

205
REALISTIC ELEMENTS IN THE PLAYS OF TOM TAYLOR

by

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Dedication

To Jack, for his support and
belief in my ability.

Chapter I

Introduction

In The Victorian Theatre, 1792-1914, George Rowell calls the dramatist during that period the "handyman of the company," the growth of the playwright being dependent on the production methods of individual theatres and the changing Victorian audiences.¹ However, even in this supposed non-productive atmosphere, managers such as Madame Vestris, Samuel Phelps and the Bancrofts were incorporating new methods of production, and some playwrights were trying to stretch beyond the bonds of audience and established theatre practices in order to implement some realism onto the boards.

In discussion of English theatre during the Victorian period, one frequently finds remarks focusing on the milestones established by Tom Robertson and the Bancrofts. Montrose J. Moses, in his preface to Caste, reported, "Squire Bancroft . . . believed that Robertson comedies saved the English stage and revived an intelligent interest in drama. . . ." ² One gains the impression from such comments that there first occurred in 1843 the Theatre Regulation Act and that the next major development was Robertson's play Society in 1865.

However, to assume this is to ignore the groundwork laid down by playwrights writing before and during Robertson's time. The entire period of Victorian theatre, particularly from 1840 to 1880, contained roots for modern drama. Winton Tolles, another researcher of Victorian drama, summarizes the period in that respect:

In the physical theatre, as well as in styles of drama, the years between 1840 and 1880 produced important changes. During this time many of the refinements of the modern playhouse were developed. A natural style of acting and realistic staging conquered older methods. The elements of song and dance were diverted from the stream of legitimate drama. Outmoded, lifeless forms of drama were replaced by newer types better adjusted for an interesting and realistic treatment of contemporary life.

Changes in dramatic form credited to Robertson represent the culmination of a process begun by playwrights who contributed both before and during his time. One of those contributors was Tom Taylor.

Taylor's work occurred during that period of English drama all too often skimmed through by dramatic critics and historians because it emphasized melodrama - a genre that, more than any other, depended on visual elements of spectacle and plot rather than characterization and thought for its popular appeal. Yet upon closer examination, seeds of modern drama can be found within the large variety of entertainment encompassed in the Victorian period.

As a playwright within that period, Taylor's contributions need to be examined because in many of his

plays he made choices to incorporate devices that denoted more realism in domestic and social dramas. This is unique in that many examples of these devices were contained in works which preceded or overlapped those of Tom Robertson, who is usually labeled as the bridge between melodrama and modern drama. The lives of both playwrights overlapped, with Robertson's drama produced between 1847 to 1871 and Taylor's produced from 1848 to 1877. But the misunderstanding related to Taylor's contributions to the period is exemplified by George Rowell's inclusion of Taylor under the heading "Robertson's Successors" in his book.⁴

Tom Taylor was an anomaly among playwrights of the nineteenth century because of his education and his journalistic ability. Born in 1817, he was educated at the University of Glasgow and at Trinity College, Cambridge, achieving a Bachelor of Arts in mathematics and the classics and eventually a Master's Degree. While studying law, he taught English at London University, was admitted to the bar in 1846, and gained a public position in 1850 as Assistant Secretary to the Board of Health.

Beyond his achievements as lawyer and public official, Taylor gained a reputation as a journalist and art critic, contributing to several magazines, including Punch, of which he later became editor. According to Montrose J. Moses, in an introduction to The Ticket-of-Leave Man, Taylor's "criticisms on art and the theatre won him considerable reputation. Yet what he earned as a literary man and a public official was nothing in comparison

with the income that came to him through the rapid writing of dramas."⁵ Thus, Taylor was recognized as having the ability to critically view the theatre of his time and note trends and needed changes.

In her biography, The Story of My Life, the Victorian actress Ellen Terry writes of Taylor, "He lived entirely for his age, and so was more prominent in it than Charles Reade, for instance, whose name, no doubt, will live longer."⁶ In the sense of Taylor's ability to please the audiences of the time, this was true. Between 1848 and 1877 he wrote seventy plays, covering the popular forms of farce, burlesque, extravaganza, melodrama, comedy and domestic drama. He even wrote a hippodrame, Garibaldi, for the theatre of spectacle, Astley's Amphitheatre. Taylor was such a success in all areas of popular theatre that it is easy to overlook his contributions to the development of social drama. Yet in order to understand the evolution of realism in the modern theatre, Taylor's plays need to be analyzed by focusing on how they were different from the generalized melodramatic mode. To do this, that prevalent style first needs to be examined to locate some universal elements which can be used as a basis for comparison.

Oscar G. Brockett, in History of the Theatre, chooses to define melodrama under the section "French Drama, 1800-1850" since the basic characteristics of melodrama originated in the French boulevard theatres and were put into a typical form by René Charles Guilbert de Pixérécourt:

The basic characteristics of melodrama can be summarized briefly: a virtuous hero (or heroine) is relentlessly hounded by a villain and is rescued from seemingly insurmountable difficulties only after he has undergone a series of threats to his life, reputation, or happiness; an episodic story unfolds rapidly after a short expository scene; each act ends with a strong climax; all important events occur on stage and often involve elaborate spectacle . . . and local color . . . ; the typical plot devices include disguise, abduction, concealed identity, and strange coincidence; strict poetic justice is meted out, for . . . the villain is always defeated. . . .⁷

Michael R. Booth has done several extensive studies on melodrama, and in his English Melodrama, he himself concludes that "theme, situations, and character types repeat themselves endlessly, and after a while in melodrama there is nothing new under the sun."⁸ Yet he offers some concise characteristics to hold onto as a norm in this genre of Victorian drama. He continues:

The emphasis on sensational and rapid action is part of melodrama's concentration on externals, which produces two main things: complete subordination of character development to the story line, and rigid moral distinctions. The two are closely related, for moral position is identifiable with character type. . . .⁹

It is a difficult process to divide melodrama into categories, such as nautical, military and domestic, because there is a great deal of overlapping in subject. However, since Taylor's plays are usually subtitled "A Domestic Drama in _____ Acts," efforts to define that category should be attempted.

Booth includes in his book a chapter on domestic melodrama:

Domestic melodrama offered audiences the same escapism as other kinds, that is, an ideal world of dreams fulfilled, but the setting is different. . . . Audiences themselves lived very much in the world of factory, slum, dirty crowded streets, hunger, and cold. . . . Dramatists were quick to offer them familiar situations, settings and characters met with every day, all served up, however, with thrills and happy endings not encountered in ordinary life. . . . It is with domestic melodrama that the curious paradox begins of a mostly unreal content combining with increasingly realistic settings, a dream world disguised as a true one. . . . Many domestic melodramas do not have English settings and are once removed from immediate reality.¹⁰

The major criterion that separates domestic melodrama from the other types is setting. Booth continues his definition by noting the similarities between the domestic melodramas and others, similarities which include "emotions, sentiments and situations," with all genres containing the "melodramatic universality of fleeing heroine and pursuing villain."¹¹ Thus in narrowing the definition of melodrama down to domestic melodrama, there are few basic elements which change, other than the setting. Within the definitions, the constant elements can be distinguished for comparison: plot lines which rely extensively on action, stock characters, and a conventional, rigid moral tone.

The purpose of this thesis is to draw focus to Taylor's methods, and to locate within certain plays specific devices relating to plot, characterization and thought which show

deviation from the general characteristics of melodrama. To separate Taylor's plays and analyze them in terms of conscious choices by the playwright to incorporate realistic devices, it is necessary to search for plot choices which (a) do not rely on physical action and spectacle, (b) allow a blurring of character types with some character growth and development, and (c) allow room for some thoughts reflective of contemporary times. Chapter Two discusses the framework of melodrama in all three of these areas, Chapter Three contains analysis of specific plays by Taylor, and Chapter Four presents conclusions of that analysis.

Chapter II

A Framework of Melodrama

In order to decide if Taylor's playwriting techniques contributed to the development of modern drama, elements which appear to be uniform in the melodramatic genre of the Victorian period need to be examined. By presenting definitions of plot, character and thought characteristic of drama during Taylor's time, these elements can be established as a basis of comparison for Taylor's plays.

Plot

It would be difficult to discuss plot in melodrama without an understanding of the English system of labeling original and borrowed material. The French influence cannot be overlooked when examining plot sources, and the English dramatists developed an interesting system of nomenclature in describing the play's source. Taylor explained this system in a series of letters printed in the theatre columns of the Athenaeum from April 13 to May 27, 1871:

Basically a "play" was a translated piece; "a new play" was one in which the author reworked, but closely followed the material of another; and "a new and original play" accepted, at the most, only barest suggestions from other sources.¹²

After 1843, French sources were increasingly utilized in England with the popularity of Victor Hugo's romantic dramas and the development of Eugene Scribe's formula for the "well-made play." During 1850 to 1870, French influence was at its height, and English melodrama is filled with examples of borrowed French plots. In such a period, it would be erroneous to assume that all of Taylor's material was original. However, even in the adapted material there are several areas on which to focus when discussing plot to make an analysis of Taylor's contributions in that area.

In choosing the French model to be used for adaptation, the playwright must decide on the quality of the model. Many dramatists during the height of the Victorian period chose plots which would reflect the increased emphasis on spectacle over character development. Dion Boucicault, known for his relationship with the "sensation drama" represents this trend in his 1852 adaptation of Les Fieres Corses, a novel by Dumas pere. Boucicault's The Corsican Brothers displayed "two remarkable vision scenes and an apparition."

From the drama of Boucicault and Daly with one sensation scene in the play, it was a natural step to the drama with such a scene in every act, and that one more sensational than the one before it.¹³

Even in plot lines which would be considered original, the temptation to include spectacle to the point that it overpowered character development was too great to resist for the majority of playwrights. In his introduction to a collection of plays entitled Hiss the Villain, Booth notes that "plot and situation are dominant; character is entirely subordinated to the necessities of plot, and a collection of exciting incidents and situations fraught with emotion comes first."¹⁴

Besides the playwright's ability to overcome the temptation of spectacle in the selection and adaptation of material, elements of actual plot development should be considered in discussing Taylor's plays. Within definitions previously cited, there have been references to plot elements, such as "an episodic story unfolding rapidly," a "short expository scene" at the beginning, and "a strong climax at the end of each act." The use of Eugene Scribe's formula helped many playwrights tighten their plot lines, but action was still of major importance.

Brockett describes some elements of the formula which came into vogue during the Victorian period: "Careful exposition and preparation, cause-to-effect arrangement of incidents, building scenes to a climax, and use of withheld information, startling reversals and suspense." But he also admits these elements sacrifice "depth of characterization and thought to intrigue."¹⁵ Winton Tolles

concur in his book Tom Taylor and the Victorian Theatre:

There is no time for verbal wit, no matter how clever, or, for philosophical musing, no matter how enlightening. The action is all important. . . . [His Scribe's] characters are little more than established types. . . . He never probes social or moral problems. . .¹⁶ His pieces were written for the "crowds."

So the playwright who wanted to focus on any kind of characterization and/or thought needed to choose material which would allow adaptation to incorporate more realistic devices. In addition, he would have to utilize Scribe's formula in a way that would allow it to reflect character depth and thought on contemporary problems.

Taylor exhibited such tendencies throughout his career. Allardyce Nicoll supports this view in his book A History of English Drama, 1660-1900. "That he [Taylor] borrowed many of his plots is unquestioned, but, like Boucicault, he was a man who understood his theatre perfectly and always transformed what he utilized."¹⁷ Making reference to the same point, John Coleman, in Plays and Playwrights I Have Known, states, "In no case was he a servile translator; indeed, every play which he manipulated underwent a thorough process of transmutation."¹⁸

Taylor had the recognized ability to anglicize settings and subjects within his adaptations, but closer examination of his plays will also reveal a remolding of Scribe's

formula to avoid the action-focused plot line in favor of the development of other elements, such as character and thought.

Characterization

Generally melodrama is known for its strict character distinctions, broken down into the character types of hero, heroine, villain, comic man, comic woman, old man, old woman, and the comic character actor. In pinpointing these character elements, Booth relates these types to the melodramatic framework:

By its very nature melodrama demands superficial "instant" characters who behave in the same way, think in the same way and act in the same way. . . . Both their conception as ideal types and their actual performance on the stage were extreme, and they are sharply differentiated from one another.¹⁹

This sharp delineation of characters leaves little room for in-depth examination of motivation or character growth. Booth continues:

The melodramatist has no time for character development or the study of motivation. Neither has he time for moral searching and questioning; moral as well as character must be easily recognizable.²⁰

The Victorian audience recognized each character type from the first entrance on stage, so much so that the types had particularly distinctive features, dress, habits and personalities. Booth describes the hero as

"confused, muddled and extra-ordinarily gullible; sometimes he plots counter-action, but frequently this is ineffective and he has to be helped out by the comic man."²¹ The villain, by contrast, is the moving force of the action, with his usual main goal focused on the abduction or ruin of the heroine. It is by his plotting and planning that events occur, and it is often the comic man, not the hero, who foils the villain's attempts.

The focus of this conflict between good and evil is the heroine, and according to Booth it is a basic characteristic of melodrama that at some early point in the play the heroine should begin to suffer:

The melodramatic function of the heroine is an enlargement and intensification of that of the hero. Although the weaker vessel in one sense, in another her strength is far greater, and she is far more persecuted, far more suffering. . . . Most of the sentimentalism and pathos attaches to the heroine, who is the emotional core of melodrama, and very often the storm center of action.²²

So in characterization there are several areas on which to focus to see if Taylor deviated from the general framework of melodrama, and particularly domestic melodrama. Study of his plays will reveal his various methods used to avoid the classic character types, methods including blurring of traditional character distinctions, introducing new types representative of a more realistic world than was usually presented in melodrama, and placing unusual

emphasis on the role of minor characters. In addition, analysis will show how he moved toward realistic characterization by giving his characters some depth in their choices and their motivation.

Thought and Idea

In his preface to Ruy Blas Victor Hugo divides the theatre public into three classes - the "crowd," who demand action and sensation, the pleasure of the eyes; the women, who demand passion and emotion, the pleasure of the heart; and the thinkers, who demand character study, the pleasure of the mind.²³

Throughout the definitions used to establish a framework for melodrama, thought has been referred to primarily in terms of its absence, overpowered by spectacle and action. Any attempt at theme was put into terms of moral black and white, good versus evil. Booth refers to this in his definition:

One of the great appeals of this world is clarity: character conduct, ethics, and situations are perfectly simple, and one always knows what the end will be, although the means may be temporarily obscure. The world of melodrama is thus a world of certainties where confusion, doubt, and perplexity are absent; a world of absolutes where virtue and vice coexist in pure whiteness and pure blackness; and a world of justice where after immense struggle and torment good triumphs over and punishes evil, and virtue receives material rewards. The superiority of such a world over the entirely unsatisfactory everyday world hardly needs demonstration, and it is this romantic and escapist appeal that goes a long way to explain the enduring popularity of melodrama.²⁴

Thus, melodramas such as Boucicault's After Dark or John Thomas Haines' My Poll and My Partner Joe were written or adapted for Hugo's "crowds," not the thinkers. Few playwrights ventured toward the boundaries of contemporary controversial issues. But upon close examination of Taylor's works, original as well as adapted, evidence can be found to show where he did approach these boundaries, and in some instances he crossed them by offering the "thinkers" of the audience something in the gray area between the criminally black and the morally white.

Chapter III

Play Analysis

In the process of searching through Taylor's plays, the decision was made to focus on domestic dramas, placing aside material such as extravaganzas and farces. Taylor did write several popular comedies, such as Our American Cousin and To Oblige Benson; however, these were also set aside because they lacked developments significant in the area of realistic social drama. In addition, several of Taylor's domestic dramas were written in collaboration with other playwrights, such as Charles Reade and Augustus Doubourg. These collaborations were not analyzed because of the difficulty of separating specific contributions by each playwright.

Not all of the remaining plays show evidence of Taylor's utilizing techniques different from the usual theatre offerings of the Victorian period. However, the ones used in this study, drawn from the length of his playwriting career, do contain specific elements important to the development of modern drama in their deviations from the melodramatic framework.

One of Taylor's most influential plays came early in his career. Still Waters Run Deep was first produced on

May 14, 1855, at the Olympic Theatre. It was a dramatization of Charles Bernard's novelette Le Gendre, and according to Tolles, ". . . it proved an excellent study of domestic relations, artfully constructed and having many qualities destined to win popular approval."²⁵ These qualities appeared primarily in the areas of character study and theme.

The play's title describes the main character, John Mildmay, introduced as a humble personage in his own home, and considered by his wife Emily and her aunt Mrs. Sternhold as a fixture not worth acknowledging:

Mrs. Mildmay. . . . Now, aunt, what could be worse than a husband without the least spirit, life, enthusiasm - not enough to keep him awake, even through a sonata of Beethoven!

Mrs. Sternhold. Pooh, pooh, child, what do you know about it. It is quite true Mr. Mildmay is dull - stupid if you like - but then, remember, he has none of those ridiculous pretensions, which most men set up, to a will of his own. That is the great point. You can do what you like with him, if you'll only take the trouble.

Seeking more excitement, Emily flirts with Captain Hawksley, a frequent visitor at the Mildmay home. Hawksley's primary interest, however, is Emily's dowry, £1,000 of which he has persuaded Potter, Emily's father, to invest in Hawksley's Galvanic Navigation Company.

Mrs. Sternhold, once on very intimate terms with the captain, has been encouraging her brother to persuade

Mildmay to invest. But through hints dropped by her brother and by her own observations, she becomes aware that she is about to be replaced in the captain's affections by her niece. By confronting Hawksley and threatening to discourage Mildmay's investing, Mrs. Sternhold puts herself in a position to be blackmailed by the captain, who has thirteen incriminating love letters, which he threatens to expose to the world. Mildmay overhears the threat and decides to drop his humble posture.

In the second act Mildmay appears at Hawksley's office, armed with the stock bought from Potter and incriminating evidence from Hawksley's past. Threatened with exposure, Hawksley buys back the stock and gives Mildmay the letters. However, having done that, he regains his courage and challenges Mildmay to a duel. Mildmay refuses, and the act ends with Hawksley promising revenge.

The final act takes place at the Mildmay home. Mildmay returns the letters to Mrs. Sternhold, advising her that he is once again the head of that household and firmly telling his wife the same. He then awaits Hawksley's arrival at a dinner party by discussing with a police officer further evidence from Hawksley's past. Before the guests go in to dine, Hawksley again challenges Mildmay to a duel. However, the captain backs down when Mildmay chooses as weapons dueling pistols, one loaded, one unloaded, with

each man selecting one and both firing at the same time. Before Hawksley can leave, he is arrested on the additional evidence and the play ends with the main characters going in to dine.

The basic plot itself is devoid of any major scenes of spectacle, and Taylor has effectively kept the action within two settings, without extraneous incidents. The importance of the piece, however, lies with Taylor's treatment of the traditional character types. He has avoided the instant character identification which Booth associates with melodrama and has blurred the distinctive qualities of hero and heroine.

Booth determined that by its very nature melodrama demanded "superficial instant characters" recognizable at an early point in the play. Yet Taylor delayed audience recognition of any characteristics which would label Mildmay as a hero. And although Emily is presented as a virtuous wife who almost gets trapped by her flirtation, it is not Mrs. Mildmay but her aunt who takes on some characteristics of the suffering heroine. Mrs. Sternhold has put herself into the position of being blackmailed by her old lover Captain Hawksley and, unable to get the best of him, she becomes a heroine in search of a hero. She turns to Mildmay, who salvages Mrs. Sternhold's reputation, not through physical spectacle, but by quiet behind-the-scenes manipulation.

There are no distinct characteristics of hero or heroine that can be used to classify these two characters. They emerge as being in conflict with each other and join hands only in the common goal of eliminating Hawksley. In fact, Mildmay's motivation for taking action is to resume control of his home, a motivation he succinctly presents to Mrs. Sternhold:

Mildmay. I'm a man - and not the automaton, as you've always considered me. . . . We must have an explanation - and this is the time for it. I'm neither a hero nor a conjuror, but I'm a straight-forward man. . . . When I married your niece, I looked forward to a quiet life, with a woman I love in my own undemonstrative way, and who, I thought, would love me - and so she would have done, but for you. . . . She was brought up to think you infallible. Had you treated me with respect and consideration, she would have done so too. You thought proper to ridicule and despise me, and she followed your lead. . . . For ten months I've tried what patience, indulgence, and submission would do - that plan has been a failure. From this hour I change my tactics. . . . From this day forth, remember, there's only one master in this house, and his name is John Mildmay.

Tolles notes about this play that "the piece contains distinct characterizations which avoid caricature."²⁶ The hero is a long-suffering individual who turns against his oppressors, including his own wife. The heroine obtains a gradual appreciation of the hero's strengths, and the suave villain is deftly put away without violence. But besides being noted for its avoidance of caricature, Still

Waters Run Deep has also been referred to as a problem play, something Tolles considered unusual on the Victorian theatre circuit:

The play also stimulates a certain amount of thought from the reader, something most Victorian plays fail to do. The action centers in the problem of a husband's behavior when he sees his wife drifting toward infidelity. This situation contains the elements necessary for a "problem play," and Taylor offers a concrete, if not very profound, solution.²⁷

In his analysis of the Victorian theatre and this play, Nicoll focuses on the same important aspect in the area of thought content:

Still Waters Run Deep introduces us to what was perhaps Taylor's greatest contribution to the theatre of the time. . . . In this play the most important thing is not the plot or the technique; it is the frankness with which the affairs of sex are discussed . . . the admission that illicit love was a fact of life. The scene in which Mrs. Sternhold confronts Hawksley may be lacking in vigour and intellectual honesty if we view it from our position in the twentieth century, but for its own age it marks a very deliberate break with convention. The way is being prepared for the dramas of the last decade of the century; the scope of the domestic play is being extended to include subjects and characters which before were taboo.²⁸

Thus, by withholding instant identification of character roles, by blurring traditional character types, and by offering a contemporary issue for audience consideration, Taylor began displaying in the early part of his career elements predictive of later realism. Booth cites these elements in their importance of bridging melodrama to social drama:

[The general character] outlines remain the same for over a century. When they become blurredred, and when the sharp divisions of morality are no longer observed, melodrama disappears as a separate form.²⁹

The appearance of some of these same elements in Retribution, which was produced a year after Still Waters Run Deep, demonstrates some consistency in Taylor's techniques.

Retribution, an adaptation of another novel by Charles Bernard entitled La Peine du Talion, was first presented May 12, 1856, at the Olympic Theatre. The initial action takes place during a party in the salon of a French hostess, Madame de Pommenars. Among her guests are the principal characters Oscar de Beaupre, his wife Clarisse, and Monsieur Morisset. The focus of the conversation is the absent Count Priuli, a man of mysterious background, and the mention of whose name causes great consternation in Clarisse, who made his acquaintance while riding in the park.

Priuli himself appears at the party, and in a private moment relays information to Clarisse concerning her husband, who had just left to share a box at the opera with Morisset's wife. Seeking confirmation of her husband's possible infidelity, Clarisse sends a devoted young man, Victor de Mornac, to the opera. He returns, substantiating Priuli's alligations. Priuli then proposes meeting Clarisse in order to give her more proof. In the meantime, Victor has approached Priuli, recognizing him as his brother Rodolphe. Priuli stops Victor before the rest of the guests notice the recognition.

The second act is in Priuli's rooms, and there, through question and answer between Victor and his brother, exposition unfolds to reveal Priuli's true purpose. The audience discovers that Priuli's real name is Rodolphe, and that he had been a French naval officer on duty for two years. When he returned home to Toulon, he found his wife dying, holding evidence that she had been seduced by Oscar de Beaupre. Rodolphe donned the disguise of Count Priuli and resolved to get even with de Beaupre "wife for wife."

At this point Victor confesses his own love for Clarisse, and resolves not to let her be used as a pawn in the count's vengeance. In the third act he visits Clarisse to warn her of Priuli, and when interrupted and insulted by her husband, Victor challenges him to a duel. Later, the count himself comes to Clarisse, with more documentation of her husband's unfaithfulness.

In the fourth and final act, the tale of vengeance is brought to a close in Priuli's apartment. Clarisse has brought him a letter she had received from Victor, hinting of the count's intentions and Victor's own duel. She is forced to hide in the closet when de Beaupre enters, bearing Victor's body. This brings about Priuli's exposure and de Beaupre recognizes him as the husband of the lady who died at Toulon. De Beaupre is killed in the ensuing sword fight, but Priuli's glory in vengeance is tempered by his brother's death.

In Booth's definition of melodrama, part of the established framework was that plot action was more important than either character development or thought. Although Retribution does contain some strong action scenes, such as the sword fight, Taylor selected material for adaptation which would at least allow him to develop character simultaneously with plot, rather than have plot the all-encompassing attraction. Thus Taylor presents an intertwining of dramatic elements in Retribution. He has the characters unfold as the plot develops, and while the audience is hearing exposition or proposed action on the part of the characters, the theatre-goers are also receiving clues to the character's personality and relationship to other characters. The molding together of these elements demonstrates an advancement over the melodramatist who completely subordinates character development and thought to the plot line.

An example of Taylor's technique is when the plot element of exposition is used to reveal character relationships rather than have the instant stage recognition typical of melodrama. In the first act a minor character, Madame de Pommenars, is adept at seeking out reasons for Clarisse's discomfort at the mention of the count's name. She sets herself up as the court inquisitor, and the answers she gets from Clarisse prepare the audience for Clarisse's reaction when the count enters the room later. In another

example, the relationship between Clarisse and her husband is established, ironically, in conversation between de Beaupre and Count Priuli himself. De Beaupre refers to marriage as a "lottery, in which to find a fortune." This prepares the audience for de Beaupre's infidelity with Morisset's wife and establishes credibility for the story Priuli tells his brother Victor.

Another aspect of Oscar de Beaupre's character unfolds simultaneously with plot development when he confides to Count Priuli the prearranged signal between himself and Morisset's wife. She makes her husband wear certain pieces of jewelry to indicate rendezvous points. De Beaupre concludes with the point, "The knowing hand never contends with the enemy - he uses him." This play on words signals an insight into de Beaupre's character as well as foreshadows how the count plans to implement his revenge.

Through these devices of foreshadowing and audience preparation, Taylor subtly advances the plot rather than have it jump from climax to climax. The character roles are also subtly developed, with Taylor using a technique similar to that used in Still Waters Run Deep. He blurs the distinctive characteristics of villain, hero and heroine, thus creating room for gradual character development rather than instant character types.

The count's mysterious background is fully established prior to his entrance and hints of his masquerade are dropped by numerous minor characters. When Victor inadvertently

calls him "brother," the audience is allowed to go "aha," and may have a tendency to label the count a villain in relation to his persistent pursuit of Clarisse. But Taylor has blurred the distinctive character traits of the villain by showing the count is sincere in his attitude toward Clarisse and by presenting genuine warmth between the count and his brother. More importantly, Taylor presents within the exposition between Priuli and his brother a sympathetic and justifiable motivation for Priuli's revenge. This brother-to-brother confrontation is also important because it brings sympathy to the count and it helps cast doubt as to who the real villain is, Count Priuli or de Beaupre, whose own reputation has cast him in a villainous light.

Since there is no clear-cut villain in Retribution, Taylor has successfully blurred that particular character type. In addition, he develops both men by giving them varying depths of a revenge motive and by having them struggle with a decision-making process. Both of these techniques demonstrate character depth beyond stereotypical bent attitudes of melodrama.

The revenge motive was established early in the play in a conversation between de Beaupre and Count Priuli. De Beaupre is admitting he is after Morisset's wife in retaliation for being denied a loan by Morisset. In an effective play on words, both characters establish the groundwork for their later relationship:

- Count. Revenge justifies everything.
- Oscar. A most orthodox Italian sentiment, and delivered like a stiletto thrust. But I'm satisfied with our Parisian style of retaliation.
- Count. We pierce the husband's heart - you break the wife's. If I were to found a school of revenge, I should combine the two.

After the count has narrated the discovery of his wife dying at Toulon, the audience sees him struggling with his decision to seek revenge, particularly since he recognizes his growing affection toward Clarisse.

- Victor. She loves you, and you would destroy her? You avow it coolly, as if there were nothing base or unmanly in the deed. Brother, it is a coward's act; you shall not do it.
- Count. Can you paint my conduct in blacker colors than I have put it to myself, over and over again? There are moments when I hesitate; but then that death bed rises to my memory, and my heart is turned to stone.

Oscar de Beaupre is painted as the villain of Priuli's story and de Beaupre's behavior toward his own wife supports that, yet he also shows the audience moments of hesitation and even a lenient side. In de Beaupre's soliloquy, he realizes he need not be jealous of Victor with Clarisse, and he worries about his reputation if he harms Victor, a mere "school boy." When faced with his thoughts before he fights Priuli, de Beaupre shows an understanding for the count's quest for revenge.

Oscar. . . . His debt is a heavy one - it
 needed not eight months' interest!
 I would not lift my hand against him -
 I dare not - but how to avoid it! No!
 Come what may he shall not see me shrink.

But the actual duel, although occurring in the last few moments of the play, does not end the character development. When Booth discusses the villain character type in English Melodrama, he makes the following observation:

Conscience is not common in villains, except in Gothic melodrama and even there it is ruthlessly repressed. When it breaks out, it is grappled with and subdued in a soliloquy that is the high point of a villain's speech.³⁰

Given that the count comes closest to being a model of the melodramatic villain, Taylor provides depth to his characterization with his final action in the play. In plotting his revenge, the count had made it look like Clarisse had been unfaithful to de Beaupre. As her husband lies dying in her arms, she appeals to the count for mercy:

Oscar. My wife!

Clarisse. But guiltless! (To Rodolphe [Count]) Do not let him die and think me guilty! For my sake - for his - for the eternal truths!

Count. Did he spare her?

Clarisse. Oh have you no mercy! One word - oh, tell him that I never sinned.

The count complies with her request because of his own brother's death. Victor fought to save Clarisse's name;

Priuli cannot condemn it. Although achieving the death of Oscar de Beaupre, Count Priuli, contrary to the typical villain character, is unable to subdue his conscience:

Count. [following Oscar's and Victor's deaths] And for this I have dared usurp Heaven's work of retribution! His blood and Victor's are both upon my head! I have sowed the wind, and round me lies the whirlwind's harvest.

The intended moral of the ending is obvious, but Taylor chose a story which does not contain a definite choice between black and white, as was so typical of most domestic dramas of the period. The primary reason can be tied back to character depth through motivation. The count weaves a story around the discovery of his dying wife which convinces his brother as well as the audience that de Beaupre deserves what is in store for him. The wrongness of the act is somehow tempered by the depth of motivation. As noted in the Times review:

The impression left at the end of the piece was somewhat equivocal. . . . When the excitement of the third act had passed away, the more fastidious among the audience began to feel uneasy in the very peculiar moral atmosphere that enveloped the whole affair. . . .³¹

Retribution is an example of Taylor's selecting fairly early in his career material which would allow him to develop character and thought in lieu of spectacle. Another of Taylor's plays which allows him to achieve the

same purpose is The House or the Home, presented at the Adelphi Theatre on May 16, 1859. The conflict in this play revolves around a man's duties to the legislature versus his duties to his wife.

The main character, Chetwynd, is of rising importance in the House of Commons, but unfortunately he has had to sacrifice time at home with his young wife, Lady Helen. Frederic Warder, a youth in the Government offices and companion to Lady Helen during their childhood, is taking advantage of Chetwynd's absence to pursue Lady Helen and convince her of the mistake she made in marrying the elderly statesman. Mrs. Warder becomes involved with all the characters as Chetwynd's former admirer, as Lady Helen's substitute mother and friend, and as Frederic's real mother. She uses circumstantial evidence to deduce that Frederic turned down an office of foreign appointment because he is in love with Lady Helen, and when efforts to cover up her son's pursuit of Lady Helen fail, Mrs. Warder confronts Chetwynd with his inattentive behavior as a husband.

Again Taylor chose a French model, the play Pirils dans la Demeure, from which to create The House or the Home. But his skill at anglicizing the setting and characters allowed the Times reviewer to call it original:

In the outline of the story something of the Parisian may be observed, but the filling group completely depicts that English society in which

Government officials of the more fashionable kind generally figure. The description of Frederic, as a modern exquisite, whose highest philosophy is indifference, who is a Chesterfield, without his elegance; a Rochefoucault, without his wit, is, for instance, as good a bit of portraiture as was ever inspired by a knowledge of Parliament-street and Pall-mall. The practice of adapting from the French becomes a nuisance when it is used to foist upon us a view of the Boulevards for an accurate picture of Cheapside; but if the collisions contrived on the other side of the Channel are so used as Mr. Taylor has used those of Pirils dans la Demeure there is no reason to complain of want of originality. This piece is quite original enough for all practical purposes.³²

The primary reason for the inclusion of The House or the Home in this study is that it shows Taylor's having completed the step in subordinating plot action to character and thought development. The Times critic commented on the strength of these last two elements:

The piece depends so much more on the exposition of the characters and the moral relations in which they stand to each other, than on details of action, that we have refrained from giving those links of the story by means of which the different stages of exposition are connected. It is not the complexity of its intrigue, but the careful delineation of the personages, the elaborate finish of the dialogue, and the healthy moral both of tone and purpose that render the work attractive.³³

Evidently the "attractiveness" of the piece was not enough to keep it long on the Adelphi's program, and Tolles attributes its short run to its "relative lack of action."³⁴ This time Taylor may have selected material which

the "crowds" in the Victorian audience were not yet ready to accept, but this should not detract from the evidence in the piece reflecting his techniques of character development.

As in previous plays, Taylor avoids the melodramatic technique of instant identification of character types. He presents only one or two characters at a time, placing them in scenes composed primarily of dialogue, with little if any physical action. He has created a domestic drama in which none of the characters have those distinctive qualities which would immediately label them as "hero" or "heroine." Avoiding that type of characterization allows Taylor to develop each character and character relationship gradually through exposition and discoveries.

Relationships are subtly established through conversation rarely involving more than two characters at a time. For example, in the first three pages of the script, conversation between Frederic and the General, a family friend, hints of a past relationship between Chetwynd and Mrs. Warder, a relationship which parallels that of her son and Chetwynd's wife:

Frederic. Oh, I don't care for Chetwynd. He's a great friend of my mother's.

General. So great a friend that he might have been your father if he hadn't been blind.

The last line hints at the relationship Mrs. Warder had with Chetwynd before either was married, and that relationship is important enough to provide the audience with a satisfactory

motivation for Mrs. Warder's concern for her son's infatuation with Lady Helen. At the same time, it lends a small amount of pathos for Mrs. Warder, which is reinforced in later dialogue between her and Chetwynd.

It is this kind of character development Taylor has time for once the main focus on plot action is set aside. There is no spectacle in the plot line which detracts from the character relationships. It is for that reason, as well as for its presentation of an issue of responsibility among characters familiar to an English audience, that the play shows an advancement which, as evidenced by the play's short run, the Victorian audience was not yet ready to assimilate.

The Fool's Revenge, presented October 18, 1859, at Sadler Wells Theatre, is very different from The House or the Home both in subject matter and setting, yet the realism in exposition, motivation and character development offer vast amounts of evidence of Taylor's belief that serious drama should be performed on the English stage.

The appearance of The Fool's Revenge caused so much controversy in terms of its right to be called "an original work" that Taylor was prompted to write a preface to the script defending the extent of changes from the original work, Le Roi s'Amuse, written some thirty years earlier by Victor Hugo. In actual comparison of the two plays, there are few similarities, and study can show Taylor's intent

to use only the essence of Hugo's revenge motif [See Appendix] . The preface also shows the importance Taylor placed on giving characters depth of motivation and decision-making to add to the realism of the play's situation:

On looking at Victor Hugo's drama . . . I found so much in it that seemed to me inadmissible on our stage - so much, besides, that was wanting in dramatic motive and cohesion, and, - I say it in all humility - so much that was defective in that central secret of stage effect, climax, that I determined to take the situation of the jester and his daughter, and to recast in my own way the incidents in which their story was invested.³⁵

The setting of the story is the court of the Lord of Faenza in the fifteenth century. Bertuccio, the court jester, was severely wronged in his youth by the death of his wife at the hands of a court noble, Lord Malatesta. In revenge, Bertuccio has urged the Duke Manfredi to kidnap Malatesta's young wife. Bertuccio's daughter, the one object he cherishes, only recently returned from being raised in a convent, and Bertuccio covertly confines her in his quarters, thinking her safe from the court society. Unfortunately, one of the court lords spies her on her way home from vespers, and, thinking her to be Bertuccio's mistress, urges the Duke to kidnap her as a just response to Bertuccio's constant insults.

Hoping to help Bertuccio's daughter escape, a young poet urges her to seek refuge with Malatesta. Malatesta

puts the young lady in his absent wife's apartments, from whence she is kidnapped by the Duke and his men, assisted by Bertuccio.

At the court Bertuccio gloats over Malatesta's supposed loss. Meanwhile, the Duchess of Manfredi arrives, jealous over her husband's escapade, and poisons two cups of wine destined for the Duke's apartments. Upon learning the true identity of the Duke's captive, Bertuccio is distraught at the possible consequences. But fate intervenes, and the Duke drinks the poisoned wine while Bertuccio's daughter sips nothing.

In discussing The Fool's Revenge, Tolles comments that "the clever twists of a 'well-made' play formula keep interest at a high pitch. Throughout, dramatic irony is effectively employed."³⁶ The cause-to-effect buildup to the single climax prompted the Times reviewer to note that "the incidents follow sharply upon each other, and the interest increases to the end, not being weakened even by the ultimate happiness of the principal personages. . . ." ³⁷

Rather than have the plot line jump from climax to comic relief to startling discoveries, Taylor effectively allows the plot to develop and grow, preparing the audience for the probability of each action. One method used to do this is to combine the characters in a common motivation of revenge in Act I. This motive creates some basic conflicts among the characters - the Duchess against Lady

Malatesta and the Duke; the lords of the court, Torelli, Ordelaaffi and Ascolti, against Bertuccio; and Bertuccio against Lord Malatesta. Unusual partnerships are also created based on this mutual motivation. For example, the Duchess Francesco seeks out Bertuccio to spy on the Duke:

Francesco. Men call you faithless, bitter, loving
wrong
For Wrong's sake, Duke Manfredi's worst
councillor,
Still prompting him to evil. . . .
.....
I know you're private with my lord.

Bertuccio. He trusts me!

[The Duchess gives Bertuccio her ring to seal his
letters to her]

Francesco. Mark! write not on suspicion,
Let evil thought ripen to evil act,
That in the full flush of their guilty
joys
I may strike sudden, and strike home.
No Bentivoglio pardons. . . . Give me my
vengeance. Then come what may. (Exit)

Bertuccio. (looking at ring) A blood-stone - apt
reminder!
Does she think
That none but she have wrongs? That none
but she
Mean to revenge them? What? "No Bentivoglio
Pardons." There is a certain vile Bertuccio
A twisted, withered, hunch-backed, court
buffoon -
A thing to make mirth, and to be made
mirth of -
A something betwixt ape and man, that claims
To run in couples with your ladyship.
You hunt Manfredi - I hunt Malatesta -
Let's try which of the two has sharper
fangs!

The lords are also bound together in a common goal of vengeance against Bertuccio:

Ordelaffi. Giving Devil. I shall thrust
My dagger down his throat one of these days!

Torelli. Call him a jester; he laughs vitriol!

Ascolti. Spares nothing; cracks his random scurril
quips
Upon my master - great Lorenzo's self.

Ordelaffi. Do the knave justice, he's a king of
tongue-fence!
Not a weak joint in all his armour's round
But he knows, and can hit. Confound the
rogue!
I'm blistered still from a word-basting he
Gave me but yesterday. Would we were quits!

Because of the dialogue between these characters in Act I, the audience is prepared for the counterplot by the lords against Bertuccio and for the Duchess' reappearance in the last act to poison the Duke. The twists of plot around Bertuccio's aiding the abduction of his own daughter help maintain the dramatic excitement. Evidence of Taylor's applying Scribe's "well-made" play formula appears throughout the play. But rather than have all-encompassing action dominate the play, leaving characters which are "little more than established types," Taylor makes room within the formula for character development.

Taylor, in his defense of the play's originality, cites the need for character motivation. In viewing Hugo's play, he found it wanting in dramatic motive and cohesion:

The motives of Bertuccio, the machinery by which his revenge is diverted from its intended channel, and the action in the court subsequent to the carrying off of his daughter, are my own, and I conceive that these features give me the fullest right to call "The Fool's Revenge" a new play. . . .³⁸

Taylor's ability to effectively supply that dramatic motivation needs to be evaluated by examining closely Bertuccio's single drive for revenge.

From the very beginning Bertuccio's need to avenge his wife's death is obvious, and his anger has caused him to view himself as ". . . vile / A twisted, withered, hunch-backed, court buffoon . . . / Something betwixt ape and man. . . . "

The main character's drive for revenge is an area where Taylor made what he felt was an improvement over Hugo's main character's motivation. The actions of Hugo's jester were a result of his general hatred for all men born normal and whole. In order to gain more depth and pathos for Bertuccio, Taylor takes the generalized hatred and focuses it on one reason, the needless death of Bertuccio's wife. Indeed, his quest has actually put him on equal ground with the body-perfect lords of the court, as evidenced in Bertuccio's soliloquy at the end of Act I:

Bertuccio. Take my curse among you -
 Fair, false, big, brainless, outside
 shows of men,

For once your gibes and jeers fall
 pointless from me!
 My great revenge is nigh, and drowns
 all sense.
 I am straight, and fair, and well-shaped
 as yourselves,
 Vengeance swells out my veins, and lifts
 my head.
 And makes me terrible! - Come, sweet
 tomorrow,
 And put my enemy's heart into my hand
 That I may gnaw it!

The imagery of revenge as capable of eating and devouring is also established and is important to the image of Bertuccio at the end, where the vengeance has devoured him from the inside out.

However, if Taylor shows only one side of Bertuccio, filled with hate and malice, the playwright would only create a character type, a melodramatic villain. In order to give him depth, another side must be presented, and Taylor uses Bertuccio's daughter, Fiordilisa, to do this.

In conversations with her nurse Brigetta, Fiordilisa describes the man she knows as her father as kind and gentle, and she is completely ignorant of his role as court jester. In Bertuccio's relationship with his daughter, the jester presents a side the court would never be allowed to see, but one that is necessary for the audience to witness in order to understand the later conflict within Bertuccio:

Bertuccio.

In this house I am thy father;
 Out of it, what I am boots not to say;
 Hated, perhaps - or envied - feared, I
 hope,

By many - scorned by more - and loved
 by none.
 In this one innocent corner of the world
 I would but be to thee a father - something
 August, and sacred!

The two sides come to a visible struggle when Fiordilisa tells her father of the kindness shown to her by the Lady Malatesta. Bertuccio is thankful for his daughter's rescue, yet the name Malatesta incites memories of his wife's death and his goal of vengeance against the house of Malatesta.

Taylor is using the same device there as he used in Retribution to add depth to a character who may otherwise be classed as a villain. The playwright allows the vengeance to be justified in the audience's minds. The description of the death of Fiordilisa's mother somehow lends justification for the evil intentions within Bertuccio:

Bertuccio.

A devil came
 Across our quiet life, and marked her
 beauty,
 And lusted for her; and when she scorned
 his offers,
 Because he was a noble - great and strong -
 He bore her from my side - by force -
 and after
 I never saw her more: they brought me news
 That she was dead! . . . And I was mad
 For years and years, and when my wits
 came back -
 If e'er they came - they brought one
 haunting purpose
 That since has shaped my life - to have
 revenge!
 Revenge upon the wronger and his order!
 Revenge in kind; to quit him - wife for
 wife!

True to Booth's description of a villain's conscience, that it is "grappled with and subdued in a soliloquy that is the high point of a villain's speech," Taylor allows Bertuccio to struggle with his conscience in a soliloquy beneath the balcony at Malatesta's home. The difference lies at the end of Bertuccio's speech, where he leaves the impression that this is a one-time act of evil, and that his basic characterization is not that of villain:

Bertuccio. I had need to whet the memory of my wrong,
 Or my girl's angel face, and innocent
 tongue
 Had shaken even my steadfastness of purpose!
 And Malatesta's wife has done her kindness -
 I would she had not! But that's such
 slight service
 To my huge wrong? Let me but think of that!
 I grow too human near my child. I lack
 The sharp sting of court scorn to spur
 the sides
 Of my intent! With her I'm free to weep -
 With them I still must laugh -
 . . . Oh, courtly sirs!
 Sweet-spoken, stalwart gallants! If you
 knew
 The hate that rankles underneath my
 motley!
 The scorn that backs my wit - the bitterness
 That grins behind my laughter - you would
 start,
 And shudder o'er your cups, and cross
 yourselves
 As if the devil were in your company!
 Once my revenge achieved, I'll spurn
 my chain -
 Fool it no more - but give what's left
 of life
 To thought of her I've lost, and love
 of her
 That yet is left me.

In a vision of dramatic irony, after the concealed Fiordilisa is taken away by the Duke and his men, Bertuccio

calls vengeance done, not knowing the curse lies upon
himself;

Bertuccio. Now, Malatesta
Learn what it is to wake, and find her gone,
That was the joy and pride of your dim
eyes -
The comfort of your age! I welcome you
To the blank hearth - the hunger of the
soul -
The long dark days, and miserable nights!
These you gave me - I give them back to you!

And later, Bertuccio unknowingly condemns his own daughter to death as he convinces the Duchess to poison both cups, not just the Duke's.

To increase pathos, build the emotional climax to Bertuccio's discovery, and create suffering in Bertuccio's character, Taylor utilizes a scene between the jester and the court lords that is filled with dramatic and verbal irony, considering they are outside the Duke's bedroom chamber, deliberating on what is going on inside:

Bertuccio. . . . But tell me,
How will the lady relish o'er her wine,
The cut-throat faces that she saw last
night?
Methinks, 'twill mar her appetite.

Ascolti. Be sure
She will not look so scared at us,
As thou would's't at the sight of her.

Bertuccio. . . . But, pr'ythee, Ordelaffi,
How looked she in her night-rail?

Ordelaffi. Would's't believe it?
Methought she had a something of thy favor;
As, if so crook'd a thing could have a
 daughter,
Thy daughter might have had.
 (All laugh - Bertuccio starts)

Tolles summarizes the effects of The Fool's Revenge in his study of Taylor:

As exciting entertainment, as a vehicle for the display of histrionic ability by an emotional actor, and as a piece of deft craftsmanship The Fool's Revenge must certainly be judged a success. From the point of view of stage effectiveness it outranks almost any other English verse play of the nineteenth century. . . .³⁹

Four years after the successful run of The Fool's Revenge, Taylor presented another play containing considerable evidence of realistic social drama. The Ticket-of-Leave Man was first performed at the Olympic Theatre May 27, 1863. The reviewer of The Times then, and historians since, have elevated the play above the usual Victorian theatre offerings not so much in uniqueness of plot, but rather in the introduction of new character types and a theme that deals with a very contemporary issue.

The play revolves around the return to society of an ex-convict, Bob Brierly. The first act, which takes place in an innovative crowd scene at a restaurant, acts as a prologue to show how the main character was set up by two criminals to pass counterfeit money. The passage of the notes by Brierly caused Detective Hawkshaw to arrest all three, but the other two escaped, leaving Brierly to face trial and prison.

The second act begins four years later in the apartment of May Edwards, whom Brierly befriended at the play's

beginning, and who has been corresponding with him during his prison term. Brierly enters, bearing his "ticket-of-leave" and determined to begin a new life. He starts by anonymously returning money lost by May's landlady, Mrs. Willoughby, who had been the storeowner when Brierly dropped the counterfeit bills.

In the third act, Bob is a messenger at a bank-house. Hawkshaw enters and even though he recognizes Brierly, decides not to expose his past to his employer, knowing that doing so would cause his being fired. However, another customer, one of the original criminals who caused Bob's problems, is not as kind, and Bob is forced to quit.

To gain Brierly's help in robbing the bank-house, the two criminals continue to thwart his efforts at honest employment. But Hawkshaw discovers their plans, and with Bob's help the criminals are apprehended.

The Times review notes several plot elements routinely used by playwrights of that period:

There is no doubt that the plot of The Ticket-of-Leave Man and the machinery employed for its development are completely of the kind that is usually considered transpontine. Forged notes are circulated in the least romantic way; the agency of the detective police is visible through the whole course of the story; the handcuff is rarely out of sight; burglary is committed with the most prosaic reality; unpleasant and prominent above all is the "ticket of leave," that stern unpleasant fact of modern times, which absolutely refuses all ideal treatment. For many years expedients like these have delighted the audiences on the Surrey side of the water, who have long lost their relish for fanciful robbers in Spanish boots; but they are in a great measure new to central London.⁴⁰

Although enumerating familiar plot devices, the critic continues his comments by pointing out Taylor's ability with his characterization:

Let us hasten to remark that Mr. Tom Taylor never gave a more striking instance of his dramatic skill than in his employment of these very hazardous means. While his outline and his main incidents are clearly of the transpontine kind, he has connected his scenes and marked out his characters with all the ability and tact of a refined artist; and though of necessity many of his personages utter a great deal of vulgar talk, it is obvious throughout that the dialogue avoided that maudlin sentimentality, that inflated bombast, which really vulgar writers often employ to elevate a homely subject.⁴¹

Although the plot line uses many of the dramatic elements of melodrama, Taylor does present some innovative techniques in characterization. He chooses to change stock characters by introducing new character types and placing more importance on the role of the minor characters.

The new characters are Taylor's attempt to achieve more realism within the melodramatic structure. Hawkshaw was the first detective presented as a main character on the stage, and Bob Brierly, an ex-convict, represented an English social type usually portrayed as a villain. Taylor continues to blur other distinctive features in that, again, there is no specific suffering heroine. May Edwards, whom the convict Brierly befriends and eventually marries, actually saves herself from a life of poverty by becoming employed as a seamstress. Brierly himself seems the object

of the villain-criminals Dalton and Moss as they interfere with his every attempt to gain honest employment, eventually gaining his aid to rob the bank-house. Although with detective Hawkshaw's aid he tries to upset their plans, it is a minor character, a fifteen-year-old boy named Sam, who actually accosts the villains and saves the day.

The character of Sam is an example of Taylor's ability to give more warmth and depth to the drama by developing previously comic types into more realistic people. Because of his grandmother's insistent bewailing of his bad habits, the audience believes that they are thoroughly familiar with Sam before his actual appearance. Expecting a real delinquent, however, they are surprised to find warmth in his teasing of his grandmother:

May. Sam, I'm surprised you should take pleasure in making your grandmother unhappy!

Sam. I don't take pleasure - she won't let me; she's always a naggin' and aggravatin' me. Here, dry your eyes, granny (Goes to her) - and I'll be a good boy, and I won't go after the rats, and I won't aggravate old Miggles bullfinches.

Mrs. Willoughby. There, that's just him - always some of his impertinent audacious chaff - I know he gets it from that Young Miggles - ready to stop his poor granny's mouth with.

Sam. No. (kisses her). That's the only way to stop it.

Throughout the play, Sam is presented in more depth than most comic characters - at one point he is a youth eager to make money on the betting game and the next

moment he becomes a young man anxious to aid the hero and protect his grandmother. Taylor is experimenting with the expected behavior of a minor character, making one more rigid element of melodrama flexible and realistic.

Although plot elements and changes in characterization in The Ticket-of-Leave Man are worthy of attention, its subject matter was such that it caught the awareness of the Times reviewer then and of historians since. The reviewer opened his article on May 29, 1863, predicting that the play "will very likely cause change in the class of entertainment presented to the patrons of the more fashionable theatres."

The Olympic Theatre has so long been associated with light comedies of the genteel kind, and with those representations of humble life in which even the vicissitudes of the poor wear a picturesque appearance, that the productions on its boards of a piece that by the most palpable means appeals to the sympathies of the masses is a sign that a belief in the efficiency of the purely comic and gracefully domestic is losing ground, and that a strong homely interest is deemed as suitable to a fashionable as to a plebeian public.⁴²

When Nicoll finished discussing the openness of the subject of Still Waters Run Deep, he began crediting The Ticket-of-Leave Man with the same breakthrough in "greater intimacy" and "application of the dramatist to contemporary material." He credited it as "one of the first melodramas to deal with the criminal life of London."⁴³ George Rowell supports this view in his introduction to the play:

. . . The Ticket-of-Leave Man tackles a theme of some social importance, the dilemma of the discharged prisoner, which Galsworthy was to take up half a century later in Justice, (1910). Taylor could not stretch the conventions of melodrama too far. . . . Nevertheless the play is closer in spirit than in time to the social drama of the twentieth century.⁴⁴

Thus, through development of new character types, such as the detective and criminal-hero, experimentation with minor characters, and a theme reflective of a contemporary issue, The Ticket-of-Leave Man helped establish Taylor's work as a bridge between melodrama and early attempts at social drama. As Nicoll puts it:

The play definitely marks a stage in the development of the nineteenth-century stage. It springs from the old melodrama; it borrows from the adaptations of Dickens' novels which had been and still were so popular; but, in spite of these things, it has a quality of its own which must induce us to rate Taylor as one of the more noteworthy dramatic authors of the century.⁴⁵

The Ticket-of-Leave Man is representative of many of Taylor's plays which seemed on the threshold of modern drama in characterization and thought, but the ties that held him to a crowd-pleasing melodramatic form were strong. Mary Warner is another play which comes very close to the world depicted several years later by Ibsen. On the surface it seems to meet the traditional definition of a domestic melodrama, but closer study reveals some issues and characterizations which, if they had been pushed to the limits, would have completed the bridge to realistic social drama.

Mary Warner was first presented at the Haymarket Theatre June 21, 1869, and was hailed by The Times as "the most effective piece that has proceeded from the pen of Mr. Tom Taylor since the days of the famous Ticket-of-Leave Man."⁴⁶ The plot, adapted from a novel, revolves around a young couple George and Mary Warner. Warner, an honest workman, is accused of stealing a sum of money from his employer. Bob Levitt, a fellow worker, actually committed the crime, but the circumstantial evidence against Warner is so overwhelming that even his wife believes he is guilty. However, she takes the blame and is sentenced to prison. Seeking consolation from her husband, Mary receives instead his accusations that she really had committed the crime, and she makes the decision not to return to Warner and their small daughter. Driven into poverty, Mary is again accused of theft, this time by George Warner himself, who is now a successful merchant. He recognizes her on the court docket, and labeling her guiltless, attempts to speak to her, but she flees. Meanwhile, Levitt has confessed his crime to his wife, and she brings Mary back to George's home, where Mary is reunited with her husband and child.

The plot of Mary Warner represents a drama devoid of the fleeing heroine, pursuing villain and rescuing hero. It met Booth's definition of domestic drama in its presentation of a "world filled with factory, slum, dirty,

crowded streets, hunger and cold," and it included the "happy ending, not encountered in ordinary life." But in analyzing the play beyond this definitive framework, one can locate in Taylor's characterization a line of thought more realistic in its implications than was usually presented in the Victorian theatre.

The focus is almost totally on the two main characters, George and Mary, and even more so on Mary than George. Because the money is stolen in the first moments of the play and the theft is witnessed by the audience, there is no mystery as to who stole it. The thief, Levitt, is not a major character, and he disappears after the theft, appearing infrequently throughout the rest of the play. Between the theft and Levitt's confession at the end of the play, the audience is left with a struggle between the two main characters as a result of a minor character's action. Any plot sensationalism or spectacle has almost totally yielded to character development.

The heroine of Mary Warner has made a strong decision in making the ultimate sacrifice for her husband's welfare and being ostracized for the deed. This would seem somewhat prophetic of the situation of Ibsen's Nora; however, Taylor's ties to the crowd are strong, and in this play a pathos-filled reunion occurs between Mary and George. But the prison scene in which Mary realizes George actually believes she is guilty is a catalyst for a decision-making process rarely seen on the Victorian stage:

- Mary. . . . I shall bear it all George, all the sorrow and the shame. I don't mean to blame you, dear.
- Warner. (looks up surprised) You blame me?
- Mary. How could I prevent doing as I did?
- Warner. Was the temptation so strong upon you?
- Mary. The temptation? (surprised - sadly) I don't repent what I have done. . . . It was to save you.
- Warner. To save me! Better that you had let me go down to ruin than be saved by that! (his tone and manner, like hers, becomes more and more animated with this out)
- Mary. Oh! I don't deserve this! (bitterly)
- Warner. Well, what can I say?
- Mary. I do not ask you to accuse yourself of the crime for which I suffer - no, no. I thought that you would feel for me, and would come to console me before this. Better you had not come at all, than to be coldly silent or to speak stern words.
- Warner. You speak of your suffering and shame! Don't I know what shame and sorrow is - as I sit, under the weight of it, in the cloud of that crime, in our desolate home, shutting out of my ears the cry of our child, for I hate to hear her ask the question which I must answer with a lie. If I had lost my wife, the pain would have been greater, though the grief were less profound.
- Mary. Oh! The hard-hearted cruelty of the man! I begged for a kind word of comfort, and was willing to suffer all the consequences of the guilt, and not by speech or sign to own it. . . . I can live without you henceforth! See if you can live without her who has been a good mother to your child and a wife more than true to your good name! Never come to see me again. Go home, George Warner, to the desolate fireside

that you have made desolate, which will never know me again - to the helpless child that you have made motherless, who will never see me again! (Voice trembles a little but becomes firm again quickly) It was you who put up these bars! You have this day set up a blacker separation between us - black as your unrelenting heart! strong and cold with the iron of your will - the barrier of an unrepentant spirit!

The reviewer for London's The Times also considered this scene worthy of special attention:

The scene in the prison, when in a subdued tone she almost implores her husband to cheer her with a kind word, is singularly beautiful, through the depth of sorrow expressed and the perfect nature of the expression. And throughout the piece the manner is homogeneous. The indignation felt by Mary at George's supposed contumely is mild in its intensity, and a resignation qualifies the almost despair with which she sits down to die at the door of her residence.⁴⁷

George retains his heroic qualities by forgiving Mary and accepting her back into the home. But in George's characterization, Taylor has again managed to blur those distinctive heroic qualities by delaying George's visit to the cell and allowing him to believe Mary was guilty. The critic reflects this in his review:

George Warner is not a kindly character, for, though his harshness is the result of a mistake, the sympathies of the audience are so decidedly on the side of his wife, that he can scarcely avoid the appearance of being a tyrannical oppressor.⁴⁸

So both main characters present a domestic couple on the level of the majority of audience members, making decisions in their marriage not heard on the stage before. The saving grace for the English audience is that Mary returns to husband and child. But the importance of this particular play lies in the glimpse of realism which comes through the conversation within the prison.

The plays by Taylor which have been analyzed up to this point have all offered evidence of the playwright deviating from the framework of melodrama in the areas of plot, characterization and thought as defined by various theatre historians. Among other domestic dramas reviewed for this study, however, several contain various elements which are worthy of notice, since they, too, offer some evidence of the way Taylor presented realism on the English stage.

Elements of that reality appeared with Sheep in Wolf's Clothing, produced at the Olympic on February 19, 1857. With this play Taylor adapted and thoroughly anglicized the French piece Une Femme qui deteste son Mari, which was being presented in literal translation at the Haymarket the same week that Sheep in Wolf's Clothing opened. The reviewer at The Times praised Taylor's adaptation: "Never probably was there an instance of a French piece more thoroughly 'done into English.'" ⁴⁹ But the importance of the play in relation to Taylor's writing is that it contains the beginnings of conflict of emotion within a main character.

The action focuses on an uprising in western England, and the heroine Anne Carew is hiding her husband Jasper, who has been branded as a traitor. To avert suspicion from her house, she has turned away her mother-in-law and her daughter, and has feigned a relationship with the captain of the occupying forces.

Taylor presents a heroine with suffering strength, decisive and sure in her actions, yet torn apart by the suspicions those actions put upon her by her loved ones. At one point, however, she seems to enjoy the challenge, which is uncharacteristic of the melodramatic heroine:

Anne. We poor, weak little women! There is some strength in us after all. Were it not for your danger, dear, I could almost enjoy my power over that mass of brute force and evil passions. I feel as a girl might, who had tamed a tiger to be her plaything, half expecting every instant that his purr may change to a roar.

The imagery of suffering is strong, however, when Anne is torn apart from her husband and daughter. Taylor manages to put aside an action-filled plot to allow room for development of that emotion between the two main characters:

Jasper. . . . It makes me mad, sometimes, to think I must not see her [his daughter] - to take her in my arms - never feel her sweet, soft hands round my neck, and her warm round cheek against mine, as I used to do. Oh, to be in the same town - almost in the same house with one's child, and to know

she thinks you dead, and not to dare
to leap out and take her to your heart.
By Heavens, it makes a man's blood boil!
Wife - there are times when I feel ready
to give up all - to leave my hiding - to
go out boldly and barefaced, and buy, with
life - if need be - one hearty, happy moment
in my child's innocent arms.

Anne. Jasper! Darling, shall I tell you of a
better suffering? To feel that your mother
believes me unworthy of her son's love -
untrue to his memory, and the cause he is
supposed to have died for; and that she
is trying to teach our Sibyl to think so
too. And yet, sooner than risk your life,
I am content to let your mother think thus
of me, and to live apart from our child.
You see dear, we have both our crosses.
Let us try and bear them patiently.

Although Taylor retains the male "hero" image by
allowing Jasper to come up with the ruse to escape, the
playwright stretches the melodramatic characteristics of
the heroine by having her show signs of the conflict within
her between the real and assumed character of the wife.
In this one-act, Taylor has presented a tight plot line,
but one that also has room for some blurring of the
traditional heroine outline.

Three other plays, all presented in 1865, also
evidence Taylor's going beyond the boundaries of melodrama
in some areas. Settling Day, subtitled "a story of the
time," is a realistic presentation of England's financial
world. Based on a real scandal in the stock-broker's
industry, Taylor's plot dramatizes the conflict of hiding
the scandal by additional devious means or exposing it .

and settling the affair honestly. The play has drawn the attention of theatre scholars because of its realistic detail of the stock-broker's office. The attention to detail may be attributed to the Olympic Theatre's reputation, but it is Taylor's dialogue and stage directions for two clerks which contribute to that detail:

Fermor. (reading from his list) Mr. Martin, three hundred Venezuelans for money, fifty confederates, forty Buenos Ayres sixes. (exit customer who was at lower pigeon-hole, having paid a cheque) Six hundred Spanish New Defferreds, for next account.

1st Clerk. (coming out with his hat on and with his note-book in which he has made the entry) Yes, sir.

Fermor. How are Buffalo and Lake Hurons?

2nd Clerk. Last business done at five, sir. (Fermor makes a note)

Fermor. We've an order for sixty when they touch four-three-eighths. (exit Client who was at upper pigeon-hole) Did you see Mr. Laxton in the house? . . . (enter a brother Broker who just shows his head at the door)

Broker. Got any money?

Fermor. How much?

Broker. Three - till tomorrow.

Fermor. Cheque, Mr. Martin. (Broker goes to lower pigeon-hole and waits till a cheque is handed out to him - Fermor takes it as he passes, reads and calls) Three fifteen! (enter a Client with stock receipts; Client passes up to lower pigeon-hole and waits till No. 1 gets cheque and exits, then puts in his receipt and waits)

Taylor not only presented to the audience a financial world few women at that time were allowed to see, but he also raised an issue in Victorian society few men would openly support. One character, Miss Hargrave, voices some sentiments about women and money which, on the surface, seem rather revolutionary by nineteenth century standards:

Miss Hargrave. (upon Harring's proposal) May not even happiness have its lessons? And what does it teach so much as distrust of what we are, still more of what we seem to others. Besides, I am very independent; I like to be mistress of my own acts, my own money.

Harring. Pray don't let that horrid word be mentioned between us. . . . I want to go as the world goes. I think women should know nothing about money except how to spend it. . . . The next thing will be to claim for women the right, not merely to talk about money, but to manage it.

Miss Hargrave. That would not satisfy me.

Harring. What more could you want?

Miss Hargrave. The right to dispose of it absolutely.

Harring. No married woman ever has that. Miss Hargrave, it startles me to hear you talk so. . . . If there is one thing that seems to me unnatural in a woman it is this anxiety for independence and in money matters above all.

Unfortunately, Taylor is still bound by audience opinion of propriety, and Miss Hargrave voices her opinions because she wants to use her money in a way the "trustees under a marriage settlement would not approve." The audience

discovers at the end of the play that Miss Hargrave had adopted such a liberated attitude in order to help her brother-in-law out of financial difficulty. Taylor had gracefully backed away from "women's rights" under the guise of dramatic irony, but the subject was still there, reflecting a contemporary issue and causing The Times to label Miss Hargrave's statements as "unfeminine unworldlymindedness."⁵⁰

The Serf; or Love Levels All was also presented at the Olympic Theatre in 1865, as a benefit performance for actress Kate Terry. The play contains an involved plot line of assumed identities and hidden parentage, wherein a noblewoman falls in love and marries a Russian serf turned lord. The play is a good example of Taylor's dramatic use of local color and his ability to avoid the black and white morality in favor of a more universal theme. The spectacle of plot has been put aside in favor of thought and idea development, and the critic reflects this in his Times review:

. . . It may generally be remarked that English theatrical admirers do not commonly sympathize with persons whose manners are utterly different from their own. But this disadvantage is counterbalanced in the case of Mr. Taylor's play by this other fact, that the interest is of an universal kind appealing to the feelings of humanity in general, not to those of any particular nation.⁵¹

The playwright also managed to side-step melodramatic classification:

The artistic spirit in which this piece has been conceived by Mr. Tom Taylor cannot be too heartily acknowledged. Every resource that will secure variety of detail without compromising unity of purpose has been employed, and one knows not whether most to admire the work as the careful elaboration of a leading idea by means of clearly defined characters and admirably pointed dialogue, as a dramatic picture of local manners widely different from those of Western Europe, or as a melodrama that by well-distributed effects can stir audiences of every degree of cultivation.⁵²

The third play presented in 1865 was Henry Dunbar, an adaptation of a popular novel at that time by the same name. The plot revolves around the murder of Dunbar and the murderer who assumed Dunbar's identity. Taylor's efforts to avoid sensationalism in the plot line were noticed by the Times critic, but in a rather negative manner:

He occasionally deadens the effect of some of his best situations by making the characters indulge in dialogue when prompt action is required. We may instance the conclusion of the third act . . . when a shriek, followed by one or two words of recognition, would fully answer the purpose. But Mr. Taylor, instead of dropping his curtain at once, makes Margaret recover from the shock and descant leisurely on the difference between repentance, and remorse, and thus, in our opinion, produces an anti-climax.⁵³

Taylor was recognized by the critic as having made a choice to deviate from the melodramatic expedient of having each act's curtain drop on a climax. Instead, he utilized an "anti-climax" which, although viewed at the time as an unfortunate choice, is now recognized as a device leaning toward realism in the plot structure.

Chapter IV

Conclusions

In reviewing Taylor's domestic dramas, no one particular play encompasses all of the devices he used to blur the distinctive traits of melodrama. He utilized the technical devices of the Victorian theatre to create atmosphere rather than spectacle, as seen in the stock-market office scene of Settling Day (March 4, 1865) and the Bellevue Tea Gardens scene in Ticket-of-Leave Man (May 27, 1863), the settings of both plays "suggesting a world closer to life than to the theatre."⁵⁴ The melodramatic plot line, filled with spectacle and contrived discoveries, was toned down in Still Waters Run Deep (May 14, 1855), The House or the Home (May 16, 1859) and Mary Warner (June 21, 1869). Taylor utilized plot elements to reveal some character depth rather than simply carry the action from climax to climax.

With regard to characterization, Taylor blurred the distinctive qualities associated with instant identification of hero, heroine and villain, a technique seen most clearly in Still Waters Run Deep, Retribution (May 12, 1856), The House or the Home, and The Fool's Revenge (October 18, 1859).

In Retribution and The Fool's Revenge, however, Taylor went beyond simply blurring stereotypical characters by focusing on conflicts within the main characters themselves and showing their internal struggle with their decisions.

Many of Taylor's plays were on the edge of moral issues and contemporary ideas, making it difficult for the audience to choose between a distinctive good and evil. The Ticket-of-Leave Man presents a social issue of acceptance for ex-convicts and Settling Day approaches the issue of women's rights, albeit in a roundabout manner. Domestic issues of marriage fidelity are seen in Still Waters Run Deep, and Mary Warner comes close to allowing a woman to freely leave her duties as wife and mother. Even in The Fool's Revenge and Retribution, two plays set apart from contemporary English society, Taylor makes it difficult to choose a moral right and wrong by creating pathos for the main characters by allowing them to justify their acts of revenge. That Taylor made choices in all these elements of plot, character and thought development is reflected in his selection of material to adapt, of novels to manipulate into plays, and of historic incidents to present to the theatre audiences.

There is no doubt that Tom Taylor is recognized as a major playwright during the Victorian period, but the recognition is based on his popularity at the time, not on contributions he made to the development of more realistic

modern drama. Why have his efforts been generally overlooked? To answer this question, one needs to understand that the largest portion of his plays did not consist of domestic drama. Of the seventy-one plays written by Taylor, only twenty-one were domestic dramas, and of these only ten contain evidence of realistic changes from the melodramatic framework.

In addition, within his dramatic work it is difficult to pinpoint a consistency in his utilization of dramatic devices which could be used as evidence of an actual realistic style of playwriting. Close examination of the production dates for Taylor's plays show that at varying times through his career he would use a particular technique, such as conflict within a character rather than between characters. Statements reflecting contemporary issues are also spaced throughout, and not every play avoids the definite moral issue of good always overcoming evil. However, isolated as they are, the plays cited in this thesis demonstrate Taylor's acknowledged use of realistic characters, subordination of action-packed plot lines, and development of ideas reflecting contemporary issues.

What can be said about Taylor's domestic dramas is that within each play he stretched the melodramatic framework enough that he was recognized as an innovative playwright offering something new in the English theatre, yet he remained enough within the boundaries to be accepted by the Victorian audience and too-often tied to that period by theatre historians.

Within the Victorian period playwrights were grappling with the problems of deregulation of theatres, changes in audience numbers and classes, innovative acting styles and new stage technology. A number of dramatists were trying to walk the fine line between pleasing the masses of urban theatre-goers and yet responding to these changes within the theatre itself. Tom Taylor managed to balance himself between both worlds successfully. Although there is no pattern to his development, Taylor's contributions need to be recognized. He offered domestic plot lines devoid of massive stage spectacle and by doing this he raised the awareness level of internal character conflict over physical conflict. He demonstrated that social issues and problems could be presented on the Victorian stage, and all of this contributed to realism in social drama. These elements of Taylor's playwriting provide evidence of his contributions to succeeding dramatists.

Appendix

When The Fool's Revenge was presented at the Sadler Wells Theatre on October 18, 1859, it was met with criticism which challenged Taylor's definition of an original work versus an adaptation. In defense of his play, Taylor issued a return challenge in the preface: "Those who will **take** the trouble to compare my work with either of its alleged originals, will see that my play is neither translation nor rifacimento."⁵⁵ The two originals he was referring to are Victor Hugo's Le Roi s'Amuse and the libretto of Verdi's opera Rigoletto. A brief comparison of all three plays will support Taylor's claim that his drama is "in no sense a translation."

Hugo's Le Roi s'Amuse was itself met with criticism and even censorship after its opening night at the Comedie-Francaise on November 22, 1832. The official criticism revolved around Hugo's presentation of King Francis I as a lecherous monarch frequenting places of ill repute. In reality, the plot is much more involved than this.

The first act opens at the King's court, where Francis is amusing the lords with accounts of his pursuit of a young maiden at the church where she worships. He has

avoided public recognition by disguising himself as a poor student, and the girl has responded to his humble demeanor. The act also introduces Triboulet, the court buffoon, "deformed", "unhealthy" and "evil." Hugo himself best describes Triboulet's motivation for living:

Triboulet hates the King because he is King, the nobles because they are nobles, and he hates ordinary men because they do not have humps on their backs. His only pastime is to set the nobles unceasingly against the King, crushing the weaker by the stronger. He depraves the King, corrupts and stultifies him; he encourages him in tyranny, ignorance and vice. He lures him to the families of gentlemen, pointing out the wife to seduce, the sister to carry off, the daughter to dishonor. The King in the hands of Triboulet is but an all-powerful puppet which ruins the lives of those in the midst of whom the buffoon sets him to play.⁵⁶

Among the married women Triboulet has encouraged the King to seduce is Diana de Poitiers, who succumbs to the King's attentions in exchange for her father's freedom. At the end of Act I, her father, M. de Saint-Vallier, appears at the court. He reproaches the King for his daughter's treatment, but at Triboulet's insistent jeers, the father turns and curses the jester. According to Hugo, "It is from this scene that the whole play develops. The real subject of the drama is the curse of M. de Saint-Vallier."⁵⁷

Act II is named after the assassin Saltabadil, whom Triboulet meets outside his home. This meeting lays the foundation for the jester's later act of revenge. The

second main character introduced is Triboulet's daughter, Blanche. She has been raised in another town as an orphan and has been cloistered in Triboulet's home for only two months. Their conversation reveals that Blanche does not know her father's name, nor the reason for her mother's death. Triboulet, however, displays his deep love for her as well as his insane fear that she may be discovered. During their conversation, the King quietly enters the courtyard, and upon Triboulet's exit, begins wooing Blanche. After Francis leaves, the courtiers gather below Blanche's balcony, planning to kidnap her as a present for the King. Triboulet enters, and the poet Marot masterminds a plan to make Triboulet suffer even more by convincing him they are kidnapping M. de Cosse's wife. They blindfold the jester and he is left holding the ladder as the courtiers escape with Blanche. The curtain drops as Triboulet, having found Blanche's veil, grieves over his loss.

In the third act Blanche discovers that her student lover is really the King and her jailer. The charges of immorality directed against the play arise from a scene in which Blanche, thinking to escape the King's advances, runs into his bed chamber and locks the door. The King pulls out his own key, unlocks the door and goes in after her. Triboulet then enters and, despite his pleas for his daughter, the courtiers refuse him entrance to the King's rooms. Finally, Blanche comes out and confesses her shame. Triboulet vows revenge.

Hugo defends Act IV, where the King is seen at an inn run by the assassin Saltabadil, as history, not immorality. Triboulet has brought Blanche to Saltabadil's to show her that the King has made a mockery of her love. He instructs her to disguise herself as a cavalier and ride to a distant town. After she leaves, Triboulet hires Saltabadil to murder the King, but Saltabadil's sister, Maguelonne, begs for the King's life. Saltabadil agrees, but only if a stranger appears before midnight so that a substitute can be provided to satisfy Triboulet. Blanche returns, and overhearing Saltabadil's condition, she knocks on the door, enters the inn, and is struck down.

The final act reveals the fulfillment of M. de Saint-Vallier's curse. Upon Triboulet's return to the inn, Saltabadil shoves out a sack containing a body, but before Triboulet throws it into the river, he soliloquizes over his supposed triumph. Just as he starts to dispose of the body, he hears the King leave Maguelonne and a flash of lightning reveals Blanche's body in the sack. The play ends as Triboulet blames himself for Blanche's death.

Despite Hugo's defense, the play was banned in Paris until 1882. However, the controversy did not stop Guiseppe Verdi from using the story as his libretto in the opera Rigoletto. The composer met opposition to the opera's production, not only from the President of the Teatro la Fenice, but also from Hugo himself, who considered the

operas Ernani and Rigoletto a "literary mutilation of his work."⁵⁸ To gain acceptance of the libretto, several concessions had to be made. The scene in which Blanche is confronted by the King and tries to escape into a nearby room is omitted in the opera. In addition, the commissary of police, a music lover, strongly suggested "that the king, Francis I, be made into the insignificant ruler of a petty state."⁵⁹ Thus Francis I became Duke of Mantua, the names of the other main characters were changed, the Duke is enticed to Maguelonne's inn by a ruse, and the opera took its title from the name of the protagonist now called Rigoletto.⁶⁰ The opera was performed in Venice at the Teatro la Fenice on March 11, 1851. Its first production in London was at the Covent Garden Theatre on May 15, 1853.

In 1858, actor Frederick Robson requested Taylor to adapt Le Roi s'Amuse as a vehicle for Robson's acting ability, but when The Fool's Revenge was completed, Robson declined the part of the court jester. Samuel Phelps accepted the role, and the play was produced at his Sadler Well's Theatre on October 18, 1859.⁶¹

Taylor made many changes from Hugo's play in an attempt to create "more dramatic motive and cohesion." He kept the main character a Duke, encompassed Saint-Vallier with the jester, now called Bertuccio, and used the poet's love for Bertuccio's daughter Fiordilisa as a contrast to the courtiers' actions.

The action takes place in three acts rather than Hugo's five, and the plot line is reduced by the absence of the assassin Saltabadil and the scene at the inn. Taylor retains the essence of Triboulet's revenge, but focuses it by giving his Bertuccio a past. In the conversation between Fiordilisa and Bertuccio, the jester discloses that he was a public notary in Cesena, and he tells Fiordilisa of her mother's death at the hands of Malatesta. The curse issued by Hugo's Saint-Vallier is issued by Bertuccio himself against Malatesta. As in Le Roi s'Amuse, the curse is turned back on the jester.

Several plot twists introduced by Taylor are based on this revenge. Since it is Malatesta's home in which Fiordilisa seeks refuge, the courtiers' ability to kidnap her under the eyes of Bertuccio is more credible than the ruse used in Hugo's play. Since Malatesta's wife is absent from court and does not reappear until the end of the play, Bertuccio's discovery of his daughter's kidnapping is delayed until the final scenes, which adds to the dramatic irony of the entire piece. Taylor also replaces the assassin with the Duke's wife, who murders the Duke by poisoning his wine.

In addition to changes in plot elements, Taylor focused his attention on changes within Bertuccio's characterization. The pathos of his suffering is increased by the necessity of his acting the convincing fool outside the Duke's bedchamber:

Bertuccio. (stopping Torelli) Why, man - I know that
 there's a petticoat -
 And more, I know the wearer . . .
 . . . For once I'll own
 You've turned the tables fairly on the fool!
 And poor Bertuccio not know! Ha! Ha!
 Oh, excellent!

 Besides the pleasantness of it, there's
 the honor.
 Think, my poor daughter in the duke's high
 favor.
 . . . But, lo you, I am merry,
 And so shall she be, if you'll let me in?
 But let me in - I'll school the silly wench -
 Teach her what honor she has come to - thank
 The gracious duke, and play the merriest
 antics.

Possibly to maintain his own popularity with the English audience, Taylor has Fiordilisa emerge from the Duke's apartment with purity intact. The moral learned is a godly one rather than prophetic, as in Hugo's play, and in this sense Taylor's play loses the tragic quality inherent in Le Roi s'Amuse.

In Tom Taylor and the Victorian Theatre, Winton Tolles discusses the source of The Fool's Revenge, and he draws the following conclusion:

Taylor actually retains little more of the original than the theme of a misshapen court jester who unwittingly assists in carrying his own daughter to the arms of a licentious nobleman."⁶²

Under definitions cited by Taylor in 1871, this would entitle The Fool's Revenge to be called a "new play" rather than a "translated piece."

Notes

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- ² Representative British Drama: Victorian and Modern (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1931), p. 273.
- ³ Tom Taylor and the Victorian Theatre (New York: Morningside Heights, Columbia University Press, 1940), pp. 255-256.
- ⁴ Rowell, p. 84.
- ⁵ Moses, p. 220.
- ⁶ Tolles, p. 25.
- ⁷ History of the Theatre, 3rd ed. (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1977), pp. 274-275.
- ⁸ English Melodrama (London: Herbert Jenkins, 1965), p. 5.
- ⁹ Booth, pp. 14-15.
- ¹⁰ Booth, p. 120.
- ¹¹ Booth, p. 120.
- ¹² Tolles, p. 20.
- ¹³ Booth, p. 170.
- ¹⁴ Hiss the Villain: Six English and American Melodramas (New York: Arno Press, 1977), p. 12.
- ¹⁵ Brockett, p. 418.
- ¹⁶ Tolles, pp. 22-23.
- ¹⁷ Late Nineteenth Century Drama, 1850-1900. Volume V of A History of English Drama, 1660-1900 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959), pp. 97-98.

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- 26 Tolles, p. 135.
- 27 Tolles, pp. 136-137.
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- 29 Booth, Hiss the Villain, p. 10.
- 30 Booth, English Melodrama, p. 22.
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- 32 Rev. of The House or the Home by Tom Taylor, The Times, 17 May 1859, p. 10.
- 33 Rev., The House or the Home, The Times, p. 10.
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- 47 Rev., Mary Warner, p. 6.
- 48 Rev., Mary Warner, p. 6.
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- 50 Rev. of Settling Day by Tom Taylor, The Times,
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- 51 Rev. of The Serf; or Love Levels All by Tom Taylor,
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⁶¹ Tolles, p. 223.

⁶² Tolles, p. 227.

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REALISTIC ELEMENTS IN THE PLAYS OF TOM TAYLOR

by

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AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S THESIS

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Although Tom Taylor is recognized by historians as a successful writer of melodrama during the Victorian period, his importance in the development of realistic social drama has not been explored. This study researches specific devices Taylor used to incorporate realism into his plays, devices that may establish the significance of his work in the development of modern drama.

A framework of comparison was established by defining melodrama's action-oriented plot lines, stock characters, and conventional rigid moral tone. Taylor's plays were then analyzed to isolate areas in which they were different from the melodramatic mode. The plays discussed include Still Waters Run Deep, Retribution, Sheep in Wolf's Clothing, The House or the Home, The Fool's Revenge, The Ticket-of-Leave Man, Settling Day, The Serf; or Love Levels All, Henry Dunbar and Mary Warner.

It was concluded that several devices utilized by the playwright reflected choices to incorporate realism into melodrama. Plot lines were toned down to subordinate action to character development, distinctive qualities of melodramatic character types were blurred, and Taylor began focusing on the main characters' internal struggles. Taylor also blurred the black and white moral themes by presenting contemporary ideas on social issues and situations.

Although each contribution in itself is significant, study of Taylor's work did not reveal a consistent pattern

that would help isolate a definite realistic style of playwriting. However, analysis of his plays did show that Taylor's work stretched the melodramatic framework enough to create a substantial link between melodrama and modern social drama.