In 1955 I visited the United Kingdom for a few months and had the privilege of attending performances at Stratford by some of the star actors. Among them were such notable Shakespearian interpreters as Sir Laurence Olivier, Sir John Gielgud, Lady Vivien Leigh. Shakespeare interested me far above other dramatists. But I did not venture to take up Shakespeare for a special study because I thought I did not possess the necessary equipment. I decided to study the modern one-act play written in the present century. When I began to study dramas some five or six years back I thought of undertaking the study of short plays in general, including two-act and three-act plays. Later I limited myself to the study of one-act plays whose quality and variety drew all my attention. More than two hundred one-act plays have been analysed for the purpose of my present work.

The broad divisions include Social and Religious, Biographical and Literary Plays. Different sections have been given to Verse Drama, Fantasy and Irish Drama. In our survey some of the plays have been analysed in greater detail than others. More attention, for example, has been given to Yeats, Bernard Shaw and Eliot than to others. As regards
the classifications followed in this work there have been some cases of overlapping, which seemed unavoidable. Plays which can be treated in two different sections have been treated only in one. "Count Albany", for example, can go into the historical section or into our discussion of Scottish writers; Carswell, the author is a Scotsman, but here we have preferred the theme to regional interest and have assigned the play to the rather meagre account of historical plays which we have been able to produce. There have been other such cases and we hope this explanation will cover them all.

A portion of my enquiry has been devoted to an analysis of experimental plays. In doing this I have not confined myself to those written by English authors alone. For some of the important experiments are associated with writers of non-English extraction like Brecht and Ionesco. On the intellectual plane as well as the artistic the idea of one world seems now to have gained an immense practical force. Yeats borrowed from Japanese Noh Plays, Picasso from African Sculpture and Eliot from Buddhist and Hindu Philosophy. In the theatre national and geographical boundaries do not restrict those who adopt an avant-garde attitude. It is because of this that I have tried to offer a conspectus of dramatic development on the continent of Europe and in America with reference to a limited number of plays.
For the purpose of envisaging the theatre of the future, the contributions of the experimental writers is highly significant. The Absurd Theatre and the Epic are two important streams of development. There are intractable elements in life which cannot be dramatically represented without a sense of confusion. We experience this confusion in the Ionesco plays because the new roads have not yet been properly laid out and the forest cleared but signs indicate that there will be major changes in the nature of the theatrical entertainment. But no prophecies can be made as regards the change. For neither is all change for the better nor hostility to change the right attitude.

The section on experimental drama has been kept as short as possible. The intention is to arrive at a view of what is being done both in the contemporary bourgeois theatre and the non-traditional. The two parts of the survey are complementary to each other.

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