

R O Z P R A W Y

DARKO SUVIN
Zagreb

ON INDIVIDUALIST WORLD VIEW IN DRAMA

1. THE INDIVIDUALIST AND RENAISSANCE VIEW OF THE WORLD: REIFICATION AND ENVIRONMENT

The central feature of the bourgeois (middle class) European art and literature is individualism, a conceiving, viewing or feeling the world from the standpoint of the individual. Individualism became a stylistically decisive element of middle-class *Weltanschauung* at the point of its contracting out of the Renaissance popular mainstream. In this connection it is useful to recall the vision of the Renaissance, i. e., of an epoch when the bourgeoisie wasn't yet a stylistically decisive class but the articulate vanguard of a popular movement, so that the great personalities of the then truly "middle" classes were anything but limited in a middle-class way, representing the *civis* rather than the bourgeois. — The Renaissance ethics were absolute, universally applicable and of universal relevance. By their light, a human being was analogous to the macrocosmos, diminished in scale but qualitatively of the same importance. Because of this, the titanic figures of Renaissance drama, a Tamburlaine, Faustus, Prospero, Antony, Macbeth, Lear or Timon, can be equivalent to cosmic forces, harmonising or conflicting with them. Their tragedy doesn't lie in quantity — in Macbeth's being finally less cunning than the Witches, or Tamburlaine's being less powerful than Death — but in a wrongly orientated quality, in their having transgressed against the cosmic order. But even in its doom, a Renaissance personality co-involves the Universe — during Duncan's and Caesar's murder the elemental frame is shaken, Lear struggles with the hurricane as an equal. Qualitative values lie in personality, not in an ideological view of the world. The views of Prospero and Antonio, or Faustus and Mephistophilis, differ only in quantitative awareness of a common, clearly defined and absolutely relevant qualitative anthropology and cosmology: and the views of Claudius the murderer

and Hamlet the avenger differ only in the consistency of applying such shared awareness.

Deprived of the completeness of the Renaissance universe (which holds true, although in a considerably dehumanized way, also for the late Middle Ages, e.g. the universal Gothic drama of the Mystery cycles) the Individualist drama had no other source for its material but an antinomic reality split into the individual and its environment. The "real" fact of Individualist reality, flowing out of the very essence of money economy¹, is the maximum de-sensualizing of human relationships, through abstraction as well as through reifying. The Renaissance writer commented: he who doesn't know himself, how shall he know things outside him? Conversely, for the individual it is the things outside man which are important: more particularly those attributes of theirs which can be translated into the numerical language of measures and money, the one language pertinent to only quantitatively measurable units. Marco Polo is, for all his descriptions of Cathay wonders, already interested primarily in their wealth and size, in their "million-ness"; for Dante "all the gold under the Moon" was less important than one man, even one tired, wealth-beguiled soul in Hell (*Inferno* VII).

Such a reification has profound affects on human relationships. As Marx expressed it, the direct consequence of Man's alienation from the product of his work, is "the alienation of man from man, the alienation of man from his generic activity signifying that one man is alienated from another as well as that each of them is alienated from human Being" (Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts from 1844). Thus, the bourgeois man is not analogous to the cosmos, but a fragment opposed to an *a priori* alien cosmos, to his environment. More and more, the individual exists only as a sum of relationships to things outside him, the "external reality". Other people too are included among the external things: in the Individualist world man is primarily a thing to man. It's because of this that he can behave towards another man as if he were a usable thing, slightly more complicated to use. The Renaissance prince Hamlet was still outraged at such Guildensternian behaviour:

Why, look you now, how unworthy a thing you make of me: you would play upon me; you would seem to know my stops; you would pluck out the heart of my mystery; you would sound me from my lowest note to the top of my compass; and there is much music, excellent voice, in this little

¹ I tried to bring this fact out in an essay especially devoted to it, the first one in my book *Dva vida dramaturgije* (*Two Aspects of Dramaturgy*), Zagreb 1964.

organ, yet cannot you make it speak. S' blood, do you think I am easier to be play'd — on than a pipe?

(*Hamlet*, Act III, iii)

The ideal of plenty, here applied to music, is, in the Renaissance view, a means of attaining beauty and excellence, and thus an organic feature of integral intellectual and sensual enjoyment of life. With the loss of generic human values, this ideal is supplanted by an arithmetic view of the world which can, even in music, only count the notes according to a defined scale, by making out of the abundance of things an end unto itself, by reifying all relationships — those between men as well as those between man and universe (here the universe of sounds).

Man's being a thing to man is the final expression of a situation where everything outside the individual is inanimate as far as he is concerned, where personal qualities are increasingly irrelevant. Each individual is in the final analysis alone, a Robinson on his own cosmic desert island of objects. Man can no more fulfil himself as a member of the harmonic Renaissance body of autonomous personalities, but only as a dominant individual "at the expense" of other, subordinated and exploited individuals. In such a climate the individual's relationships with other individuals become increasingly unbearable bonds. At the very outset of the newer European theatre the individual was — paradoxically — most heroically affirmed in the not yet fully individualist drama of Marlowe or Shakespeare (and, in a feverishly concentrated way, of Corneille and even Racine). Subsequently, individualist art is permeated by increasingly acute manifestations of accidia, melancholy, Weltschmerz, boredom, spleen, *mal du siècle*, nausea. That's why the protest against the universe is so hysterical as already in some aspects of Robinson — sensitively noted in Buñuels film treatment — or as in European Romanticism after de Sade, Rousseau and Byron (e.g. Schiller's *Die Räuber* or Dumas-père's *Antony*). The Individualist cosmos is in the final analysis composed of one character and his real environment: all-pervading, and therefore all-important.

However, the Individualist cosmos exists not only in space, but also in time. The abstracting of human relationships into bonds between men of property, owners of commodities, flowing out of the Individualist greed for quantitative magnitudes leads to universal antagonistic competition. Man is not only a thing to man, but in a mystical way also a wolf, a competing inhuman being. He is alive and a subject only in so far as he is competing: the war of each greedy individual against each is a normal Hobbesian state of the Individualist world. And the persistence of this warfare is made possible by the boundlessness of

promised spoils, by the factual and notional appearance of capital. Land property in a given area has natural boundaries, financial property theoretically hasn't. The financial areas acquired in time are potentially vaster than even the Roman Empire (so that Cortez and Pizarro's America was more of a financial than a spatial discovery). Time, the measure of acquisition, becomes the equivalent of finances: its quantity begins to be measured in the 14th century (first town clocks), in the same period when literature begins to mourn its swift flow. One of the fundamental tenets of individualism, the "time is money" slogan, is now emerging; at the same juncture as the metaphor of Time as a river and devourer, as the theme of "seizing the day". Among the most significant examples from the host of such testimonies is *Troilus and Cressida*, the drama of Time which, bringing in its flow the War, destroys generic love relationships:

Time hath, my lord, a wallet at his back
Wherein he puts alms for oblivion,
A great sized monster of ingratitude [...]
(*Troilus and Cressida*, Act III, iii)

Individualist relationships finally exist only as a capricious, thankless flux, determined by the positions of figures in a competitive and inimical environment, constantly changing in an unsafe Time.

2. BACKGROUND AND DRAMATIC TIME

All this means that dramatic figures are determined at least as much by their relationships towards a dramaturgically transposed "real environment" as by their mutual relations. More precisely, these mutual relations are to a considerable extent determined by an artistic transposition of the environment. And the external — spatial and temporal, i.e. social — environment transposes itself into Individualist drama as the background. Its figures can conflict with other figures representing the background, as in the case of Schiller's Luise and von Walter, Ibsen's Dr Stockmann and his brother or Shaw's Joan and the court. But it is more typical, especially in modern times, to have the background represented by more impersonal forces around (Chekhov) or inside (Pirandello) the protagonists, or both (Beckett). Different secondary groupings around such a main axis of tension — e.g. the love partner and the virtuous father alongside the main character in bourgeois tragedy from Lillo and Diderot to Lessing and Schiller, or the doubling of the main figure in early Beckett — constitute characteristic stylistic features of smaller units in the history of Individualist drama. But through all metamorphoses the existence of a dominant dramatic background remains

(up to our day) the axiom of Individualist drama. It is that background which defines the relationships of the intrinsically isolated figures, and which looms over them, in a quite different way than in Aeschylus or Shakespeare. Lady Macbeth from Mcensk region — or from Kenya — is quite easily imaginable, and Prospero's being a duke is a wholly irrelevant convention. Nora as a duchess, a working-class woman or a Mexican is imaginable only in so far as the Individualist situation and the notion of background have gained hold of, say, a Proustian aristocracy, a Lawrentian working-class or contemporary Mexico. I would assert that there was no unbridgeable gulf between Clytemnestra and a charwoman of any present-day Mediterranean port: between Hedda Gabler and a working-class woman of present-day Oslo I can see no dramaturgically pertinent bridge. The background, the transposed environment, determines, by manifesting itself in Time, the figures of Individualist drama: "and this view has become so firmly entrenched that only a conscious analysis makes it possible for us to see things in another way" ².

In addition, the figures of newer European drama are also determined by a theatrically transposed Time. The Gothic drama knows no Time — its Time is absolute, frozen by God's gaze (natural economy) as Dante's Giudecca by Lucifer's wings. The Renaissance drama organizes Time, "the swift predator of created things" (Leonardo), around an integrated personality who in a heroic struggle reduces it to the space of his deeds. In Individualist drama Time becomes the master of events. The absolutist statics of Classicism (which tried also to ignore the background by artificially fixing it) was an attempt at ignoring Time: but the price of such isolationism turned out to be excessive. The rising middle class is during the Enlightenment persuaded that Time and environment are its allies. But the collapse of bourgeois revolutionary spirit at the moment of confrontation with the basic questions of generic human relations, when faced with the taboo of private property, destroyed the naive optimism of the 18th century, e.g. Lessing's *Minna von Barnhelm oder Das Soldatenglück* or Sedaine's *Le Philosophe sans le savoir*. For the Romantics, Time becomes a "peau de chagrin", mystically and intimately connected with the central figure, whose every deed increases its fateful power: in *Wallenstein* it is the waiting for the propitious conjunction, in *Hernani* for the horn blast. The bourgeois drama will never extricate itself from this subservience of the act to an inescapably bitter Fate, which the protagonist is unable to evade in Time. Be it Balzac's comi-tragic Mercadet who waits for the bell which

² G. Lukács, *Zur Soziologie des modernen Dramas*, [in:] G. Lukács, *Schriften zur Literatursoziologie*, Ausgewählt und eingeleitet von P. Ludz, Bd. 9, Neuwied am Rhein, Berlin, Spandau 1961.

announces his creditors or be it Strindberg's tragi-comic Jean who waits for the bell which announces his master, Time remains fatal for the individual in its grip.

Of course, hardly any class-society drama attains, in the final analysis, generically open horizons. However, when we say that Macbeth or Cassandra is fated to a violent death our metaphor is so much less precise that it here covers a qualitatively different kind of event. Cassandra and Macbeth realize at a certain point that they must die, and they go consciously to their death as bearers of human generic values established by their personalities during the entire play, and decisively stressed by the poetic dramatism of the episodes preceding their deaths — the prophecy, or the "sound and fury" speech. On the contrary, Jean not only risks no tragic downfall (death), nor does he in fact understand what his situation entails, he unresistingly renounces human values and Miss Julie because he bears his master's bell within himself, because he has been waiting for it all the time. He is not a fighter who affirms an absolute ethic in succumbing, but the slave of the background and its continuous presence in Time. Charged with the entire potential of his dread, the bell changes thus from a thing to a hypnotic antagonist with a vitality of its own: Time lasts as anxiety. The winged chariot of Time is bereft of its Hellenic or Renaissance driver, it drags its victims through the dust like a triumphal conqueror: Phoebus has ceded his place to Phaeton. Barbaric festivities — to take a phrase of Brecht's — of a fundamentally barbaric world, of a Time lasting as nightmare.

Finally, it's no wonder that the scenery can be dispensed with: the background grows so pervasive that it permeates into the dramatic characters. No wonder either that Time, from the most precious and the only irrevocable commodity, has become the cheapest. Its flow has been entirely emptied — a catharsis which would have shocked Aristotle — it is hollow within, like the dramatic characters. Beckett's world feels Time no more as a pain of valuable chances missed, of lost Julies: in that universe only quantity is left, an empty and tedious flow, a wholly revocable waiting, in the first act as well as in the second and until the end of time, Amen. The cycle of the bourgeois view of the world from the Medieval guilds to the modern intellectual "Lumpenproleter" has closed its circuit: Time, as well as Space, is absolute again, only now absolutely present within the dramatic figures, made diffuse by an Individualist absence of world view — or by a presence of a wholly Nihilistic world view, whose bearers are, logically, uprooted tramps. The Time of middle-class anti-drama, setting of the final lay alienation, is related to the Time of religious drama as blasphemy is to prayer.

3. HISTORICITY

The manifestation of the background in Time and through the characters becomes thus the basic structural element of Individualist drama. It flows necessarily out of an individual time and space, out of irrevocable because unique events, unrelated to an all-embracing ethic of their age. Irrevocable events bound to definite circumstances (the background) and "just such" individual behaviour (the characters) result in historicity. Implying an exclusively individual existence of each event, character and thing, the historicity is an essential characteristic of middle-class being and drama — which is in this sense always historical, whether the characters wear doublets, a smoking-jacket or overalls. History, public or private, is the superordinated principle of Individualist drama, the way that Fortune was for the Renaissance and divinely personified collective Fate for the Greeks. In the *Oresteia* Athene is a figure and also the personification of the polis of Athens from whose point of view the dramatist regards and organizes his artistic structure; it can be said of the *Oresteia* that it is seen through the eyes of Athene, the goddess and the commune. In *The Tempest* Prospero, no longer a god but still a mage, a man with a certain amount of super-individual power, stands above the plot and determines it. Even if he isn't absolutely sovereign (cf. the revolt of Caliban), he is allied to Fortune who leads Antonio's ship to him. He doesn't solve human problems by means of a religious power from above but by means of a magical wisdom operating through men and their senses — the love of Ferdinand and Miranda, the music of the enchanted island as a sensual, anti-Guildensternian principle of harmony — through their generic humanity. *Rosmersholm*, on the other hand, is dominated by an inimical History as revelation of the background, and all the efforts of the characters can only reveal it and hasten its approach to the finale of death. History stops only with the annihilation of its subjects, the correlative characters.

In middle-class drama the reified character thus finds himself acting in front of a definite background, an historically and illusionistically "real" scene of events. Although Shakespeare's tragedies also purport to happen in a definite time and place (a legendary Scotland and England, Denmark, Venice and Cyprus, etc.) the drama of Lear as, say, a viceroy of Cyprus would not necessarily have to be different — except for dramaturgical difficulties in motivating the division of his domain etc. In Elizabethan drama, place and time are conventions, determined by tradition, and the relationships of figures are transposed Renaissance relationships. Similarly Racine's Greeks wear also ethical Louis-Quatorze wigs: the tradition arises in this case from Court codes,

not from popular legends. Shakespeares's "background" can remain abstract because the play is dominated by personalities who, each in his own way, reflect an ethical whole, the cosmos. Racine's can remain a sketchy backdrop to a specific viewing of the fixed and closed ethics of an absolutist ruling class. Ibsen's or Schiller's background is historically univocal, and any material change in it would immediately destroy the drama — meaning neither the geography nor the calendar but the kind of original relationships between people in it (cf. the examples of Clytaemnestra and Nora in Section 2).

The main stylistic consequence of the existence of History, of the temporal and spatial background for middle-class Individualist drama, is a quantitative enrichment in the detailed aspects of the dramatic figure as a sum of relationships with the background and of the moulding of that figure through events. Spatial and temporal dimensions are no longer economically outlined and strictly necessary as in Greek or Renaissance drama: more aspects of the figure are filled in to produce "well-rounded" characters "in depth", irreducible to a type, an allegorical or a mythical personification. Seen from different angles, these characters draw illusionistically near to persons from life, just as the stage happenings are "realistically" limited by everyday middle-class verisimilitude up to the scenery and the costumes in which they happen. The "slice of life" is implied in middle-class drama from its very beginning, as well as its obverse, the escape from History into Symbol: Naturalism and Symbolism are the two faces of Individualist Janus.

Because of the concrete historical situation of the middle class, the relationships in Individualist drama first became multidimensional in the field of explicit class ideology, in the genre *sérieux* and the bourgeois tragedy of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th century, having as their conscious premise the "Weltanschauung" of a rising class. The Romantics were already losing confidence in direct social action: this loss can be symbolized by Schiller's refusal to accept the honorary citizenship of the French Republic in 1792 and by his creative crossing from the first rebellious trilogy over to the olympically vacillating *Wallenstein*. The German Romantics, in drama the most significant ones, turned towards the mysteries of an irritated — because closed-in — psychology: "Nach innen geht der geheimnisvolle Weg" (Novalis). There-with they instituted the tradition of a theatre separated from a larger public: the logic of Individualism leads towards the "drame dans le fauteuil", towards a public atomized into individuals, which can be reconstituted only by artificial measures of mass empathy. The rare printed dramas were in the Renaissance a means of conserving the performed works: now the closet drama (Lesedrama) is born, made with little

reference to stage and dramaturgy. The horizon of repertory providers begins to coincide with the wallpapers of middle-class drawing rooms. A second Romantic wave of the Byronic rebels against French Restoration (Dumas-père, Hugo) vacated the stage comparatively swiftly. The popular public had since the Thermidor little access to the dramatic theatre, and the bourgeois public wanted to see on the stage a universe presided over by its new Trinity, the Individual, the Money and the Code Civil. The whole of so-called "realistic" drama satisfied exactly such wants from Scribe through Augier, Dumas-fils, Sardou etc., etc., passing during the entire 19th century for the exemplary pinnacle of "well-made" play for dramatists from Portugal to the Urals. Not until the Scandinavian doubters Ibsen and Strindberg, supported by explicitly anti-capitalist writers from Tolstoy to Shaw, did the bourgeois world and the Individualist man as such appear at a deeply problematic dead-end. This watershed marks the approach of a subsequent radical decomposition of the bourgeois world view through all the -isms. Following the Naturalism of a Becque and the Symbolism of a Maeterlinck, Hauptmann already oscillates between these stylistic poles: the same holds true too in Decadent drama, for *Salomé* as much as for *A Streetcar Named Desire*.

4. THE IDEOLOGICAL NATURE OF THE BOURGEOIS WORLD VIEW

As the first class in newer European history which shapes its myths into a Rationalist semblance, which advances under a pseudo-integrally scientific banner, the bourgeoisie is also the first class to have elaborated its demands in a theoretically explicit way. Never before have class antagonisms been theatrically manifest. The *Oresteia*, for example, is (as research from Hegel to Thomson has shown) from an historical standpoint a drama of the conflict between the matriarchal clan (Clytaemnestra and the Erinnies) and patriarchal clan aristocracy (Agamemnon and Apollo) solved in the Aeschylean synthesis of a democratic polis (Orestes justified by Athens — which is why the trilogy is called *Oresteia*, although in the Individualist dramaturgical logic of dominant character it could have very well been called *Clytaemnestreia*). But "it never was said: you Athenian aristocrats, the principles of your clan morals are contrary to the fundamentals of our democratic state; your heroes are not only killers of their brothers and mothers but have also committed high treason. Or: you English barons, your frenzies threaten the peace of our industrious cities; your throne pretenders and rebels are no more than imposing criminals. Or again: you Paris shopkeepers, usurers and lawyers, know that if we French noblemen disappear, with

us will disappear a world too good to enter into compromise with you. Now, however it is quite explicitly said: we, honest citizens, cannot and will not live in the world ruled by you parasites, and if we fail, our children will win and live"³. In place of an ethic implicitly permeating all relationships, identically entire in life and on the stage, from the 18th century onwards a conscious polemical ideology appears, according to the demands of which the playwright establishes the conflict of dramatic characters. Hence a much greater mortality among plays and increasingly frequent wailings on the ephemeral character of the theatre. The Elizabethan or Commedia dell'arte theatre was, of course, still more ephemeral — what wouldn't we give for a movie or at least a coherent criticism about the actor Shakespeare? — but it considered itself a functional part of an integrated popular organism and so had, before the arrival of Humanistic professional "elites", neither time nor cause to think of future glory. All Individualist drama dies with the age which provided its author with the moral demand and the problem-matter, thus bringing about the individual ideological variant of such a drama as a solution of this problem in applied aesthetics. The work of dramatic art, the specific definition of which is that it lives in action, is no more realized in a generic Time: it is understandable that, as soon as the modalities of such non-realization recede into the past, nothing is left of such a work. Who, except for teachers of German and their luckless pupils, watches *Wallenstein*, and who doesn't watch *Mackbeth* today? Indeed, where are the snows of bourgeois yesteryear?

The bourgeois world view, namely, hasn't found time to anchor itself into History. Because of its tempestuous history, full of upheavals, this restless and unsatisfied class never had a long enough interval of secure tenure. If we wish to count its full victory from 1792, we can't forget that before then the victors had to promulgate a law against trade unions. From 1848, perhaps: but what about the June uprising of the Paris proletariat? From the English Reform Bill: and the Luddites, the Chartists, or earlier still, the Diggers alongside Cromwell? Germany's unification in 1871 was preceded by whole movements within European and German socialism. France finally became a republic when only the republic could stifle the plebeian movement of the Commune: many other bourgeois states, south or east of those mentioned — such as Yugoslavia — were caught up in new revolutionary movements even before having been fully constituted. Five centuries passed between Charlemagne and Gian della Bella and roughly as many from the first sotties

³ A. Hauser, *Sozialgeschichte der Kunst und Literatur*, vol. 2, München 1958.

to Ben Jonson: Robespierre and Babeuf were bumping into each other on the streets of Paris. From anti-aristocratic polemics the bourgeoisie had to redeploy without a breathing-space into the polemics with its own revolutionary ideas of yesterday, with the popular and proletarian mainstream out of which it had arisen. From its beginnings, it exists in the guise of a patricidal and incestuous Oedipus (Freud's clientele was bourgeois). Mention has been made how this change can be noted in Schiller (in the middle of *Don Carlos*, in fact), the same holds true for Beaumarchais (between the second and third part of the "Figaro" trilogy), and many others.

Thus, the bourgeois view of the world and the relationships in it, middle-class cosmology and ethics, has always remained relative. Up to the French Revolution this could still be considered a temporary and optimistically curable state of affairs. After that, however, creative artists could no more partake of the basic middle-class illusions. Father Miller could no more resemble Odoardo Galotti, nor Ruy Blas resemble Figaro.

5. THE DOCTRINAIRE DEGRADATION OF INDIVIDUALIST DRAMA AND ITS STRUCTURE

This explains the roots of a phenomenon all of us are so used to that it passes almost unnoticed, although clamouring for a concentrated critical "estrangement": namely, the historically unprecedented and, to my knowledge, as the law of a whole class epoch unparalleled fact that each variant of middle-class drama is preceded by a doctrinaire ideological programming, more or less explicit, from Diderot's and Lessing's writings to Shaw's prefaces and the modern manifestoes. Drama no longer grows organically out of the communal ethics and theatre. It is therefore either untenable on stage (closet drama, "Literature", or "paper" in modern theatre jargon) or at least much less in touch with the exigencies of the stage. If, on the other hand, the writer comes from within theatre practice he uses his knowledge solely as an aesthetic reservoir to increase his "bagful of tricks" (Shaw), and not in order to verify his ethics: for better packaging, not for a better product. Significant playwrights, such as Merimée, Musset, Büchner etc. (it is hardly necessary to go on up to — Mayakovsky, Odets and Genet perhaps?) either remain without a congenial wide public, or must woo such a public for dozens of years without much chance for a success not bought by compromising, by accepting the very middle-class world against which they protested as poets (see, for example, the change in dramatic space, time and language between *Peer Gynt* and *The Enemy of the People*, or *The Bald Primadonna* and *Rhinoceros*). The whole

epoch, from roughly the French to the Russian Revolution (starting, of course, with Lillo and finishing with — Beckett and Albee?) hasn't come near to the mass theatre of economically poorer periods, from ritual drama to Pulcinella. The bourgeois epoch is the first after the Huns in which the disappearance of dramatic theatre is a seriously discussed possibility. The Humanists already pleaded for a learned elite, but they, at least theoretically, hoped the learning would spread. Only at the apex of Individualism, in bourgeois drama, the very notion of a non-minority theatre will be lost (cf. Strindberg's preface to *Fröken Julie* in favour of a minority theatre). Long before TV, the Goncourt brothers assumed that the circus, the Orpheum, the review, would supplant drama. At a time when drama declines to an escapist divertissement, theatre as a popular festivity, lifting its public to joyous awareness which cuts down class barriers, is as a rule non-existent.

Behind the facades of pseudo-Baroque buildings and the glitter of first-night evening dresses, the Individualist reality has, like Glamis murdered the organized theatrical dream: wondering why the stage reflects the sleeplessness and nightmare of Cawdor (*Cacbeth*, Act II, iii).

This also explains why drama is no longer the most comprehensive literary form, the supreme poetical cognition which it was in Hellenic or Renaissance times: it abdicated from a central place in literary art. As a rule the playwright does not dominate Individualist literature. What would Lessing, Hugo, Chekhov, Krleža or Pirandello be without their lyrics or prose? On the contrary, Aeschylus or Molière, without any doubt significant poetic thinkers, could put all their insights into dramatic form, on a public stage. Racine's, Lope de Vega's or even Shakespeare's lyrics are secondary to their drama. Clearly dramatic temperaments, like Keats or Dostoyevsky, didn't become dramatists. Certain exceptions could be found in German or Scandinavian literature, yet even there the compromises already mentioned were serious. Schiller is today (except for *Die Räuber*) dead to the stage wherever he is not used for ideological flag-waving. Kleist and Büchner were left for the next century to discover, and even Goethe's major work has stayed on the stage only in Gounod's sorry travesty. Of course, this in no way represents a valid judgment on the unique values of *Faust*, but it gives an eloquent "testimonium pauperitatis" to Individualist theatre which found no way of accepting it. Moreover, *Faust* has historically remained within the Individualist dramaturgy an isolated "epic" or "open-form" attempt. Shakespeare's are the most significant of dozens of similarly structured dramas before and after him, including notably Marlowe's *Dr Faustus*. Molière is the centre of an unbroken line from Gothic or

even earlier soddies to present-day boulevard comedy. Similar considerations hold good for Aeschylus or Aristophanes. On the contrary, around *Faust* there is nothing in Individualist dramaturgy: in it *Faust* exists more as a foreign body indicating the need for a Faustian kind of drama than as a drama *per se*.

In other terms, what is the place of O'Neill's, Odets' and Miller's dramas in the literature of Henry James, Dreiser, Lewis, Scott Fitzgerald, Dos Passos, Hemingway, Wolfe and Mailer? Or of Wilde, Shaw and Synge at the time of Hopkins, Hardy, Owen, Eliot and Yeats? Some chronologically permitted parallels in France are yet more eloquent: Scribe — Stendhal, Augier — Balzac, Dumas-fils — Baudelaire, Sardou — Flaubert, Becque — Zola, Maeterlinck — Valéry, Giraudoux — Eluard... unequal and blasphemous matches, lost *par forfait*! Individualism, so fertile in the lyrics of the aggrieved individual and in the prose epics of his increasingly complex relationships with the environment, runs to all appearances contrary to the basic principles of dramatic form.

Only a world view which rules absolutely for several centuries can, it seems, outgrow the abstract ideological stage and constitute a framework of feeling and understanding which works as if without value judgments but with self-evident, inescapable truths. Such non-cerebral cosmology the bourgeoisie didn't, on the whole, manage to attain. Its value judgments are therefore not sensual as well as cerebral, so to speak reflexes like the Elizabethan revenge or the Spanish *pundonor*, they are ideological, reflecting and sentimental. The conflict in Individualist drama doesn't take place between complete personalities, ethically determined *passions* but between ideology bearers, status-determined conditions: the characters are determined more by the different *Weltanschauungen* than by their generic human qualities. Thus, the increasingly complex and on the surface increasingly verisimilar stage figure is in the same process losing its ethical dimension. The accent shifts from its humanity to its clothes at the time of Carlyle's paradox in *Sartor Resartus* that clothes do in fact constitute a man. Ethics are no longer a common framework but a theoretical, rational problem for each individual. Dramas change from action to rhetorical debates and declaimings. Hamlet's monologues — or Macbeth's before the murder — are preludes to a shift from action into musings on intellectual problems, but their rhythm — although doubtless in the tradition of Humanist rhetorics — is still strongly haptic, muscular. Compared to them, Posa is a Kantian barrister, and Hernani the head of a high-school class in elocution.

Where a universal view of the world is lacking all points of view are relative. The standpoint of the formal antagonist (Schiller's King

Philip, Hugo's Ruy Gomez) is relatively right: the bourgeois class consciousness is beginning to respect the rulers it once fought against. The poetry communicated with Man: rhetorics communicate with the Prince. Individualist drama relies increasingly on idealist rhetorics, not on the poetry inherent in the story. The so-called "poetry" in Individualist drama is an exclusively verbal, elocutional, linguistically evocative, i.e. rhetorical, effect (Giraudoux or Fry), not the integral *mousiké* of the Greeks nor the poetry of human relationships — Lear's "Pray you undo this button" (Act V, iii) — of the Renaissance.

6. THE LOSS OF THE STORY

The fundamental dramaturgical event of the Individualist drama is the recession of the plot, the loss of a significant story. Lear would be tragic in any case; for Karl Moor the trick of a falsified letter is necessary. Shakespeare's figure is motivated out of its own fullness, and Schiller's out of the author's fabrication. Shakespeare's story flows inevitably out of the initial situation which contains the whole of it in nuce; the story in Individualist drama flows from an author's fanciful delineation of characters, dependent on his more or less idiosyncratic feeling for historical background. Accidental and arbitrary, such a story concerns the individual in the auditorium only if and when he identifies himself with the otherwise alien stage character. Identification or ineffectiveness, indifference or enchantment: such are the alternatives of Individualist dramatic effect. The possibilities of an active co-operation of the public, of a critical mutual induction of new appreciation and understanding from both sides of the footlights, dwindle to nothing. The story turns into a "*pièce bien faite*" escalation of sensations, where the strongest sensation must logically be reserved for the end. An analysis of the story — as well as of the ethics and the implied bourgeois view of history — points strongly to the fact that the "criminal play" is the primal nucleus of Individualist drama, its alpha and omega (*The Merchant of London*, *Die Räuber*, *Rosmersholm*, *Cavalleria rusticana*, *Erdegeist*, *Sei personaggi in cerca dell' autore*, *The Crucible* — right up to Miss Christie). The final arbiter of bourgeois tragedy is the policeman — a nemesis wholly pertinent to a universe whose laws are identical with the Code Civil (just as the final arbiter of comedy from *Tartuffe* through *Minna von Barnhelm* to Brecht's parody in the *Dreigroschenoper* is some version of a royal messenger).

Macbeth and Cassandra, mentioned earlier, had to die from the moment their figure was what it was in a determined universe; their tragicness is an *a posteriori* one. Ibsen can almost make us suspend our

disbelief on the necessity of Rosmer's and Rebekka's death by his well-engineered fabrication, if we want to agree with his theoretical premises. But there is no real reason for doing that. There is nothing to stop our stepping outside such premises and envisaging a further fighting life for the inhabitants of Rosmersholm in the teeth of their social environment: nothing, that is, except the lugubrious atmosphere of the "white horses" i. e. except an ideological fabrication of the author's. Significantly, Ibsen's characters — standing here for those of bourgeois drama in general — reach fulfilment only in their downfall, dramaturgically speaking — in Death. Shakespeare and Aeschylus deny Death, Ibsen affirms the sublimity of the escape into it. Individualist drama has a strong streak of the necrophilic: behind the best of its tragedies a grand-guignol melodrama peeps out. Behind *Mourning Becomes Electra*, behind the *Six Characters in Search of an Author* one can glimpse the skeleton of *The Merchant of London* or *La Tour de Nesle*. Only in the moment of death does the individual sequence of events shape itself into an organic whole, denying both itself and the play as such. In the play, before death, the individual Rebekka or Don Carlos could only long for a significant order (love, justice). A Nirvana is the most enlightened ideal of individualism.

Aristotle — and Brecht too — would have categorized the subordination of the story to the character as a grave structural error which involves losing sight of the purpose, i. e. the *raison d'être* of drama. Moreover, the all-important dramatic character is itself broached from within, made ethically abstract and less significant. With the loss of the framing cosmology goes the waning of central anthropological values which drama displays. On the one hand, the breakdown of the story is an expression of the Individualist theatre's dead end, of its moving towards the shimmering incoherence of the Variety. The bourgeois world vision is relativistic: the heroism of the hero, of the protagonist, is sanctioned only by the author's intention. The playwright strains to make up a story, taking refuge under the fetish of originality, contemporary with the notion of copyright. On the other hand, this breakdown is an expression of more complicated ways of transposing the relationships from life. Just as the figures get more complex and blurred, so does the ordering and hierarchy of their thematic lines. Secondary figures have become characters just as the protagonist. Thus, the main antagonists have in this general levelling of values come closer to each other than ever before — they are relatives, brothers and finally the same figure (Pirandello etc.). The pinnacle of reification and dehumanizing is reached in that state of bourgeois tragedy and comedy in which each character is his own antagonist and somebody else's protagonist. "Hell is other people" (Sartre): there is no heaven in sight, nor a humanized world

to which the notion of Heaven and Hell would be unnecessary. For such reason the motivation of the story shifts after the eighteenth century from the generic into the historical field, i. e. into the special, into a category which becomes an intimate possession of the individual only through abstraction. The figure acts increasingly against his will (Hernani, Medea, Oswald — to Pirandello and Beckett), he in fact ethically partakes less and less in his actions, just existing more and more as a sensitive complexity. The basic problem of middle-class dramatic aesthetics, the "Hybris", isn't therefore aesthetically soluble but is an ethical problem, an Idealist "hypostasis of sociology" (Lukács). A Shakespearean dramatic conflict is motivated from within the figure and takes place between the protagonist and the antagonist. An Individualist dramatic conflict is motivated from within the historical background and takes place, lacking a clear dramatic antagonist, inside the psyche of one or more main characters. In such a context the story is fragmented into ideologically connected reactions of individuals to the course of history, into rhetorical beatings of characters against the barriers of the background.

7. CHARACTER AND IDEOLOGY

Yet, it is only from the standpoint of such arbitrary, increasingly complex and sensitive characters that some unity and orientation can be arrived at in Individualist drama, which lacks an all-embracing understanding of the world necessary for a harmony of composition and characterization. Character, the special Individualist case of the scenic figure, is the fundamental device of Individualist drama. In its naive phase and in the beginnings of its dramaturgy, accompanied by least self-deceit, Diderot had directly asked for the figure to be formed no more according to Classicist abstraction but according to its social status (condition) of judge, merchant, father of middle-class family et sim. Not long after that, the Romantics will recognize the social basis of motivation and erect their drama on the rebellion against such a basis — simultaneously envying Shakespeare who didn't have to recognize this.

However, with the historical background becoming increasingly aggressive and the characters increasingly blurred, the feasibility of human relations, of establishing a personality, develops into a basic problem. In the Renaissance it was the scenic figure's qualitative orientation that mattered. Now the very need for action, the quantitative feasibility of a character's existence through action, is in question. Hamlet doesn't know what to do but he has been created to act; Wallenstein knows that he should want to do something, but he has been created

not to act: there is a chasm between their vacillations. Hebbel expressed the hysteria of Individualist drama by declaring that it's quite indifferent whether the "protagonist" meets his doom because of his good or bad action — i. e. the important thing is to do anything at all. This drama is centrally concerned with the naked subsistence of individual integrity, with the tragedy of the individual's duration as such. The dramatic tension grows as the tragedy is identified to be the "natural" correlative of individuation. "Thus understood, the tragic is not primarily a dramaturgical but a metaphysical notion [...]", explains Staiger⁴, the last in a series of Idealist middle-class theoreticians stretching from Kant, Hegel and Schopenhauer through whole libraries of Teutonic elucubrations "on the tragic" (Vischer, Volkelt, Zimmerman, Dietz etc. etc.). Such metaphysical recourse to Fate tends to a more or less explicit religiousness. Even for the Rationalists, Society was a kind of terrestrial divinity. Such a parvenu deity having been abandoned after the French Revolution, the search for a successor to Osiris, Dionysos and Christ went merrily on. The Pantheon of such candidates is rather variegated: Fate can be the Use of Capital (*Mrs. Warren's Profession*) or Heredity in Spyrochetae (*The Ghosts*), but it's always a mask of History, the swift predator of human beings. Parallel to Fate, characters also become strangely equivocal — both mystically irrational and geometrical fabrications, "a mere contrapuntal necessity" (Hoffmannsthal). All generic human contacts outside a doctrinaire blueprint of conflicts have become superfluous. The disintegration of a significant story set in during the 18th century; the significant scenic figure disintegrates next. The fundamental device of Individualist drama, the sacrosanct final atom of the bourgeois world view, turns out to be unsuited for the role of the basic unit with which to build a universe. From the Romantic schizophrenia outward — e. g. Fiesco's, or both Schiller's and Hugo's Don Carlos' — the dramatic character himself is increasingly disintegrating into the nether structural elements of ideas (i. e. its Individualist special case, ideology) and language.

The author's fabrication of happenings round the reified characters opens thus the problem of communication and symbolics, of the suitability of the whole dramatic medium. The lack of a universal ethic means, moreover, that the characters stand in the field of drama like to newtonian atoms, discrete particles whose linking constitutes the problem. In the abstracted world of Individualism they can be linked, "the problem can be solved" only by an explicit ideology formulat-

⁴ E. Staiger, *Grundbegriffe der Poetik*, Zürich 1964.

All quotations from the German language translated by D.S.

ed by the author, which thus becomes the fundamental stylistic element of Individualist drama alongside the characters. It is now clear why Individualist drama has to have ideological programming, and furthermore each time a new one, corresponding to a new variant of distributing and linking the characters with regard to each other and to the background, and the new variant of ideology dominant at the moment.

Individualist drama knows in fact no other tradition but the ideology of the bourgeoisie, it breaks with the existing stage tradition: the consequences have already been sketched in this essay. The traditional themes are in this drama completely restructured: Grillparzer's *Medea* is subject to historical background in a way which makes her essentially different from Euripides' avenger.

8. A PROVISIONAL CONCLUSION

When ethical standards cease to be clear, ethics turn from an all-embracing into an initial category, into a problematic motivational focus of the plot; what was once a secure basis is now a provisional solution. The connections between the scenic figure and the events have lost their necessariness; conflicts grow abstract in such a doctrinaire form of drama. The net of dramatic necessities is no more immanent to the scenic figures, it becomes fatefully transcendental. The necessity is only a formal — irrational or contrapunctal — one, and the characters are constituted as functions of such a formal, non-generic and non-intimate necessity. The main character may be farsighted, but he is dramaturgically inactive: seeing is separated from understanding, and understanding from practical cognition and mastery, leaving all necessity to Fate. The reified figures, turning to each other only that side which expresses a fatal necessity (Lukács), become Fate or agents of Fate for each other. From a generical viewpoint, their conflicts are therefore merely nodal points of an ornamental pattern of fatal relationships. Also, at each individual moment, for each individual, his fate becomes a world-historical one. History grows into the individual's flesh like a Nessus' shirt.

A *Cid* or *Antony and Cleopatra* — dramas whose subject matter was taken from historiographers — also treated human relationships from other periods as relationships of their own epoch. However, as different from an *Hernani*, *Wallenstein* or *Un Verre d'eau*, they didn't pretend to be historically accurate reconstructions. The notion of history in the sense of a succession of moments with individual and irrevocable specificities was unknown to them: they just used majestic legendary types

whose validity was to their minds eternal. Corneille's Augustus was Louis XIV whereas Ben Jonson's was James I, because Augustus was the perennial model of an ideal ruler. The ancient king Lear was to Shakespeare as real and as legendary as the still more ancient Caesar or the mythical evildoer Richard Gloucester. And what is the Macbeth of the chronicles — reality or legend?

As opposed to this, each bourgeois drama is historical by its angle of vision and understanding, by its inescapable ingrown notions of the individuality and uniqueness of time and place. "Verweile doch, Du bist so schön": Faust's supreme sin, which destroys him as a sovereign and entire personality, is the adoption of such an Individualist point of view which doesn't find its values in the dynamics of events but in the statics of the perfect moment. A dramaturgy bereft of all-embracing ethics, and consequently also of generical dialectics of the relationships between sovereign personalities and scenic figures, is necessarily going to substitute ideological problems for aesthetical, characters and ideology for figures and thought, and break the structure of the dramatic story down to the nethermost level of language. The Individualist reality and feeling of reality are breaking up the drama as a form and as a genre. Although it put up a furious defence, condemning itself to increasingly smaller rations of significance and lower life forms, the moment of its final annihilation was put off only by Atlantean efforts of poets and rebels, heroically opposed to an Ibsenian "Solid majority". But this couldn't be done either without making increasingly drastic compromises with the bourgeois reality. It is paradoxical, as well as tragical in the most technical sense of the word, that it was the Individualist poets, intimately rebelling against the consequences of Individualism, who became the historical executioners of the drama, carrying out a necessity which they didn't bring about but which they, as the most sensitive instruments of the time, felt most clearly. History was also their tragic Fate: the more authentic a poet, the deeper he felt a need for order, for elastic yet all-embracing ethics, and the more stubbornly he had to try and recreate such an order formally, through aesthetics. A vain attempt: for aesthetics are free only when ethics are firm. And vainest for those who needed it most, for the potentially most creative writers: Sisyphus should be imagined as increasingly unhappy. From Faust's arresting the most beautiful moment, to Sisyphus' repeating the most difficult moment — how faithful a trajectory of the Individualist poet, of the Individualist drama!

INDYWIDUALISTYCZNY POGLĄD NA ŚWIAT W DRAMACIE

STRESZCZENIE

W niniejszym studium próbujemy zbliżyć się do dramatu od czasów Szekspira aż po dzień dzisiejszy z określonego antropologicznego punktu widzenia, który chcemy wykorzystać jako kryterium zarówno strukturalno-estetyczne, jak i socjologiczno-genetyczne. Studium to opiera się na wcześniejszych badaniach autora, dotyczących renesansowego i indywidualistycznego obrazu świata (por. książka *Dwa aspekty dramaturgii — Dva vida dramaturgiye*). Wychodzi się z założenia, że głównym rysem nowszej mieszczańskiej dramaturgii europejskiej jest indywidualizm, pojmowanie świata z punktu widzenia losów jednostki. Pojęcie to stało się stylową dominantą, ponieważ burżuazja przeciwstawiła się ludowym tendencjom renesansu i rozszczepiła wizję rzeczywistości na jednostkę i jej otoczenie. W takim zindywidualizowanym świecie rozwija się silna depersonalizacja i reifikacja stosunków międzyludzkich w kierunku ilościowym. Każda jednostka przypomina swym położeniem Robinsona, który jest coraz mniej zdolny do zachowania rodzajowej więzi ludzkiej z innymi. Korelatywem tej antagonistycznej sytuacji burżuazji jest afirmacja Czasu w dramaturgii jako miernika zdobywania i wytracania wartości, utożsamianej z vitalnością.

Otoczenie zewnętrzne transponuje się w indywidualistycznej dramaturgii jako dominujące tło spoza pierwszego planu głównych charakterów. Tło i jego ciągle oddziaływanie w czasie dramatycznym określa stosunki panujące między izolowanymi jednostkami. Na przestrzeni kilku ostatnich stuleci środowiskowe tło stało się na tyle marginesowe, że charaktery wysuwają się na pierwszy plan, a Czas „wypróżnia się” ze swojej treści i trwa jak przerażenie, jak puste *quantum*, zamykając w ten sposób cykl rozwojowy mieszczańskiego obrazu świata.

W nim to uwidoczniają się charaktery jako funkcje nadrzędnej, rozstrzygającej Historii, a dramat waha się między „tranche de vie” a symboliczną abstrakcją. W krótkim przeglądzie historycznym rozwoju dramatu jednostki od XVIII do XX w. próbuje się wskazać przyczyny i sposoby rozkładu jego obrazu świata w nieobowiązującej, efemerycznej ideologii, która manifestuje się w doktrynerskim, apriorycznym programowaniu. Tym faktem można objaśnić wzrastającą niekomunikatywność dramatu, jego oddalanie się od szerszej ludowej publiczności oraz coraz mniejsze znaczenie na gruncie literatury. Charaktery, coraz bardziej wiarygodne w aspekcie zewnętrznym, zatracają swój etyczny wymiar, akcja natomiast przechodzi w retoryczne dyskusje lub monologizowanie. Eliminacja potrzebnej i ważnej fabuły jest podstawowym faktem w rozwoju indywidualistycznej dramaturgii. Z kolei dochodzi do rezygnacji z protagonistów i antagonistów i wskutek tego każdy charakter jest antagonistą dla siebie i protagonistą dla innych (Pirandello, Beckett, Sartre), a fabuła zawęża się do powiązanych sensem ideologicznym reakcji jednostki na ciśnienie otoczenia. Tragizm objawia się w ten sposób jako metafizyczny korelat indywidualności. W rezultacie pozostają osamotnione słowa i gesty, ich związek przeto bywa podstawowym umotywowanym problemem.

Rekapitulacja dotyczy genetycznego skrzywienia dramatu jednostki w epoce, która po raz pierwszy od czasów Hunów zwątpiła w możliwość jego dalszego istnienia jako formy i jako rodzaju.

Przełożył Stanisław Kaszyński