to another. Methusalem pays no attention to these changes and "speaks on importantly" (p. 83). At the end of the first sequence of the dream film, a text-bubble appears above Methusalem's head, containing his plea that the woman, "no matter who," will "always wear a Methusalem shoe." In the second dream sequence, Methusalem enters a theatre and interrupts a rehearsal of Hamlet to demand—again through the text-bubble—that the actors hawk his shoe product. The third sequence shows him marching at the head of a column of soldiers, while promising them that his shoes will save not only their feet but also the German nation.

J. M. Ritchie notes that these film sequences which show the inner workings of the bourgeois mind, also ridicule

> the fusion of the erotic with the materialistic, the exploitation of culture, the combination of the militaristic and patriotic with commercial interests.[1]

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[1]Ritchie, Expressionist Plays, p. 17.

The text-bubble in the film sequences is Goll's version of the "dream balloon,"[1] a silent-film technique in which a character's thoughts are visualized within a circular frame flashed above his head. Each of the filmed sequences projected over the head of Methusalem sleeping on stage, are themselves "dream balloons," since they contain the inner workings of his mind in the play.

The filmed sequence in Pirandello's Tonight We Improvise shows part of an Italian opera being performed. A phonograph playing a recording of that part of the opera is synchronized with the projected film (p. 35). The film is projected on the upstage, white wall of the setting; and represents a performance going on in a theatre during a scene of the inner play in Tonight We Improvise. The performance is being attended by the actor-characters of the outer play in their roles as Signora Ignazio, and her daughters with their escorts. They arrive late and noisily crowd into their box on stage, receiving reproaches from the actors portraying the audience. These actors are seated in the auditorium among the real audience.

Pirandello's use of filmed theatrical performance adds another dimension to his dramatization, in the theatre plays, of the relationship and distinction between life and the theatre. In between the audience heard protesting in the auditorium and the film of the opera they are watching, there exists a play within a play. Thus the performance on film is a performance within a play, which is itelf a play-within-a-

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[1]Vardac, Stage to Screen, p. 201.

play, which is going on before an audience of people who represent life outside of the theatre. Pirandello vividly demonstrates the artifice and artificiality of theatrical performance as he shows real actors playing actors, who play characters watching film images of performers performing an opera. Roger Oliver explains the sudden introduction of a filmed sequence by pointing out that in Tonight We Improvise, Pirandello

> keeps his audience off balance with frequent changes of perspective. As soon as the reality of one level has been established he shifts out of it. . . .[1]

Oliver also offers a convincing explanation for Pirandello's use of an opera performance on film. He points out that the plot of an Italian opera is usually melodramatic, and so is the inner play of Tonight We Improvise. Pirandello uses the audience's assumed awareness of the melodramatic nature of opera plots to "create levels of melodrama" in the play;[2] that is, to use the melodrama in a familiar opera to illuminate and underscore the melodramatic aspects of scenes in the inner play. And naturally, a feasible method of including an opera performance within the stage performance of a play is the use of film.

The filmed performance of opera also serves as a dramatic counterpoint to Mommina's singing of operatic arias in the inner play. Mommina has sacrificed her chance at a singing career in opera because of her husband's pride and jealousy. Instead, her sister Totina, with a lesser

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[1]Oliver, Dreams of Passion: Theatre of Pirandello, p. 118.

[2]Ibid.

voice, has achieved the success that should have been Mommina's. Mommina's sacrifice is dramatized as she sings an area from Il Trovatore to distract her mother from a raging toothache, and the performance is stopped by a furious Verri (pp. 58-59). The result of Mommina's sacrifice is dramatized as she tries to demonstrate to her children the talent she had in the past. However, Mommina has lost her ability to sing, and the effort puts a fatal strain on her weak heart (pp. 94-95). The film of an opera being performed by skilled professional singers represents the goal which Mommina sacrifices.

Moscow Is Burning, written for the twenty-fifth anniversary of the 1905 Revolution, has been described as a "political satire developed in motion picture style."[1] Included in the montage form of the script are filmed sequences which, as the author specifies, are to be projected onto large screens hanging in the performing areas. These filmed sequences are integrated with the actions of the live performers. In the first sequence the Czar's restrictive proclamation is projected simultaneously on five screens (p. 71). The next film sequence visualizes the effect of a worker's strike. A wave of the hand by a live actor brings to a halt a speeding train, a moving tram, and a busy factory, each projected on separate screens (p. 77). Another sequence shows Lenin—on one screen—silently overcome an adversary on another, while live actors narrate the controversy (pp. 82-84). The last sequence shows photographs of villages that serve as backdrop to the live action (pp. 87-88).

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[1]Victoria Nes Kirby, "Moscow Is Burning: Introduction," The Drama Review, March 1973, p. 64.

Silent-film comedy

In the "Translator's Note"[1] to A Man's A Man, Eric Bentley mentions Brecht's knowledge of silent-film comedy, and points out the influence of the Keystone Cops movies on the play. This influence is particularly evident in the Second Scene of A Man's A Man, where Uriah, Jesse, Polly, and Jip seem to work at cross purposes as they try to loot a pagoda. The comedy in the scene is essentially visual, and relies on the acrobatics and frantic physical action which characterized silent-film comedy. The antics of the four soldiers include: Uriah and Polly swinging precariously on a bamboo pole; Jesse shooting down a bell which then falls on Polly's foot; Uriah leaping onto a balcony which immediately collapses; Polly getting caught in rat traps; Jesse getting hung up on electric wire; Jip getting hit on the head by an object and then hung up by his hair. The zany ineptitude of the would-be robbers as they first try to break into the pagoda and then frantically try to break out, the rapid succession of disasters which befall them, all unmistakably resemble the silent-film exploits of the Keystone Cops.

Ghelderode employs conventions of silent-film comedy in the mimed segments of Pantagleize. These conventions are applied to the ludicrous strategies and disguises used by the villainous policeman Creep, as he stalks his quarry. Also the physical abuse suffered by Creep as the would-be prey narrowly escapes his clutches, recalls similar instances in silent-film comedies. As the policeman phones for

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[1]Eric Bentley, ed., Seven Plays by Bertolt Brecht (New York: Grove Press, 1961), p. 70.

reinforcements to help him round up the revolutionaries, he is knocked cold by a stool accurately flung at his head (p. 169). As Creep sheds the ridiculous disguise of an astronomer in order to arrest Pantagleize, he is recognized by Bamboola, who promptly grabs the policeman and throws him over a wall (p. 177). Disguised as a potted palm tree in a cafe, he furtively hops around in pursuit of Pantagleize. Pantagleize avoids capture by knocking over the potted policeman and fleeing. Helpless, Creep frantically blows his whistle for waiters to come and stand him up (p. 199). The antics and misfortunes of this frustrated policeman are similar to those of the Keystone Cops. Ghelerode points to the connection between this play and silent-film comedy by stating: "It is not so far from Chaplin to Pantagleize."[1] Pantagleize is something of a Chaplin figure—the sad, comic lover.

The romantic-melodramatic movie

In The Death of Doctor Faust, Ghelderode uses a convention of silent-film melodrama—the hotly pursued heroine. Marguerite's first entrance is accompanied by the tavern orchestra playing "an old tune in a minor key" (p. 109). She enters furtively, and stops to look back for her pursuers. Faust appears on the scene, and Marguerite quickly slips away. Faust pauses momentarily, and then follows after her. Ghelderode uses this cinematic convention to characterize the opening of Faust's pursuit of sensual existence.

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[1]Ghelderode, Seven plays, vol. 1, p. 147.

Faust's seduction of Marguerite is accompanied by the spiel of The Barker of a nearby movie theatre. The phrases used by the barker to advertise the movie inside also make wry comments on Faust's actions. The Barker's description of the movie as "an astounding story of pleasure and pain ending in death and damnation" (p. 122) also characterizes the conventional treatment of the Faust legend in plays, operas and movies. Thus, the Barker's spiel serves to juxtapose the conventional treatment of the Faust legend—as represented by a romantic-melodramatic movie—with Ghelderode's version of the legend as it is being performed by the protagonists of the play.

The Barker's spiel embodies versions of the performing conventions of the romantic-melodramatic movie. These conventions normally insure the final victory of good over evil (as adapted from nineteenth-century Melodrama) and extol the virtue of true love. The Barker's version cynically distorts the conventions. In the movie he advertises, virtue "is punished and vice rewarded!" (p. 123). And his mention of "love" prompts a passing prostitute to claim it as her "business" (p. 125).

Ghelderode uses performing conventions of the romantic-melodramatic movie as they are implied in the Barker's spiel, to ironically characterize Faust's actions in the tragi-comic, theatricalist reinterpretation of the legend. The folly of Faust's yearning for awakened passion, love and happiness, are inronically echoed in the Barker's promise of a "romance of ever-lasting illusion," and his warnings on "the frailty of happiness" and the paths of "unreasoned desire."

Movie performance conventions in the Second Episode of The Death of Doctor Faust serve to portray satirically the conventional treatment of the Faust legend in theatrical performance. In the play's First Episode, Ghelderode satirized this treatment through a play-within-a-play (the performance in the tavern theatre). Ghelderode states that he incorporates elements "borrowed from the cinema" in this play, as a means of extending "a formula" and breaking "the conventional frame" which restrict a fresh theatrical presentation of the Faust legend.[1]

The horror film

Hollywood produced a large assortment of horror films in the twenties and thirties, and they were very popular in Europe as well as the United States. Lon Chaney in his silent-film roles, and a host of terrifying creatures such as Frankenstein's monster, Count Dracula, and Fu Manchu, all thrilled movie audiences. Witkiewicz incorporates performance conventions of the horror film in The Pragmatists, in the person of the Mummy. The horror-film conventions that characterize the Mummy's performance in Witkiewicz's play are as follows: she is a creature who has returned from the dead to take revenge on the living who wronged her; the Mummy has a frightening image, mysterious manner, and menacing gestures; and she can withstand the usual means of being killed. In The Pragmatist, the Mummy represents the spiritual, religious, and metaphysical aspects of human existence which have been either lost or discarded by pragmatic modern-man.

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[1]Ibid., vol. 2, p. 96.

Although the Mummy's performance is a parody of horror-film conventions, she frightens us just as much as the horror-film creatures frighten their audiences. Her final exit is a chilling example. She leads her spellbound victims into a dark void where a horrible fate awaits them. We continue to hear her weird siren-song until it is climaxed by the frightful screams and mad gibberish of the victims (p. 35).

The presence of performance conventions associated with horror films in a play which also contains techniques appropriated from the Grand Guignol, points up the similarity between these two forms of popular entertainment. The performance conventions of horror movies and Grand Guignol overlap in The Pragmatist; leading one to the conclusion that horror movies are a cinematic version of Grand Guignol.

The western

An important convention of the Hollywood western became the cowboy-hero's relationship to his horse. The cowboy-hero may rescue the heroine, but an overt display of affection was usually reserved for the horse. In Orpheus, Cocteau comically simulates this movie convention to characterize the dilemma of the poet—torn between love of his muse and love for his woman. Orpheus's muse is a performing horse who taps out numerical messages that Orpheus translates into verse. At the opening of the play, Orpheus demonstrates the talent of his performing horse to a skeptical Eurydice. The scene presents a comic parallel to the cowboy-hero's pride in the tricks his horse can perform.

The neglected heroine of the westerns rarely expresses jealousy at the hero's constant display of affection for his horse, but Cocteau invents such a scene in Orpheus. When Eurydice complains that Orpheus seems to love his horse more than her, the poet placates Eurydice with a half-hearted kiss, and then quickly offers the horse sugar as if to assure the animal where his true affection lies (p. 109). Cocteau theatricalizes the dilemma of the artist—devotion to his muse or to his mate—by drawing a comic parallel to the love triangle peculiar to the Hollywood western.

Newsreels

A newsreel invaribly opened the bill of short and feature-length films shown at the movie theatre. Newsreels combined photo journalism with popular entertainment; and visual details of news events were frequently edited and arranged with an eye toward heightening their shocking, lurid, or sensational aspects. The period saw the rapid rise of totalitarianism and hyper-nationalism in many parts of the world; and the newsreel often reflected the chauvinism or circulated the propaganda of its country of origin.

The newsreel integrated brief and graphic visual images with terse and provocative verbal captions. Ghelderode incorporates these devices into the Third Episode of The Death of Doctor Faust. Marguerite's suicide after her seduction and abandonment by Faust is revealed in the play by treating the event as a shocking crime reported in a newsreel. Simulating an audience watching a newsreel, the crowd of townspeople

assembles on one side of the stage and reacts to captions flashed onto a screen overhead. The captions focus attention on the lurid nature of the seduction, the grisly details of Marguerite's suicide, and the thrilling aspects of the manhunt for the guilty party. While this is going on, Faust and the Actor Faust huddle in fear on the other side of the stage and argue with each other over the responsibility for Marguerite's fate. Each turn of the argument coincides with the particular details of the crime being revealed in the caption.

Radio Broadcasting

Listening to the radio was a daily activity in the average household of inter-war Europe and America. The radio provided entertainment and news. For the illiterate or those rurally isolated, the radio was frequently the only source of news. Radio broadcasting was also a major advertising medium. The catch words, slogans, and jingles of the radio commercials were repeated until they too became a form of entertainment. Radio created a new type of performer: the announcer. He became as much a radio celebrity as the comedians, singers, and newscasters; and the names, voices and delivery styles of the most famous were known to the regular listener.

Cummings incorporates conventions of radio broadcasting into Him. The effect of radio commercials on people's perception of reality and pattern of conversation is illustrated by the dialogue of the three Female Figures in their scenes. They gossip in a patter which consists mainly of the catchwords, slogans and advertising jingles popularized by the

radio commercials of the 1920s, e.g., "It's toasted." In another example of the intrusion of radio commercials into people's psyche, the sexually frustrated old maid in Scene two of the Second Act expresses her disappointment in an outburst that strongly resembles a radio commercial. She equates her emotional distress with the examples of physical distress (indigestion, constipation) frequently described in radio commercials.

Act Two of Him is made up of a series of vaudeville, burlesque, and circus routines. In between each, the voice of Him is heard over a loud-speaker, making the transitions and introductions that a radio announcer makes on the kind of show that features comedians, singers, and orchestras. Him's sardonic commentary on each scene of Act Two has its roots in a performance convention of the radio variety show of the 1920s, wherein big-name announcers and featured performers ribbed each other in a series of routines.

In the heyday of radio, the announcer was regarded as more than broadcasting's version of a master of ceremonies. His distinctive voice frequently evoked the image of enormous power and authority. During the commercials he was spokesman for the corporate gods, and when performing as narrator for a radio drama he exercised enormous control over its events—propelling them forward or plunging them backward with the words he spoke. The playwright Cocteau performed as a radio narrator, and he chose the radio announcer's ubiquitous voice of authority to represent the gods controlling the events of The Infernal Machine.

A Voice sets the play in motion as it acquaints the audience with the Oedipus myth. After the First Act, the Voice winds back time to

show us what was happening between Oedipus and the Sphinx during the performance of that Act (p. 33). The Voice looks into the future as it sets the scene for the fateful wedding night of Oedipus and Jocasta (p. 60). Soon it is propelling us forward seventeen years for the climax of The Infernal Machine (p. 84).

Mayakovsky parodies the style of radio news announcers in The Bedbug. The decision of the communist rulers to thaw out Prisypkin sets reporters scurrying around the stage shouting the news into their microphones (p. 171). Each reports the news in the same urgent and cryptic manner made popular in American radio broadcasting by Walter Winchell. The image of communist reporters hawking news in imitation of capitalist radio-broadcasters combines with the image of the NEPmen hawking capitalist luxury items at the beginning of the play, to fuel Mayakovsky's satire on those in Russia who compromise the ideals of the Revolution.

The examples in this chapter attest to the many performance conventions offered by the popular entertainments, and illustrate how the playwright applied them. As a source of theatricalism, the popular entertainments were thoroughly explored and exploited by the avant-garde playwright in the period between the wars.

CHAPTER VII

THEATRICALISM AFTER 1939

There is ample evidence that theatricalism was used significantly in innovative drama after 1939. Leonard Pronko finds a theatricalist influence on the avant-garde theatre of France during the 1940s and 1950s. He writes that playwrights exploit "the peripheral theatre arts of fair, circus, and music-hall."[1] Another important example of theatricalism in the drama of Europe after World War II occurs in plays associated with the Theatre of the Absurd. Martin Esslin, who coined the phrase and studied the movement, points out a relationship between the Theatre of the Absurd and the popular entertainments. He notes the influence of music-hall and vaudeville routines, circus clown and acrobat acts, puppet theatre and Punch and Judy shows, and Hollywood silent-film comedy, on many plays classified within this movement.[2]

An important development in American drama is the rise of the Off-Off Broadway Theatre in New York City during the 1960s and 1970s. The plays of this movement were written by playwrights who spurned Broadway creating dramatic styles which eventually gained international recognition. This group, too, leaned heavily on theatricalism. In their

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[1]Leonard Cabell Pronko, Avant-Garde: The Experimental Theatre in France (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966), p. 20.

[2]Martin Esslin, The Theatre of the Absurd (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1969), pp. 282-290.

comprehensive anthology and study of the Off-Off Broadway movement, Albert Poland and Bruce Mailman state that Off-Off Broadway plays derive their "symbols" and "syntax" from movies, radio, and television.[1] Robert Patrick, a playwright, producer, and critic of the Off-Off Broadway theatre explains this reliance on the popular entertainments by pointing out that most playwrights of the movement come from parts of America where movies and television were the only theatrical entertainments available.[2]

Although the Threatre of the Absurd and the Off-Off Broadway Theatre supply many examples of theatricalism in innovative drama, there are other plays, belonging to neither of these movements, which illustrate the presence of theatricalism in plays written after 1939. The examples cited in this chapter are drawn from two prominent movements of the post-World War II era and from plays affiliated with no particular grouping. The examples selected, however, fall easily into the categories of theatricalism established earlier, and will be arranged here in similar sequence.

The Play Within a Play

One of the oldest, this theatricalist device retains its popularity and servicability throughout the post-World War II period. Playwrights continue to dramatize the interplay between actions taken in life by

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[1]Albert Poland and Bruce Mailman, eds., The Off Off Broadway Book (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1972), Introduction, p. xii.

[2]Robert Patrick, "American Experimental Theatre—Then and Now," Performing Arts Journal, Fall 1977, p. 15.

the actor and the role he performs on stage. In Thornton Wilder's The Skin of Our Teeth, the actress Miss Somerset breaks out of her role as Sabina to challenge the playwright's premise in the scene she is performing (p. 85). In the same play, the actor playing Henry transfers the hatred for his real father to his stage father in the scene the two actors perform (pp. 131-132). The actors in Peter Weiss's Marat/Sade are the inmates of the mental asylum where they perform De Sade's play about the French Revolution. Weiss shows how the particular mental illness of each performer intrudes upon the role he plays in the inner play. Pavel Kohut's Poor Murderer also takes place in a mental asylum where theatrical performance is employed as therapy. The play's hero is a professional actor confined in the asylum because he confuses the roles he plays in the theatre with reality. The characters in Anouilh's The Rehearsal use the staging of a Marivaux comedy to convey their true feelings.

Another device of the play-within-a-play consists of introducing the author of the inner or outer play as a character in his play. The Marquis De Sade debates the protagonist of his play—Marat, in Marat/Sade. The fictional playwright in Jack Gelber's The Connection participates in his play about drug addiction to the point of sampling heroin for the first time.

The possibility of the audience participating as performer as well as spectator continues to be explored. The onstage spectators in Marat/Sade are involuntarily drawn into the ending of the inner play; and in Heryk Bardiewski's The Show (1974), the characters who are the

spectators in the play put on their own show in the lobby of the on-stage theatre. They say they want to act out the roles they would like to play in life. They try to use the theatre to "find release for all their past frustrations and misfortunes" (p. 103). The spectators want the theatre reformed to provide "room in it for the public not only to sit but also to act" (p. 106).

The Self-Dramatizing Character

The self-dramatizing character constructs his own role in the play; we witness the character in the act of creating himself. The self-dramatizing character may only be known through the role or roles he creates, or we may see him constructing his present role using segments of old roles.

In Genet's The Balcony we witness a character creating his role in a play. In the play's opening scenes, four clients of Irma's brothel work at assuming the role in which each can achieve sexual orgasm. The whores who attend them help each client to costume himself in his desired role—one as Bishop, one as a Judge, one as a General, and one as a Beggar. These become the only roles we see the brothel clients play. Their self-dramatization is so successful and complete that the roles they create for themselves become their characters throughout the play. Genet shows us the role being played, rather than the character who is playing it. As Albert Bermel points out: "These roles are the characters."[1]

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[1]Albert Bermel, "Society as a Brothel: The Balcony," Modern Drama, September 1976, p. 269.

The whores help the clients create their roles by performing as the familiar counterpart to each role—penitent confessing to a Bishop, thief before a Judge, a horse for a General, and someone to whip a beggar. These women confirm the clients in their chosen roles—"attribute roles to them."[1] The women are not self-dramatizing characters, for regardless of the roles they adopt with the clients, they remain whores of the brothel.

The single character in Krapp's Last Tape creates his role in Beckett's drama by playing segments of an old tape-recording he had made and by making a new one. Krapp creates his role in the play mainly out of past roles which have been captured on tape. Krapp's character is constructed of performances by old Krapp, middle-aged Krapp (heard on tape), and the performance of young Krapp as referred to by middle-aged Krapp. Old Krapp listens to and mechanically edits middle-aged Krapp's performance (p. 24), just as middle-aged Krapp criticizes young Krapp's performance (unheard by the audience) (p. 16). The selection and arrangement of the taped and live recordings are made by old Krapp on stage, who, by his control of the tape-recording machine, ultimately creates the character of Krapp in Beckett's play.

Borrowed Parts; Borrowed Styles

Post-World War II playwrights conspicuously incorporate plots, characters, and dramatic styles, borrowed from other plays or other dramatic forms into their plays. The borrowed components appear in

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[1]Bermel, Modern Drama, September 1970, p. 290.

the host play as guest performers or recreated performances for specific dramaturgical purposes.

Sławomir Mrożek borrows the self-blinded Oedipus Rex, and gives him an important role in Vatzlav. The hero of Sophocles' renowned tragedy appears in Morżek's parable on Western civilization as guardian and examplar of "divine, human, and natural law" (p. 79). He performs his role as

> fountainhead of the western tradition of tragic guilt and responsibility, whose hidden transgressions inspired awe and whose fate became spiritually redemptive.[1]

In Vatzlav, Oedipus passionately seeks to save others from the tragic consequences of their vices and follies. In so doing he blindly serves an oppressive political system, inadvertently becoming its "flunky and spy" (p. 41). The exploitation of Oedipus and his brutal and humiliating treatment at the hands of a succeeding regime dramatize the fate of mankind's conscience in the wars and political upheavals of twentieth century Europe.

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead is a play derived from Shakespeare's Hamlet. Tom Stoppard has borrowed many characters and plot segments from Hamlet, but has rearranged these components and reassigned their importance. In Stoppard's play, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are elevated to principal roles, while Hamlet, Ophelia, Claudius, Gertrude, and Polonius are relegated to minor roles.

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[1]Daniel Gerould, "Contexts for Vatzlav: Mrożek and the Eighteenth Century," Modern Drama, March 1984, p. 33.

Stoppard's play contains excerpts taken verbatim from Shakespeare's play, in which Rosencrantz and Guildenstern play their traditional roles. During these scenes or after them, the two main characters discuss their roles in the intrigue at Elsinore. The play also contains scenes which echo Hamlet while using invented dialogue. In one such scene Guildenstern plays Hamlet's role and Rosencrantz pretends to be Horatio (pp. 48-51). Using colloquial language the scene clarifies Hamlet's predicament and comments on it.

Normand Berlin finds a special purpose in all the borrowing and manipulation. He believes that seeing Hamlet thus dissected, we are better able to "critically examine the Shakespearean play."[1]

Charles Ludlam, playwright of the Off-Off Broadway theatre, borrows the plot of Shakespeare's Hamlet and the style of nineteenth century melodrama in order to fashion a comic murder-mystery play called Stage Blood. Ludlam's play is about a touring stock-company whose members become embroiled in a Hamlet-like scenario back stage, while they are at the same time performing Shakespeare's Hamlet on stage.

Stage Blood contains both verbatim and comically distorted scenes from Hamlet, as well as lines from Shakespeare's play used in parallel situations of the backstage plot. Authentic Shakespearean verse is played-off against invented Elizabethan-style dialogue.

Even though the subject of Ludlam's play is theatre production, its theatricalism hinges more on its borrowed plots and styles than on the play-within-a-play aspects.

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[1]Normand Berlin, "Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead: Theatre of Criticism," Modern Drama, December 1973, p. 275.

The characters in Anouilh's The Rehearsal stage scenes from Marivaux's La Double Inconstance (Double Infidelity) for their amusement. Actually, Anouilh is borrowing the scenes from Marivaux's play to use them as a parallel to the basic situation in The Rehearsal. Anouilh not only borrows the scenes from Marivaux, he also borrows Marivaux's style for incorporation in other parts of The Rehearsal. John Harvey states that in The Rehearsal, Anouilh

> not only recreated the characters and intrigue of Marivaux's La Double Inconstance but also succeeded in duplicating the elusive style—so well, in fact, that as Anouilh's characters rehearse scenes from Marivaux's play, it is difficult to know where one text leaves off and the other begins.[1]

Anouilh does not merely imitate Marivaux as a tour-de-force in playwriting. By calling attention to the borrowed scenes from Marivaux—those being rehearsed by his play's characters—Anouilh also draws attention to Mariaux's style superimposed on The Rehearsal. Anouilh's purpose is to create a direct parallel between his play and Marivaux's in the rehearsal scenes, and an inverted parallel with Marivaux in the remainder of The Rehearsal.

Withold Gombrowicz explains his use of a borrowed form in the "Commentary" to his play Operetta.

> I have always been captivated by the form of the operetta which . . . seems to me the perfect theatre, perfectly theatrical. But . . . how to fill the puppet-show void of the operetta with real drama? On the one hand . . . this operetta should be nothing but an operetta . . . on the other hand, it should be a solemn drama of humanity.

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[1]John Harvey, Anouilh: A Study in Theatrics (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964), pp. 148-149.

The theatricalism of Operetta springs from the conspicuous contrast between the play's content and its borrowed style.

Spectacles and Scenic Shows

Scenic materials and effects used in theatre production have not changed radically since the 1920s. They continue to offer the post-World War II playwright an opportunity for theatricalism. The examples which follow show the playwright openly incorporating scenic artifice in his play, and manipulating the space and time conventions associated with the performance of drama.

Thornton Wilder uses conventional scenery for a scenic show in the First Act of The Skin of Our Teeth. As the actress playing Sabina wonders if the house isn't ready to fall down about her ears, a portion of the stage set "leans precariously" over her. As she gives it an anxious glance, it "slowly rights itself." Continuing to express her fears she is caught by surprise when this section of flats suddenly "flies up into the lofts" (p. 71). Wilder has succeeded in creating a comic routine between the actress and a piece of scenery. The scenic unit has become another performer, teasing Sabina and then frightening her.

The title of Jean Genet's The Screens indicates the author's emphasis on scenic artifice in the play. To underscore the artificiality of the screens as a scenic device, Genet contrasts the objects painted on each screen with identical but real objects. Genet means the obvious artifice of the screens to serve as background for and call attention to the role playing of the play's characters.

In this play, Genet displays the vituosity of a simple scenic element such as a set of moveable screens. Not only are the screens called upon to denote visually each of the play's seventeen scenes, they are also used as a means of depicting violent feelings and actions. The screens pictorially represent the colonist's orange grove in Scene Ten. Arabs enter and burn down the orchard by drawing flames on the screens. As the Arab revolt erupts in Scene Twelve, symbols of the hate, fear, and bloodletting are drawn on the screens. In The Screens, Genet puts on a show with scenic artifice and the scenic conventions used to establish place, time, and dramatic event.

Friedrich Dürrenmatt puts on a show with scenic artifice in The Marriage of Mr. Mississippi. "No one should deny us playwrights the opportunity to satisfy such desires now and then,"[1] he argues. The playwright begins his scenic manipulation with our first view of the play's locale: a room in which one window looks out on a northern European landscape while the one beside it reveals a typical southern European vista (p. 45). Dürrenmatt has further fun with the view through the windows. Both show tree tops which seem to locate the room on an upper floor of the house; yet some of the play's characters are seen passing by apparently at street level (pp. 48, 64, 106).

Dürrenmatt turns scenic props into performers in the play. Three "over-dramatic busts," portraying the play's male protagonists, descend from above to foretell the "regrettable fate" of the three men (p. 47).

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[1]Fredrich Durrenmatt, Problems of The Theatre and The Marriage of Mr. Mississippi (New York: Grove Press, 1958), p. 19.

Portraits of Anastasia's murdered husband and Mississippi's murdered wife float in to torment the guilty pair. In both instances, the scenic artifice is made obvious.

The playwright also puts on a show with scenic conventions which designate the time and place of dramatic events in the performance of a play. According to his stage directions, large canvas screens are to be flown in periodically. These act to support pictorially expository events being described by a character (p. 48), to illustrate recent events bearing on the present action (pp. 65, 79-80), and to show critical events presently taking place elsewhere (p. 105).

Dürrenmatt playfully makes one of the large screens an accomplice to Anastasia's infidelity. It hovers just high enough off the stage floor to reveal Anastasia's and her lover's legs in the position of an embrace behind the screen. When Anastasia's husband, Mr. Mississippi, enters downstage of the screen, we see the lovers' legs beat a hasty retreat. The screen rises to allow a solemn sense of penance and forgiveness between husband and wife, and then lowers to separate them. The screen hovers off the floor to show us the lover's legs carrying him back to Anastasia's embrace (pp. 79-82). In every use he makes of the canvas screens, Dürrenmatt emphasizes the scenic artifice of the device.

Mining the Popular Entertainments

Much of the theatricalism in drama after 1939--particularly in plays associated with the Theatre of the Absurd or the Off-Off Broadway

Theatre—was derived from popular entertainments familiar to the playwrights. Grand Guignol productions still could be seen in France for a few years after World War II. Traditional forms of variety theatre (music hall, vaudeville, burlesque) existed in Europe after 1939, and to a lesser degree in the United States. Here, night club routines, jazz and rock music concerts, inspired theatricalism in plays of the Off-Off Broadway Theatre. Circus acts and carnival shows remained relatively the same throughout this century both in Europe and the United States. In the post-World War II period, film remained a fertile source of theatricalism. Silent-film comedies and movies from the 1930s and 1940s—revived for film festivals and television—seemed to appeal to innovative playwrights. Radio broadcasting retained mass appeal as popular entertainment after 1939 until overshadowed by television. Both forms of broadcasting were mined for theatricalism by European and American playwrights.

The examples which follow are arranged in the same order as the subheadings in Chapter VI.

Grand Guignol

Near the end of The Marriage of Mr. Mississippi, Anastasia and Mississippi secretly put poison in each other's coffee and then suffer prolonged death throes on stage. As Saint-Claude returns to view the carnage, he is confronted by his executioners who calmly shoot him dead.

Adolf Klarmann implies that the playwright simulated the style of the Grand Guignol in this episode.[1]

The Grand Guignol theatre enacts its on-stage murders as if it were performing an intricate and elaborate ritual. The characters of Jean Genet's The Blacks enact the ritual murder of a white woman with the same dedication to detail, passion and shock as the actors of the Grand Guignol. Martin Esslin notes that the characters of The Blacks perform the ritual murder, "elaborately and lovingly imagined in lurid detail."[2] The play emulates the focus on sex and violence by the Grand Guignol when the enactment of the murder shows that the white woman succumbed to her killers' sexual attractions before she was strangled to death (pp. 64-68).

No onstage action has so shocked and horrified audiences as has the scene in which a baby is stoned to death in its carriage in Edward Bond's Saved. The scene contains the key elements of Grand Guignol: torture and brutal murder realistically enacted. The young men pull the infant's hair, pinch it, punch it, smear its face with its own excrement, throw burning matches at it, and finally stone it to death (pp. 51-56). The event is viewed as an expression of one of Bond's major dramatic metaphors: "the sacrificial image of an innocent human being

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[1]Adolf D. Klarmann, "Friedrich Duerrenmatt and the Tragic Sense of Comedy," in Modern Drama: Essays in Criticism, ed. Travis Bogard and William I. Oliver (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 122.

[2]Esslin, Theatre of the Absurd, p. 189.

punished by society."[1] Another view of this scene has Bond "outraging the audience emotionally as a sort of shock therapy to galvanize their conscience."[2] These explanations of the subject and intent of the stoning scene underscore the scene's relationship to Grand Guignol.

The variety stage

Traditional forms of variety theatre—such as vaudeville and burlesque—have often been identified with the Theatre of the Absurd. In his analysis of N. F. Simpson's A Resounding Tinkle, George Wellwarth notes that vaudeville comedians enter the Paradocks' living room and perform a skit for the couple's entertainment.[3] Sławomir Mrożek's Vatzlav contains a burlesque-show striptease by Justine, which "degrades the virtue of justice."[4]

Playwrights of the Off-Off Broadway theatre have also relied on conventional forms of variety entertainment. Kenneth Bernard's Night Club assembles night club, vaudeville and burlesque routines, and presents them in the style of the theatre of the ridiculous. The play is made up of campy or raunchy routines performed by ventriloquists, jugglers, impersonators, and magicians. Bubi, the androgynous master

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[1]Robert Tener, "Edward Bond's Dialectic: Irony and Dramatic Metaphors," Modern Drama, September 1982, p. 423.

[2]Christopher Innes, "The Political Spectrum of Edward Bond: From Rationalism to Rhapsody," Modern Drama, June 1982, p. 199.

[3]George E. Wellwarth, The Theatre of Protest and Paradox (New York: New York University Press, 1971), p. 244.

[4]Gerould, "Contexts for Vatzlav," Modern Drama, March 1984, p. 32.

of ceremonies, executes the bumps and grinds of the burlesque stripper when encouraged by the onstage audience. The last routine of Night Club harks back to Grand Guignol. A patron of the night club is supposedly guillotined on stage and his severed head is kept alive on a table. The macabre, however, quickly succumbs to the ridiculous as the head croaks out the play's final tribute to Bubi.

The European music-hall's modern counterpart is the jazz or rock-music concert. In The Connection, Jack Gelber puts jazz musicians on stage to perform both as a musical group and as characters in the play-within-the play. Gelber's purpose here is to create the illusion of improvised action in the play by supporting it with "the authenticity of that improvised art"—jazz music (p. 229).

The climax to Sam Shepard's The Tooth of Crime is a contest of styles between two rock-music performers: one a fading super-star and the other a claimant to the throne. Bruce Powe sees the super-star Hoss as "an Elvis Presley type,"[1] while Crow seems to resemble Keith Richards of the Rolling Stones—an up-and-coming performer during Elvis Presley's later years.[2] Powe calls The Tooth of Crime, Shepard's "ultimate rock 'n' roll play."[3]

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[1]Bruce W. Powe, "The Tooth of Crime: Sam Shepard's Way with Music," Modern Drama, March 1981, p. 17.

[2]Ibid., p. 19.

[3]Ibid., p. 16.

Circus acts

Clown, animal, and acrobatic acts as a source of theatricalism carried over into post-World War II drama. John Fletcher points to "circus clownery" as a basic form of action in Beckett's Waiting for Godot.[1] Ruby Cohn states that all four characters of the play are "performing artists."[2] She notes the similarity of the Pozzo and Lucky routine to "a circus animal-trainer" act, and likens Vladimir and Estragon to "acrobatic jugglers"[3] in their hat-switching routine (p. 46). Estragon himself compares what's going on in the play to the circus (p. 23).

Rosencrantz, Guildenstern, Hamlet and the Player perform a circus-clown act in Stoppard's play. Reacting to an attack by pirates, the four characters run around frantically, colliding with each other several times. Then each seeks refuge in a barrel, climbing in and closing the lid after him. The lights dim out momentarily, and when they return one barrel is missing and the characters peep out of different barrels than the ones they entered (pp. 118-119). The action resembles a magic routine as performed by circus clowns.

Thornton Wilder simulates a circus animal-training act in The Skin of Our Teeth. The Dinosaur obeys Mrs. Antrobus's command to "go

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[1]John Fletcher, "Action and Play in Beckett's Theatre," Modern Drama, December 1966, p. 243.

[2]Ruby Cohn, Currents in Contemporary Drama (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1969), p. 225.

[3]Ibid., p. 187.

around to the back of the house where you belong" (p. 76). Later in the First Act, all the animals run around in circles in response to a bellowing Mr. Antrobus; and when he enters, the animals cavort wildly and then embrace their master (pp. 81-82). Mildred Kuner compares Wilder's use of theatricalized animals in The Skin of Our Teeth to Obey's in Noah.[1]

Eugene Ionesco spoke for many innovative playwrights of the post-World War period when he declared that if people say his plays are circus, then "so much the better; let's bring in the circus."[2]

Carnival shows

Along the ocean beaches of the United States there exist numerous carnivals of a fairly permanent nature. Of these, the boardwalk booths of Atlantic City inspire the locale and theatricalism of the Second Act of Wilder's The Skin of Our Teeth, while Coney Island's freak shows do the same for Tom Eyen's double-bill of plays: Why Hanna's Skirt Won't Stay Down and Who Killed My Bald Sister Sophie?

The principal side-show in Wilder's play is the fortune-teller's booth. The character of the Fortune Teller functions dramatically as Chorus. Addressing the audience, she predicts the biblical Flood from which few will escape by the skin of their teeth (pp. 100-101).

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[1]Mildred Kuner, Thornton Wilder: The Bright and The Dark (New York: Thomas Crowell Co., 1972), p. 150.

[2]Eugene Ionesco, "The Avant-Garde Theatre," Tulane Drama Review, December 1960, p. 44.

The specific locale of Tom Eyen's two "sister" plays is the front of a combination fun-house and wax museum at Coney Island. The plays' three main characters, Hanna, Sophie, and Arizona, are involuntary performers in the freak-show which theatricalizes each of their lives. As they freeze into the poses which duplicate their poster images, the characters illustrate how each is "trapped in time—in their past, in their futurelessness, in their involvements with each other."[1]

Puppet-shows remain a prime source of theatricalism. One of Ionesco's stage directions in Exit The King states that King Berenger's falling down-standing up-falling down scene should "be played like a tragic Punch and Judy show" (p. 29). The larger-than-life puppets in Jean-Claude van Itallie's Motel are manipulated by performers inside them. The male and the female puppet destroy a motel room, ultimately tearing off the head of the puppet representing the motel manager. The violence is generated by the recorded voice of the motel manager, which extols the creature comforts of the motel's accommodations. The one-act play graphically shows how materialist-minded society is turning man into a destructive robot-like creature.

Arthur Kopit theatricalizes Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show in Indians, in order to depict America's relations with this country's original inhabitants. As Ghelderode had suggested in Christopher Columbus, the Indians of the new world were forced to participate in a theatrical spectacle which portrayed their systematic destruction as a people.

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[1]Michael Feingold, "Introduction," to Tom Eyen: Ten Plays (New York: Samuel French, Inc., 1971), p. 3.

The movies

Newsreels shown in movie theatres represented video-journalism, until they were rendered obsolete by television in the late 1940s. Capitalizing on the popularity of newsreels in 1942 (the copyright date of The Skin of Our Teeth), Wilder opens the first and second acts of the play with simulated newsreels. Introduced as "the news events of the world," slides are projected on a screen and narrated by an announcer's voice. The screen images show members of the Antrobus family being treated as celebrities. Inasmuch as this family represents the family of man, the first two acts of Wilder's theatricalized history of civilization are given a newsreel presentation.

Before the advent of sound, the silent film had developed an intricate vocabulary of gestures which revealed a character's emotions, intentions, desires. These gestures allowed movie audiences to recognize and properly respond to both the madcap antics of silent-film comedies and the melodramatic conflicts of serious movies. In his play The Ride Across Lake Constance, Peter Handke borrows the great stars of German film (silent and early talkies), and has them "act out situations which turn on failures in the assumed connections among language, gesture and reality."[1] Characters named Emil Jannings, Eric Von Stroheim, Elizabeth Bergner, try to act spontaneously in power struggles and love relationships, but find themselves unable to escape the melodramatic situations, and the familiar gestures and dialogue of their movie roles.

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[1]Michael Hays, "Handke and the End of the 'Modern,'" Modern Drama, January 1981, p. 359.

Handke uses the conventions of (German) film drama to demonstrate how we communicate within "the realm of pre-structured symbol and meaning," almost always preferring "the security of known forms."[1]

The Hollywood Western inspires theatricalist elements in several of Sam Shepard's Off-Off Broadway plays. Writing to Richard Schechner about a production of The Tooth of Crime, Shepard stated that the play "is built like High Noon, like a machine western."[2] Commenting on the Hoss-Crow duel in the last Act of The Tooth of Crime, Bruce Powe finds it reminiscent of "shoot-out" scenes at the conclusion of Westerns. He notes a parallel to a scene in a Western of the early seventies called The Gunfight, which starred Kirk Douglas. In this movie, two gunfighters duel one last time before a paying audience.[3]

In The Unseen Hand, Shepard patterns the Morphan brothers on the cowboy-hero teams of the 1930-1940 Westerns: a noble knight-errant hero and his (usually) two grizzly, rough-and-tumble side-kicks. Roy Rogers accompanied by Gabby Hayes comes quickly to mind. However, given the suave manner of Sycamore, the Morphan brothers most resemble the Errol Flynn-Alan Hale-Guinn "Big Boy" Williams trio which headlined a series of Warner Brothers' Westerns of the late thirties and early forties.

Ronald Tavel's Gorilla Queen vividly illustrates the affinity of the Off-Off Broadway play for movie inspired theatricalism. Bonnie

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[1]Michael Hays, Michael Drama, January 1981, p. 360.

[2]Richard Schechner, "The Writer and the Performance Group," Performance, March/April 1973, p. 63.

[3]Bruce W. Powe, Modern Drama, March 1981, p. 16.

Marranca points out this play's strong connection to Hollywood films. She suggests that Gorilla Queen embodies Tavel's view of the world as "a grade-B movie comprised of all the conventions of Hollywood." Tavel has the characters frequently "commenting on how the production derives from movies," and he puts them into situations which parody filmic conventions. Marranca concludes that Gorilla Queen playfully ridicules "the romantic conventions of Hollywood's jungle movie genre," as well as "horror films, south-of-the-border musicals, romantic films."[1]

The filming of a movie version of the Cinderella story constitutes the theatricalism in Janusz Głowacki's political satire Cinders. The girls of a Polish reform school are being coerced into participating in the film, which will be used as propaganda by the communist government. Głowacki decries the alliance between film-makers and a repressive regime—which one can trace back to the era of Hitler and Stalin. He draws a parallel between the unscrupulous film-director and the methods and motives of the tyrannical government.

The girls of the reform school have been brutalized by family, society and state. Now they are being callously exploited by art. To indicate their current de-humanization, the playwright has each girl known only by the name of the role that she plays in the film.

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[1]Bonnie Marranca, "The plays of Ronald Tavel," Performing Arts Journal, Spring/Summer 1978, pp. 62-63.

Radio and television broadcasting

Among its many forms of theatricalism, Wilder's The Skin of Our Teeth contains a radio broadcasting segment. In the play's Second Act a harried Broadcasting Official begs Mr. Antrobus to make his "broadcast to the conventions of the world," before the threatening storm (the biblical Flood) arrives (p. 111); but Mr. Antrobus's radio message to all the living creatures of the world is drowned out by the storm. Wilder has Mrs. Antrobus despair of the inability of art and the media to truly portray mankind. "We're not what books and plays say we are. . . . We're not in the movies and we're not on the radio" (p. 114).

N. F. Simpson's original one-act version of A Resounding Tinkle employs radio soap-opera style to parody the kind of drama that wallows in domestic problems. The play is a satire of middle-class suburban life—namely the obsession with possessions, status, entertainment and neighbors. Radio is an essential element in the life of the play's couple, the Paradocks. The radio's daily broadcasts provide spiritual uplift (pp. 24-26), and accompaniment to the performance of the family's trite daily routines (p. 31). Simpson underscores the soap-opera parody in the play by making the couple the performers of the soap-opera emanating from their radio. The radio voices of Bro and Middie Paradocks integrate with the couple's onstage discussions of their nonsensical domestic problems (pp. 32-35).

In Jean-Claude van Itallie's one-act play Eat Cake!, the announcer of a television commercial materializes as an attractive young man, in the living room of a woman watching television. She represents the

young woman who longs to look like the ideal female portrayed on television commercials. The young man now on stage, whose seductive voice had been heard emanating from the television screen (not visible to the audience), bullies the young woman into ordering and consuming enormous amounts of pastry. After one week, the helpless young woman has lost her precious figure. The young man leaves, only to be heard once again repeating the seductive commercial on television.

Van Itallie is dramatizing how television commercials influence the public. The announcer who materializes represents the strategy of television commercials—to seem to come right into your living room and bring you a personal message. The young man's behavior portrays how commercials cajole, flatter, insist, bully the audience. In the young woman's house for a week, the young man acts out the daily repetition of the sales pitch designed to wear down the consumer's resistance. The young woman is easily victimized because she has been conditioned to believe and comply with what television commercials tell her. In Eat Cake! van Itallie uses the conventions of the television commercial to portray interaction between announcer and individual viewer. The playwright dramatizes this process as a live performance.

Television plays a role as corrupter of society in Vasilii Aksyonov's "pop art parable" Your Murderer.[1] The play's poet-hero is forced to become a writer of television commercials. His jingles attempt to sell a whiskey product to children (p. 124). He writes commercials

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[1]Daniel C. Gerould, "Vasilii Aksyonov: Contemporary Russian Playwright," Performing Arts Journal, Spring 1977, p. 110.

which promote whiskey as a tool in the seduction of reluctant women (p. 129). The television commercials are meant to illustrate the degree to which the writer-hero has allowed himself to be corrupted.

René de Obaldia's absurdist satire of the "Lolita" theme, The Satyr of La Villette, offers a farcial view of our dependence on television. The play's hero is a prominent television newscaster whose penchant for little girls gets him involved with an extremely precocious nymphet. When the hero and the nymphet are arrested for suspicious conduct, the girl invents a seduction scenario made up of fragments from television dramas (pp. 61-64).

The television set dominates the living space and the life of the newscaster's mother. His nightly television broadcast is a scrupulously observed ritual in his mother's house--and, we are to assume, in millions of other households (pp. 19-21).

The above examples of theatricalism range over a thirty-seven year period; from The Skin of Our Teeth in 1942 to Cinders in 1979, thus demonstrating the continuing long-life of theatricalism as a dramaturgical device. Forty-four examples drawn from thirty-two plays were examined to illustrate the various applications of theatricalism to be found in the post-World War II period. The nature of the plays chosen indicates that theatricalism is most likely to be found in innovative drama. The basic categories of theatricalism--established earlier--still serve to classify theatricalist elements in plays. Some plays may contain several categories of theatricalism, as was the case in the period between the wars. Wilder's The Skin of Our Teeth contains

six varieties. Theatricalism--which first flowered after World War I--has retained its usefulness as a dramaturgical device.

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSION

This study has demonstrated that theatricalism was widely used in European avant-garde drama written between the two world wars, and that it continues to be important in the creation of innovative drama in Europe and the United States. An underlying aim has been to formulate an anatomy of theatricalism. To accomplish this, forty-four avant-garde plays of the period were studied for examples of theatricalism which were then closely examined and classified according to similarities discovered in their forms. Guidelines were established to determine what constitutes theatricalism in drama, and distinct categories were set up. The study has sought to re-examine the venerable play-within-a-play, to spotlight the self-dramatizing character as he constructs his own role and scenario, to show how borrowed parts and styles perform in a host play, to demonstrate the role of theatre-wide spectacle and scenic show in drama, and to reveal the vast reservoir of theatricalism accessible to playwrights who mine the popular entertainments.

The major criterion used here to define theatricalism was the playwright's conscious and conspicuous incorporation of theatrical performance conventions into his play. It should be noted that the use of this criterion, although it serves to sharpen the focus of the study, has resulted in the exclusion of a few types of theatricalism which

may be found in the plays of this period. The plays of Witkiewicz, for example, in addition to providing many examples of theatricalism examined here, also employ a metaphorical type too broad for inclusion in this study—a type described by Daniel Gerould as "the theatricalization of life," through which the playwright presents his view of the "inauthenticity that has infected modern life."[1] The protagonists of The Shoemakers rhetorically and self-consciously point out that they are playacting, and "call attention to their ludicrous roles and shabby performances."[2] They are ineligible, however, for my category of self-dramatizing characters, as they do not seriously attempt to alter their roles or create new ones for themselves. Nor has any attempt been made to catalogue the innumerable instances of the use of theatrical imagery in speeches by individual characters ("All the world's a stage . . .").

Another form of theatricalism excluded from this work because of its broad and diffuse character is Pirandello's theatre-in-the-theatre (teatro nel teatro), discussed by Albert Bermel in Farce.[3] Here the inner drama may include dramatized memories or dreams. Bermel gives examples from The Marriage (1946) by Witold Gombrowicz to illustrate this type of theatricalism.

Variations in theatricalist techniques developing in a period later than the time-frame of this work may also be found in Bermel's

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[1]Gerould, Witkacy, p. 41.

[2]Ibid., p. 331.

[3]Albert Bermel, Farce (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982), chap. 13, pp.332-361.

study. He cites two variations of the play-within-a-play from works by Tom Stoppard. In Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead,

> Stoppard has devised a new form, an inversion. Instead of having Rosencrantz and Guildenstern function as a subplot, he makes Hamlet the play within the play. . . .[1]

And in The Real Inspector Hound, an inner play is commented on by two reviewers who swap places and roles with two members of its cast. This "role-swapping"[2] version of the play-within-a-play allows Stoppard to mock both a particular type of drama and the way theatre reviewers arrive at their opinions. Noteworthy as they are, these variations do not belong in the categories developed within the time-period covered by this study.

Improvisation by actors is not discussed here as a theatricalist technique, although it is as old as theatre itself. This study, as noted, confines itself to examining techniques used deliberately by playwrights and does not concern itself with acting techniques. The practice of allowing space in the text of a play for actual, spontaneous improvisation by actors is a device favored by some playwrights after World War II. Bermel cites Paul Sill's Story Theatre, and the collaborative plays of Jean-Claude van Itallie and the Open Theatre. (Pirandello's Tonight We Improvise, as Bermel points out, only simulates improvisation.[3])

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[1]Ibid., pp. 347-348. [2]Ibid., p. 348.

[3]Ibid., p. 354.

The fact that contemporary playwrights continue to create new categories of theatricalism, or add subcategories to existing ones, supports the premise of this study: that theatricalism plays an important role in innovative drama between the wars. Bermel remarks upon "the spread of theatricalism"[1] during this period; and in referring to the play-within-a-play, he observes that "this type of theatricalism is rightly considered the characteristic dramatic mode of the century."[2]

What does theatricalism appear to contribute to innovative drama? Why its special appeal to the playwright? It is a technique whereby the staples of drama—character and theme and plot (or situation)—may be raised to new dimensions or seen in a new light, may be turned inside out, enhanced, diminished, mocked, distanced, mythologized, brightened, expanded, trivialized, or even abandoned altogether in a spirit of sheer play. Theatricalism broadens the playwright's range by furnishing him with such a versatile dramaturgical technique. And because it is not limited to any particular style, dramatic genre or historical period, theatricalism offers itself freely to playwrights adhering to any tradition or convention of theatre production. Further, by incorporating his own theatricalist elements into a play, the playwright protects himself to some degree from undesired embellishments or liberties that might be imposed on his play in production.

Theatricalism links drama and theatrical performance in a unique way. It is theatre nourishing drama as well as drama nourishing theatre.

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[1]Ibid., p. 335. [2]Ibid., p. 339.

Performance becomes an agent of dramatic creation as well as a consequence of it.

Theatricalism shows us the theatre delighting in itself: in the variety and ingenuity of its traditions, conventions and techniques. It gives us the playwright revelling in the use of the theatre's artifices and devices. Theatricalism may be viewed as the playwright's homage to the theatre.

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