INTRODUCTORY

Dr. Johnson's well-known saying, "The Drama's Laws the Drama's Patrons give" refers to a more or less metropolitan standard. He was thinking of London and its theatres, the critics and the public. Frequent performances in the theatre trained the taste of the public and what they wanted to see and patronize, therefore, represented a high standard. In our own time the drama had to struggle with the tastes of a large and varied public, providing as bill of fare humour, criticism and a picture of society so as to cater for big audiences. It was in the long run a box-office standard, commercial in character. The reliability of its judgement thus disappeared and was corrected by the repertory theatre which acts as the guardian of the best plays in the language and produces them without expectation of profit. The theatrical tradition was brought face to face with a new situation in the post-war years. It arose with the increasing popularity of the one-act play. A great number of organisations came into existence for the purpose of holding performances of such plays in towns and villages all over the British Isles. It is not necessary for our purpose to give a list of the various societies engaged in promoting this type of entertainment.

1. From the prologue which heralded Garrick's managership of Drury Lane, spoken by him in February 1749:

Ah! let not censure term our fate our choice,
The stage but echoes back the public voice.
The Drama's Laws the Drama's Patrons give,
And we that live to please, must please to live.

Johnson's comment was appropriate to the theatre of his
The quotation from Dr. Johnson does not indicate the standards governing dramatic production and the causes modifying it. For what seems to be the ruling impulse behind the one-act play comes from particular situations which may not call forth any enthusiasm in the capital and which do not demand the kind of patronage Dr. Johnson thinks of. For, the one-act play is inexpensively produced and does not need public patronage. This gives independence to authors; creative work requires a condition of freedom from external pressure which this form of writing assures in a large measure. What is produced without looking upto London stage managers for patronage achieves curiously enough by its originality, a standard of excellence acceptable anywhere. By escaping from domination of London and its theatrical tradition, the one-act play rises in excellence out of the soil of freedom. Thus the one-act play having left London to seek a home in the villages and in the outlying areas has found the right atmosphere for its growth. There will be many among these plays which reveal varied powers and in a measure that must win for them the highest praise.

The one-act play has a small number of characters. The minimum cannot be less than two, but usually there will be

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2. John Ferguson in his Introduction to Seven Famous One-Act Plays (Penguin Books) pointed out that the one-act play's popularity as an independent art form began with an incident.
three or four. Sometimes the characters are more numerous. The development of character through changing situations is not always practicable because one does not change in half an hour nor can a change spread over a longer period but represented in half an hour be made convincing. But the actual fact is that every moment of life means a change for us and as we watch the drama we sometimes feel that even in the exchanges of a social gathering significant changes seem to steal into the consciousness and alter one's attitude and mode of thinking. For the drama, whatever its purpose, always gives us a sense of conflict, either in the opposition of ideas or interests, and when the conflict is resolved there is a change which is apparent in the characters. Some hope, either lost or gained, some belief confirmed or abandoned, some sudden action indulged in under the pressure of an impulse—these certainly have their effect upon the characters and upon their happiness and well-being. The characters as depicted in the plays illustrate the democratic trend in a convincing manner. Upper class life and characters are found less frequently. Emphasis is clearly laid upon the middle and the lower ranks of society. The working class figure prominently and the dialectal forms are resorted to by way of bringing home to us their mode of feeling and thinking. There is always an additional effect, whether

at a West End theatre in October 1903. The one-act play was used as a curtain-raiser, and on the particular occasion "The Monkey's Paw" a dramatization of W. W. Jacob's short story was being produced for the purpose. The gruesome tale made such an impact upon the audience that they left without waiting.
intended or not, of humour which the dialectal speech often produces among people not familiar with it.

The incidents are mostly drawn from social life, sometimes also from history, mythology or fairy-lore. It seems to me a mistake to insist upon the arts being the source of new worlds. The artists are said to make worlds of their own. What happens actually is a withdrawal from the common ways of our world for the purpose of studying them more closely, by artificially distincing the view in the guise of a fanciful tale or fantasy. The new worlds of art are, therefore, abstractions or a reconstruction, apparently, very different from everything we know. But in reality, they are a comment upon our situations, our problems and our emotions. This point of view should be clearly remembered because in our analysis of the plays we have placed it in the forefront and found the work of interpretation more practicable as a result. The aloofness of art is a necessary detachment practised by the artists. This enables them to view things impartially and offer their comments with full understanding and without any desire to exaggerate or falsify the impression. The action which is in the Aristotelian view, one important element, presents a quality about which no generalization can be made except that it avoids certain

for the evening's principal shows. This led to the abandonment of the curtain-raiser and the popularity and independence of the one-act play as a form of entertainment.

3. John Ferguson, the editor of Seven Famous One-Act Plays (1950) observes: "In the short play ... the author has no time in which to develop character and situations." (pp. 9-10). This is a view which does not seem to be tenable. For no drama is without conflict of some sort and a conflict will surely mean change and development.
interests catered for by a type of fiction. In the plays under consideration the "detective" interest is meagrely represented; there is no murder or other crime requiring police investigation, except in some dramatizations of the Conan Doyle stories.

Another feature on which comment may be made is a greater degree of intrusion of what may be called, quoting the language of Aldous Huxley, "the Whole Truth". As the same thinker points out this means something different from the chemically pure tragedy or comedy. Fielding according to Huxley introduced this element in his account of Sophia Western tumbling down from her horse's back at Upton-on-the-River, exposing thereby parts of her body to the vulgar amusement of the by-standers. In Homer when the fellow sailors are swallowed by Scylla and Charybdis the survivors lament the accident and the loss of their friends. Soon, however, tired out by crying they cook their meals expertly, eat and enjoy themselves falling asleep thereafter. Here we have the whole view, the natural man and his sorrows are depicted to life, although, in doing so the heroic stature is sacrificed. The interest in the complete picture which then prevailed crowds out a view, the partial and controlled view presented by the chemically pure tragedies which found increasing

4. The exception to this is found in some plays by Ionesco, e.g. "Victims of Duty", Eugène Ionesco Plays Vol.II (John Calder, London, 1962).

acceptance at a later date. In these short plays the ascendancy of a single element, the comic or the tragic is not always found, although the two categories are used to characterize the attitude they represent. A one-act play may now and then be expanded into one of three acts. The purpose of the deliberate brevity imposed may be to gain an effect of intensity.

Samuel Johnson whom Paul Goodman quotes approvingly in *The Structure of Literature* pointed out "that tragedies may be read in books but that comedies must be experienced on the stage." The observation is subtle and valid for the two types of drama Johnson had in his mind. What provokes laughter may depend upon a slight gesture or emphasis, placed upon a word or syllable. From these little details is derived a good deal of comic enjoyment but we are likely to miss them while we read the plays by ourselves. The larger effects, however, are not thus missed but with regard to tragedy, it

6. Several Plays (e.g. John Ervine's "She was No Lady", John Galsworthy's "The Little Man", Olive Conway's "Becky Sharp", Wolf Mankowitz's "The Bespoke Overcoat" etc.) are divided into a number of scenes. These are not really one-act plays in spite of their being formally described as such. They lack the unity which the narrow range of short-play can achieve and give a sense of diffuseness rather than of concentration. The cause of this is that the subject chosen does not lend itself to full development within compass of the short-play "The Bespoke Overcoat" which must be included in the condemned class has sixteen scenes but the diffuseness which results is perhaps corrected by the unity of impression which owes to the fact that the theatre of the scenes is the mind of a half-drunk tailor. As regards other plays such a defence cannot be made. In the Brecht plays the technique being epical and not dramatic, no defence is necessary and what we have to do is to mark the departure and study the effects which follow. For a comprehensive formula can be made only after we have carefully studied what the new
may be pointed out that Dr. Johnson's position is not entirely sound. For even in a tragedy the suffering is not fully understood until it is skilfully presented on the stage. Middleton Murry in his *Shakespeare* has mentioned how he came to appreciate Desdemona's words "Sure there's some wonder in this handkerchief:/ I am most unhappy in the loss of it." spoken on the stage by a gifted actress. Thus the help of the stage in the interpretation of tragedy seems to be useful as Murry's testimony suggests. As regards comedy, good acting not only reveals subtle points in the dialogue but what is more, some plays have secured their just appraisement on the strength of skilled production. This will appear from the following passage:— "For in the summer of 1936 Mr. Tyrone Guthrie revived the play (Love's Labour's Lost) at the Old Vic, dressed it magnificently, put all his very considerable brains into the production, and revealed it as a first-rate comedy of the pattern kind — so full of fun, of permanent wit, of brilliant and entrancing situation, that you hardly noticed the faded jesting and allusion, as you sat spell-bound and drank it all in. It was a thrilling production, Shakespearian criticism of the best kind, because a real piece of restoration.

Dover Wilson adds that "Alfred Pollard, my father in Shakespeare, went with me and was as completely conquered"\(^{10}\) by the same performance of *Love's Labour's Lost*.

The plot in a one-act play is usually carefully handled. The looseness of structure is perhaps more easily avoided because complications which belong to the long play are not compatible with its limited scope. The sequence of events is always kept clear. But the one-act play is not necessarily a well-made play, what Mr. J.R. Taylor in *Anger and After*\(^{11}\) says about a three-act play. 'Roots', may also be affirmed of the still shorter play under our consideration on the ground of its artificial and forced abbreviation. Mr. Taylor describes 'Roots' as a one-act play blown up to three. We can similarly point out that "Mr. Sampson"\(^{12}\) presents an example of a two-act play cut down to one. The imbroglio involving the two Stevens sisters and Mr. Sampson is described somewhat abruptly when a scandal reaches the ear of the younger Caroline and greatly embarrasses her. It would have been satisfactory if a few scenes were set apart for indicating the development of an emotional relationship between the two sisters and their tenant. The dramatist, however, rushes us into the middle of the situation without previous warning. We have no sense of the

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10. Ibid., p.64.
tension on account of this compression, and the suddenness of the exposition merely emphasizes the comical. The other elements involved are neglected but we can see that they existed and that their omission is the result of the scale chosen. This will be true of other plays as well, but it is hardly necessary to elaborate the point farther.

The language in the plays analysed later, is often witty. These plays have a streamlined character. They move swiftly and easily, aided by a sensitive use of language and a display of wit.

The dialogue is used but it is not certain that the regional speech habits are correctly represented. Mr. John Mander in *The Writer and Commitment* thinks that to seek accuracy in dialect is irrelevant to the drama as a whole. One can be reasonably certain that Lady Gregory and Synge are accurate in the dialects they use. Mr. Mander may think that accuracy is not important but the mistakes made will jar on the ears of those who know, and will, to some extent, spoil their enjoyment. The dialectal speech is useful for the introduction of an unsophisticated element. It gives the expression of feeling in its purity which cannot be conveyed as easily when the medium is the Queen's English.

We shall go on to a discussion of some individual plays using them for illustrative purpose. We have pointed out that art does not make a different world but interprets our world and gives us new insights into various circumstances of life. For this some piece of fantasy may be used as a stalking horse. Harold Brighouse's "The Prince who was a Piper"\(^\text{14}\) is a fantasy which starts with a discussion whether disobedient children are a monopoly of royalty. The King is speaking to his Lord Chancellor with reference to the conduct of Princess Maie. The reply which the Chancellor gives brings home to us an aspect of royalty, isolated from common life. He said "I would say that the debonair vivacity of Her Highness, Princess Maie, is exclusively a royal prerogative, sire."\(^\text{15}\) The play emphasizes the fact that marriage as a form of human relationship must be based upon the free choice by the couple themselves. Even royalty must have this freedom. The history of the British Royal family well shows that such a feeling has been present as a compelling consideration in several marriages, in recent years. The fantasy thus wittily and with great delicacy represents a situation which is not alien to our world. A rather macabre fantasy by Lord Dunsany in


\(^{15}\) Ibid., p.9
"A Night at an Inn" is a story of the theft of a rich eye-jewel and its recovery by the idol itself, on which the robbery was committed. The leader of the party was arranging for a division of the loot and the associates who looked upon him as an oracle, consulted him in every crisis and accepted his views as beyond challenge. Into their secret meeting room came one of the priests who was immediately disposed of. The toff said there would be two more and he was right. But what took him and all others by surprise was the entry of the idol itself which trotted away with the jewel and then came a voice calling out thunderingly the names of the miscreants. Their execution followed in a fearful manner as they stepped out to meet their doom. The moral of the play is a time-worn one and may be expressed in the words of Robert Burns:

"The best laid schemes o' mice an' men/ Gang aft a - gley" and there is also a much older wisdom of Hellenic origin which says, pride goes before a fall. Obviously, the assumption is of a moral order operating in unexpected ways and vindicating the cause of truth and justice when it seems discarded and abandoned.

16. Lord Dunsany's "A Night At An Inn" One-Act Plays of To-day First Series, (George G. Harrap & Co.Ltd., 1961)
17. R. Burns's "To A Mouse"
The illustrations need not be multiplied. They are a quite clear evidence that there is a method controlling even the most erratic fancy of the dramatist and a connection is always maintained with the actual world by suggestions whose trend is unmistakable. Among the tragedies reviewed in the following pages Synge's "Riders to the Sea"\textsuperscript{18} is an outstanding example. In his account of the "Aran Islands" IV, he gives an explanation of the title chosen for the play: "When the horses were coming down to the ship an old woman saw her son that was drowned a while ago, riding on one of them."\textsuperscript{19} From the writer we learn again that the horror of the sea among the women folk may largely be explained by the fact that the women live only for the children. "The maternal feeling is so powerful on these islands that it gives a life of torment to the women. Their sons grow up to be banished as soon as they are of age, or to live here in continual danger of the sea."\textsuperscript{20} (Aran Islands I). Daniel Corkery in his "Synge And Anglo Irish Literature" quotes Brunetière's remark that the "germ of every drama lies in some person's coveting of some other person or thing".\textsuperscript{21} In "The Riders to the Sea" the mother is the

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\item[18.] Synge's "Riders to the Sea", \textit{Twenty-four One-Act Plays} (London J.M.Dent & Sons Ltd., 1959).
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victim and sufferer and the Sea is the image of the covetousness to which Brunetiere refers. The play within a brief compass gives the effect of a tragedy which recalls the best tradition of the Hellenic Tragedy and it is difficult to match the play by a contemporary example. The mother, who loses her husband and children expresses her emotion in the most controlled manner using words which avoid excess and yet succeed in giving us a sense of the irrecoverable loss and of pain which has made her soul run dry. Her immediate reaction is a desire for uninterrupted sleep. During years she had kept awake for her sons out at sea. Now that need no longer existed. The criticism of the play may be that the mother has a primitive grandeur with a classical self-restraint. It is usual for the simple to be loquacious, to speak in an incessant stream, whatever the occasion. Maurya's extreme brevity in the midst of tragic suffering seems to suggest a discipline of the intellect entirely unexpected among the uneducated. There is, however, no doubt that the tragedy depicted rises to a great height.

As against the tragedy we may consider a melodrama "Progress" by St. John Ervine. A melodrama gives us typical characters but atypical situations. The characters are

21. Ibid., p.140.

generalized, their responses are of the stock kind; the situation, however, may be precisely described, it may be individualized. To elaborate the point we may refer to Lear; the tragedy is what it is because of the character of Lear, because of the way he reacted to the situation. His response is individual and not of the stock kind. Another man in the same circumstances would have a different tale to tell. What is suggested is that a melodrama stresses a certain kind of action and brings characters together so that the quality of that action may be thrown into prominence. In "Progress" a sister murders a brother. She is a bereaved mother, having lost her son in the war. The brother is a scientist and has just discovered a destructive weapon of war. The sister wants it to be suppressed. On his not agreeing she stabs him to death. Here we have no opportunity to be acquainted with any individual element in the character of the two people. What they are, they are by reason of their situation and their past experience. This means that the attention is directed outwards rather than inwards, and what happens is external, a piece of sensationalism which fails even as war propaganda. For violence is by no means a convincing method of upholding the cause of peace.

Paul Goodman defines comedy 'AS A RELATION, A "DEFLATABLE accidental connection," among the parts." The idea is not apparently valid for all the plays which
are comic in their plots, the word "deflatable" seems to suggest the element of laughter which the action produces. The accidental connection would imply a situation which neither reflects character nor is an expression of any vital element in the men and women, participating in the action. We can refer to Houghton's "The Dear Departed" as an example of comedy and see whether the view taken can be profitably pursued for interpretation of its structure. The situation is accidental, it is the supposed death of an old man and the greed which it arouses in his daughter as expectant heiress. She has a sister as a rival claimant but she sets about the business of enhancing her share by removing into her rooms part of the property subject to division between them. The deflation by laughter comes when this fact is discovered with the old man's return to consciousness after an interval of drunken coma, mistaken as death. The definition is on this view satisfactory. But if we refuse to interpret the situation as an accidental connection, it will not seem adequate after all. A father's death and the expectations of the children are not matters of accident. For this event may easily be preceded by calculations and plans of action on

the part of the expectant heirs.

What is necessary to understand as the cause of laughter as explanation of comedy has always been a difficult problem. Aristotle did not give us a definition except putting the laughable in the class of the deformed whether of behaviour or of thought. The disadvantage of such a view is that most of the comedies indicate a completely different trend. The element of deformity seems to suggest a departure from the norm, an aberration of some kind and comedy is certainly that according to the classical practice. Hence, laughter has been regarded as an instrument of correction. But the type of deformity susceptible to such treatment is of a strictly limited kind and the area which lies beyond, cannot be appropriated for comic purpose. Various eccentricities and unsocial behaviours may be regarded as suitable for comic presentation. But Shakespeare enlarged the view and in his hands comedy is often a source of pure enjoyment without any purpose to laugh out of countenance the follies of men and women. Shakespeare's practice makes it necessary to review the conception which we owe to classical and some later practice. Satire and the critical attitude are not integral to the comic idea if we take Shakespeare as our frame of reference, and catharsis by laughter will not, therefore, answer the
purpose of analysis of a comedy, cast in the Shakespearian mould. We may try to discover what will be comprehensive as a definition and will satisfy the different approaches necessary to the subject. On comedy, the volume of critical discussion is much less than on tragedy. The reason perhaps is that human ingenuity seeks a loftier subject for its exercise. Comedy fails to engage attention by this standard.

We may state a view of comedy which without being ambitious may serve the object of interpretation and analysis we have undertaken. Comedy is a form of entertainment which considers men and women as members of a society with standards of its own. Its mode for the purpose consists largely in amusing situations revealing contradictory elements, evasiveness and the desire to possess or enjoy. Occasionally, love will play a role and the enjoyment which will arise will be related to the fortunes of the lovers and their fruitful pursuit of each other. Comedy can bite and wound, it can also soothe and comfort. To understand its full scope we have to recognize this ambivalence and fall in with the mood of the play, responding to and enjoying the occasion. When we assume this elastic attitude and recognize the wide range of feeling to which comedy may give rise, we shall be able to escape from the sense of being baffled by the complexity.
of its ingredients. We are concerned in a comedy with aspects of social life, with objective standards, with patterns of behaviour and with the joys of love and laughter.

The One-Act play is much shorter in compass than the full-length play. The difference does not prevent it from possessing the qualities belonging to the longer form, from being in short, a drama itself. The division of comedy, tragedy, history will equally apply, although on occasions a comprehensive view is aimed at, and a strict classification of this kind may not then be justified.

To consider plays as histories does not appear to be correct, for in doing this we emphasize the material and to the same extent, disregard the fact that what is before us is not a mass of facts but their transformation into a work of art. The matter used may be obtained from history, mythology or from life. The form is the creative element, and it is what gives it the character of a work of art.

Several plays are based on history. "A Room In The Tower" by Hugh Stewart is about Lady Jane Grey during her imprisonment in the Tower of London in 1554. Lady Jane is a young woman. Her worry is more about the safety of her husband than about her own. She has a capacity for delicate response to nature.

Her own personal temperament contained elements of poetry. On top of her natural tenderness there was an immense fund of knowledge which she had acquired and which enabled her to have patience in suffering. She was the daughter of the Duke of Suffolk and was Queen of England for a few days. Mary comes to see her in the prison and is impressed by Jane's beauty and believes that such beauty allied to her cause might make her a dangerous rival for herself. The Queen grants her pardon, extending it to her husband as well and promises that she could look forward to a happy life. This momentary happiness is annihilated by the news that her father was in arms against the Queen. This meant that her execution would not be stayed by the pardon. She does not seem to be very much disturbed even by this prospect. For her the reality of God never weakened. "Such a beautiful sunset ... there must be a God to create that. Death holds no terror for me, now ... I feel no pain ... my Spirit will spring rejoicing into the Eternal Light, where I hope the mercy of God will receive it." 26

Although very short, the play indicates a development in Jane's character. This is done by her verbal clashes with the Queen and by her attempt to console Mrs. Tylney, her waiting woman. Her own resources of spiritual strength are

26. Ibid., p. 117.
brought out by this means and at the time of her approaching
death she can rise above terror and suspense and contemplate
her end unterrified. The basis of history is not the basis
of the significance belonging to the play. It is a human
document and its meaning is not confined to an individual
associated with a period of history. That suffering can
transfigure and elevate, and instead of impairing strength
can renew it is what the play demonstrates. This is a
permanent view of human nature and does honour to it.

**LANGUAGE:** The technique of the play should take into
consideration the usual elements which are, of course, action
plot, character and the language. We have discussed most of
these elements but nothing has been said as regards language.
The prose of our time shows a very remarkable quality of sharp,
witty and effective expression. The element of wit appeared
in the most memorable form in the Restoration Comedy.Etheredge
and Congreve were its principal exponents. In their plays the
prominence given to it suggested a preoccupation with the art
of speaking wittily which seemed to have been esteemed as a
valuable accomplishment among the members of the higher
classes. It spread even to the lower classes and in *The Way
of the World* some of the most witty remarks come from servants
Although the Comedy of Manners has at best a broken and interrupted history, the tradition of wit on the stage seems to have been almost continuous. In the 90's Oscar Wilde brought to life the Manners Comedy of the Restoration in a series of plays. What he makes his characters say often gives evidence of a brilliance of mind and an easy command of the conversational manner but there are also instances when his wit declines into a static pattern suggested by the following: "It is simply washing one's clean linen in public". Algernon refers to Lady Harbury's husband's death and its effect upon her: "I hear her hair has turned quite gold from grief". Both the examples belong to The Importance of Being Earnest and rely upon a verbal trick of surprise which fails to be effective when repeated.

In the present day the use of wit shows a more cultivated approach. The quality of prose in some hands possesses a flexibility which surprises and amuses and indicates a power to exploit the natural resources of the language, rising often to an admirable height. We shall refer to a few examples by way of illustrating both the wit and the competent handling of the language. In the later

28.Ibid., p. 357.
usage the point we notice is the adequacy of the expression and the justness of the sentiment. The combination of the two elements has often the effect of wit or the unexpected appropriateness of both the thought and the language. The Bishop in a "Birds of a Feather" meeting the poachers observes that he enjoys sitting with them on the roadside and adds "after four whole days with the saints, it's quite a pleasant change to sit down and talk to a couple of sinners."  

The present age is particularly notable for the complexity entering into the different forms of literature produced in it. Much of the significant meaning is found in individual phrases and expressions. Even prose displays this phenomenon although, naturally enough, to a more limited extent. Hence the concern with the meaning of meaning which we find in critics like I.A. Richards. The modern attitude is well expressed by the surrealistic manifesto which proclaims that "any work of art that can be understood is the work of a journalist." Against this attitude we can view that of the eighteenth century because the contrast

30. Ibid., p.41  
thus seen will throw into a greater prominence the subtleties of the contemporary critical approach. Fielding in *A Journey from this World to the Next* puts in Shakespeare's mouth a condemnation of all poetry whose meaning is not at once clear: 'Next Shakespeare is encountered, to whom Betterton and Booth apply for the right reading of a doubtful line, and he tells them it is so long since he wrote it that he has forgotten his meaning. He further delivers himself of an admirable view of textual criticism: "I marvel nothing so much as that men will gird themselves at discovering obscure beauties in an author. Certes, the greatest and most pregnant beauties are ever the plainest and most evidently striking; and when two meanings of a passage can in the least balance our judgements which to prefer, I hold it matter of unquestionable certainty that neither of them is worth a farthing"'.

Defoe similarly was in favour of a plain speech which will be at once intelligible to "five hundred people, of all common and various capacities, idiots or lunatics excepted, should be understood by them all, and in the same sense which the speaker intended to be understood."  

Sutherland has referred to Swift's practice of having "two of his men servants brought in to listen to his poems being read,"... Swift would take into account their reaction

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and alter and amend what he wrote until they understood it perfectly.

To us of this century the procedure seems almost fantastic. Swift perhaps thought that the intelligence of the servant was not below that of the educated man! His scorn for intelligence, in general, among human beings might account for his simplifications.

We will take two examples from verse drama to show that the science of semantics is a great aid to the interpretation of poetry and prose alike, either of this age or of past times.

In Yeats's Purgatory the expression "the house" occurs thirteen times. Its glories are cited. Magistrates, Colonels, Members of Parliament, Captains and Governors who lived there are remembered till the climax is reached in the statement: "to kill a house/ Where great men grew up, married, died;/ I here declare a capital offence." 35

Thus the idea of aristocracy, of tradition is suggested as the greatest value and "the house" as its physical embodiment. The offence did not lie in parricide, not even in the murder of a son but in the destruction of what in the poet's eye comprised the chief source of human worth. The purgatorial experience of the murdered father is a form of atonement.

for the glory that had vanished and for which he was responsible while he lived. The mother also was doomed to revisit the scene of the offence because of the bad choice of the groom as her husband. She also had contributed to the collapse of value.

In "Sweeney Agonistes" by T.S. Eliot, Sweeney repeats a phrase (birth, copulation and death) by which he draws attention to the fundamental facts of the human situation. But those to whom he spoke had commonplace minds and were incapable of contemplating such serious questions. Repeatedly they ran away from what was serious to what was stupid and unworthy of human dignity. They indulge in superstitions. The voice of Sweeney comes warningly to them until it seems to end in the chorus's "knock, knock, knock" which introduces an element of terror, not defined and, therefore, the more formidable. Thus single phrases stand out and provide a key to the meaning of a whole play or poem. The tendency in this is to achieve a symbolical import by isolation and emphasis.

We take a prose play, a tragedy by Synge "Riders to the Sea" for a similar attempt at an analysis of a single phrase. The expression "this day" occurs several times in the play. Maurya uses it four times and also Cathleen and Bartley,

once or twice each. Cathleen refers to Bartley's going to Galway Fair, "this day", again commenting upon the terrifying vision. "It's destroyed we are from this day". Bartley, thinking of his being quite alone after Michael's death, observes the extra burden put upon him: "It's hard set we'll be from this day with no one in it but one man to work". This expression seems to imply a confrontation of time and eternity which made for great suffering and also led to Maurya's increase of stature to that of a tragic character.

Again we may offer a few comments as to the implications of the title of a prose play "The Dear Departing" by Leonid Andreyev, translated by Julius West.

(a) "Dear" may refer to the man hanging on the cliff, "Departing", his expected fall and death. "Dear" in the context is ironical, his death being desired, such a description will be hypocritical.

(b) Again "Dear" may mean 'expensive', 'costly'; "Departing" is departure, withdrawal. The crowd leaving after awaiting the event, withdraw without their expectation being fulfilled. They pay the price and go without the thrill they expect. The price is their patient-waiting and the deprivation is the non-fulfilment of the bargain. Hence the ironical implication of the term.

38. Ibid., p.21
39. Ibid., p.17
The sixty odd years which belong to our survey have witnessed more changes than any comparable period of history. The only parallel to our situation may be found in the collapse of the Roman Empire and the emergence of the Christian and feudal civilization of the Middle Ages. The hiatus with the past was then almost as great as in our time but even so the events were not on a world scale, they did not touch everybody nor every sphere of life, as they do now. We have had two great wars and several minor ones, destruction of life on an unprecedented scale and scientific inventions which have revolutionised life. The rapidity of the change in certain spheres may be understood from the following example: it is taken from the comments made by R.H. Mottram on Galsworthy's novel, The Freelands:

"Although a whole era more 'modern' than its predecessor this book has been unkindly treated by the march of events. Labourers like Bob Tryst toiling in sweat for a few shillings a week, have been replaced by tractor drivers at as many pounds. His cottage has been replaced by a council house, his son has special food concessions, and a bus takes him to the cinema when he is tired of his radio set. But in 1914, when Galsworthy wrote it, the picture drawn was true enough."41

What has happened after the Second World War is that hierarchies of class distinction have broken down and England has become transformed into a nation of middle class people. Even after the First World War, the social structure revealed alarming cracks and the privileged classes felt distressed at their predicament. Of this Virginia Woolf has provided a picture in her essay, "The Leaning Tower". The view of society as seen from the leaning tower by those educated at Oxford and Cambridge is a reproof to them and a challenge to maintain their social eminence while they have scarcely the legs to stand upon.

Drama and literature in general have perhaps owed more to Marxism, Existentialism and to Logical Positivism and Analytical Philosophy than to some other forces operating in this age. Brecht was a Marxist. On English theatre dialectical materialism did not seem to make any serious impact. The influence of Existentialism has been far more powerful on continental writers and thinkers than those of England. But a note of anguish which appears in contemporary
English writers may be traced back to its source. In Harold Pinter's plays the lack of communication which produces the absurd effect is held to have its origin in the Existentialist doctrine. In fact, there is an intimate connexion between it and the Absurd theatre, as Esslin and other critics have pointed out. The subject has been discussed in our section on the experimental drama. Yeats and Eliot have not been included in it. This may seem a little strange, because they were in different ways the pioneers of a revolt against the bourgeois theatre, and their experiments were undoubtedly among the most significant made during the period. But their experiments have almost acquired the stable value which belongs to a convention; they are founders of a new orthodoxy and their work, has, therefore, been separately noticed along with their views on drama, poetical and other, which they wished to promote.

A very significant element in the literary climate has been the use made of myth by writers, headed by James Joyce. On this subject T.S. Eliot has
written penetratingly in a review, "Ulysses, Order and Myth" published in Dial, LXXV. He observes that in using the myth, in manipulating a continuous parallel between contemporaneity and antiquity, Mr. Joyce is pursuing a method which others must pursue after him. They will not be imitators, any more than the scientist who uses the discoveries of an Einstein in pursuing his own, independent, further investigations. It is simply a way of controlling, of ordering, of giving a shape and a significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history. It is a method already adumbrated by Mr. Yeats, and of the need for which he believed Mr. Yeats to have been the first contemporary to be conscious ... Instead of narrative method, we may now use, the mythical method. It is, he seriously believed, a step toward making the modern world possible for Art. In our account of dramatic fantasy, we have found corroboration for the views expressed by T.S. Eliot.

Analysis of characters and situations with a view to the discovery of the specifically 'modern' element is not always feasible. At one point or another we seem to recognise the accent, the similarity, the urban sophistication without being able to lay our finger on the particular quality of speech or behaviour which gives rise to the feeling. T. S.

Eliot in "Burnt Norton" has in a very different context given evidence of a sensitiveness to a situation to which reason or explanation cannot rise:

for the roses
Had the look of flowers that are looked at.

Somewhat in a similar fashion we recognize a tone in a character's words reflecting the storm and stress of contemporary life without being able to specify, to state in philosophical terms all its implications. But now and then we have more than a tone as in the "the slanky sentiment-fearing youth of to-day" seen in Harry's offhand proposal of marriage to Hilda:

"Oh, and what price you marrying me?"43

We have not in these pages made an attempt to study the development of drama. The area appropriated by the short play is much smaller and frequently the most outstanding dramatists of the century, not having produced any short play, have been left out of consideration. Brecht has been included because some notice seemed called for of the influential dramatic theory to which his practice has given rise, yet his plays are not short plays. He dispenses with the division into acts, this is in accord with his innovation of an epic or narrative drama, but the drama's length and the system of indicating changes he adopts are both clear evidence that Brecht does not aim at the greater concentration imposed by the short play.

In a separate section of this thesis we shall give an account of the Experimental Theatre with special reference to the Absurd Drama and also to the Theatre of Cruelty so far as it links up to the experiences which have been peculiar to the present century.

Jacques Guicharnaud in his *Modern French Theatre from Giraudoux to Beckett* offers a survey of developments, which seems highly suggestive of what the theatre is seeking to achieve. The assault on bourgeois values marked an important departure. According to this standard "the theatre did not present the audience with an image of what it was, but of what it wished to be". The new movement was to change this by introducing a new perspective. To quote Guicharnaud:

"Such recognition is quite the contrary of the higher reminiscence through which the spectator recognizes what has not yet been said or done, what has been a dormant possibility until then and is suddenly realized both in art and in life."

Guicharnaud makes a very shrewd remark about the dangers which lie in the symbolist art for the theatre. If realism stands condemned because it does not satisfy aesthetic sensibility, its opposite also has serious limitations from the point of view of dramaturgy: "anti-realism can be just

45. Ibid.
as limited as realism: the highest plane, if only a plane, is as desperately flat as any other. The realistic and naturalistic universe is often suffocating; but it is just as easy to die of asphyxiation at heights where the air is unbreathable.  

Among significant changes in the century Jacques Copeau's demand for "a bare stage" seems worthy of mention. This revolution made the Greeks, Shakespeare, Racine, Molière and others live more vigorously on the stage and the interpretation achieved new subtlety and depth, giving as it did more opportunity for the actor's talent. Jean Giraudoux's contribution was a theatre of language: "A model dialogue: such would seem to be Giraudoux's definition of theatre." Other distinguished writers for the stage in France include Jean Cocteau, Paul Claudel, Henry de Montherlant, Jean Anouilh, and Salacrou, Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus, and also Ionesco and Beckett. One of the most influential dramatists was Artaud with his well-known metaphor of le Theatre et la peste yet his dramatic output was very meagre, being "one play, a scenario, several essays, some ideas for stage sets."  

46. Ibid., p. 9  
47. Ibid., p.10  
48. Ibid., p.22  
49. Ibid., p.227
As the work neared completion, we came across what seems a valuable study of drama by Cyrus Hoy. This is *The Hyacinth Room: An Investigation into the Nature of Comedy, Tragedy and Tragi-Comedy*.\(^5\) We could not, therefore make full use of it in our study. But there is still scope for noting a few points which it makes because these may aid interpretation and throw light on the subject of our enquiry. Mr. Hoy concentrates upon a number of leading dramatists, old and new; Euripides, Shakespeare, Jonson, Marston, Moliere, Ibsen, Strindberg, Pirandello, Anouilh, Ionesco, Beckett. His central thesis seems to be the duality and conflict between man's selfish and carnal nature and his illusions and ideals. "If there were nothing incongruous in human condition, there would be nothing to dramatize."\(^5\) Mr. Hoy holds that comedy is a superior form of drama, for while in tragedy the conflict is destructive comedy seeks to accommodate and resolve - for example, by the increase in self-knowledge in the losing of illusions.\(^5\)

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51. Ibid., pp.21-22.
52. An important view on Tragedy comes from I.A. Richards which we quote below:

'What clearer instance of the "balance or reconciliation of opposite and discordant qualities" can be found than Tragedy. Pity, the impulse to approach, and Terror, the impulse to retreat, are brought in Tragedy to a reconciliation which they find nowhere else, and with them who knows what other allied groups of equally discordant impulses. Their union in an ordered single response is the *Catharsis* by which Tragedy is recognized, whether Aristotle meant anything of this kind or not. This is the explanation of that sense of release, of repose in the midst of stress, of balance and composure, given by Tragedy, for there is no other way in which such impulses, once awakened, can be set at rest without suppression.' *Principles of Literary Criticism* (Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1960), pp. 245-246.