

DELIBERATIVE DRAMA: THE GENERIC ELEMENTS

by

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CHAPTER I

THE CRITICAL APPROACH

Since the late nineteenth century many playwrights have used the dramatic format to make a rhetorical statement. Playwrights have selected the major political and social issues of their homelands as the basis for conflict in plays. Since such a use of drama has not been limited to a few occasions in an isolated geographic region or with regard to a single issue, there is justification for assuming that for some the dramatic format is both a satisfying and valuable method of advocating change within a cultural structure. Consequently the major thrust of this essay will be to examine a collection of plays which advocated a particular position with regard to a societal exigence at the time each play was written. The initial intent will be to identify the recurring structural patterns and/or devices used by playwrights to make rhetorical arguments. The ultimate goal of this thesis is to determine whether those recurring features blend together in a way that will constitute the establishment of a rhetorical genre. Before jumping into the critical analysis, however, it is important to discuss the genre approach to rhetorical criticism by responding to three questions. What constitutes a genre? What is the value of generic criticism to rhetoric? How is a rhetorical genre claim founded?

A genre, according to Karlyn Kohrs Campbell and Kathleen Hall Jamieson, is "a group of acts unified by a constellation of forms that reoccur in each of its members."¹ Basically what Campbell and Jamieson

mean by constellation of forms is the pattern of techniques, both substantive and stylistic which the rhetorician uses in developing an argument. It is important to underscore that a generic claim is based on the recurring pattern of devices, not the devices themselves.² To engage in simple identification of the techniques used results in the categorization of distinguishing features of a particular type of work. Such categorization is problematic for public address, however, because rhetoricians rely on a core group of techniques for preparing a discourse. Consequently, if there is to be an understanding of how a particular address is created to meet a particular situation, it is necessary to identify the inherent pattern of techniques within the discourse. A pattern should be distinguished by the fusion or unique blending of its devices. A generic claim is only defensible when a repeated blend of techniques exists. To omit or change the blend in some manner is by definition to alter the genre.³

The practical value in conducting rhetorical criticism from a generic framework is twofold. First, in the genre establishing phase, criticism will give rise to a model structure for the particular type of discourse. The benefit of creating such a model is that it can serve as a guide for a rhetor who finds himself faced with creating a message in a similar situation.

Second, the pattern of techniques within a genre can serve as a set of criteria by which to evaluate representative examples of a particular type of discourse. The question of how to make the good/bad example judgment has constantly plagued critics. Very often such a judgment is

not made by the rhetorical critic. The merit test for a piece of rhetoric is its survival or success in time. When a critic does venture to make such a judgment, that judgment is based on some arbitrary comparison to another work that has been determined good by the same vague standards. The use of pattern strategies as the criterion for evaluation will provide the critic with a more tangible base by which to make the good example/bad example judgment for a particular piece of rhetorical discourse.

Before the practical applications can be realized, however, the genre form of a particular type of rhetorical message must be established. For some types of discourse, the practical applications have become realities. The American eulogy and apologia are two representative genres in which such criticism has become beneficial.⁴ For other modes however, the work in genre criticism has yet to begin. Deliberative drama is one such type, and consequently it is necessary to begin with a search for a genre.

In an article entitled "On Rhetorical Genre: An Organizing Perspective," Jackson Harrell and Wil A. Linkugel present a framework in which to conduct generic criticism.⁵ There are three stages of criticism. The first stage is generic description. In this initial stage the critic seeks to establish a genre by identifying the inherent pattern and its fusion of strategies within the particular type of discourse. The second stage is generic participation. At this stage the goal is to identify all the potential examples of the representative genre that were established in the first stage. The third and final stage is application. During this phase of criticism it is the task of the critic to analyze the examples identified in the second stage using the pattern structure identified in the first stage.⁶

To embark upon a single study that would encompass all three stages outlined by Harrell and Linkugel would be an impossible goal given the time constraints of this project. Consequently, the scope of this study will be limited to the first stage in the framework, generic description. Generic participation and generic application must be left to future study.

Generic description involves two separate operations. The first is the identification of the "motivational precedents" underlying the genre.⁷

Motivational precedents are the emotions that prompted the rhetor to make a public statement. The emotion(s) should be reflected in the societal issues presented in the discourse. In the dramatic structure the exigences should be the central ideas of plot conflict and character structure. Understanding the sentiment which caused a rhetor to speak out is important, because his/her perspective of the situation may have some influence on the messages' blend of techniques.

The second process in generic description is called mapping.⁸ Mapping is an analytical study of the representative discourses in a particular genre. The result of each analysis should be a critical description which highlights the key strategies and their interrelational pattern of structure. As Harrell and Linkugel argue, "the results of these operations should be a set of constitutive and operational definitions which can guide the works of other researchers wishing to work within the same genre."⁹ Should the goal of this study be accomplished, this premise of Harrell and Linkugel's should also be fulfilled. Now that the guidelines for rhetorical, generic criticism have been outlined, it is time to focus on the major thrust of this study, the establishment of a genre for deliberative drama.

As a starting point, an initial working definition of deliberative drama needs to be established. For the purposes of this study a deliberative drama is one which advocates a specific political or concrete change within a society. In addition, to be considered deliberative, a play should encompass those features which characteristically define other forms of rhetoric. In "A Motive View of Communication"¹⁰ Walter Fisher contends that there are four elements inherent in all rhetorical discourse.

First, the drama should be advisory. It should specifically tell the audience how to feel, to think, or to respond to an issue where controversy is inherent.

Second, the drama should create a variety of images with respect to the issue. The images created should reflect both the self images of the audience members and of the playwright with regard to the subject of controversy. The basic design of the images should reflect the advisory message of the play.

Third, the drama should be a blend of both reality and fiction. The issues and the purpose of the drama must be derived from a true problem within a particular society. In addition, it must be a fictional composition using artistic tools which recreate the rhetorical situation and a response to that situation.

Finally, the play must suggest a change in the current state of affairs through a proposition, cause, or proposal.

There are potentially a large number of plays that meet the preceding definition of rhetoric to some degree, consequently it is necessary to

limit the number of dramas which will initially be examined in the generic description. This study will explore five plays. Besides meeting the working definition previously stated for deliberative drama, the five plays were selected on the basis of two other group criteria. First, they are representatives of a fifty year time period when the stage was frequently used to make a rhetorical statement. Second, the plays represent a variety of rhetorical situations and controversial issues which have confronted different nations. The generic description will focus on the nature of Henrick Ibsen's An Enemy of the People (1882), Maxim Gorky's Enemies (1906), Eugene Brieux's The Red Robe (1915), Clifford Odets' Waiting for Lefty (1935), and Arthur Arent's One-third of a Nation (1938).

As was previously stated, generic description involves two operations: the identification of motivational precedents and the mapping of the substantive and stylistic elements of the discourse. Generally, the first operation consists of locating the key word symbols selected by the rhetor to serve as metaphors for the confronting issue. By identifying the major symbols, the critic should be able to determine the emotional framework which prompted the creation of the message.

In drama, however, it is not necessary for playwrights to rely heavily on word symbolism to create an emotional perspective for the audience. Playwrights recreate the motivational precedents which prompted the work through the structural elements of plot, character, and form. As a result, a substantive description of these three elements should generate more information about a work's emotional setting than a key word search. Since the description of these three elements is the basis for

the second operation in the beginning stage of generic criticism, the first operation is unnecessary in the study of drama and will therefore be deleted. To guide the critical description of the five plays, the discussions of two critics Elder Olson¹¹ and Hubert Heffner,¹² on the nature of drama will be used.

The works of Olson and Heffner were selected for two reasons. First both men argue that the ultimate goal of any play is its performance. This assumption is important because it supports the premise that drama is a legitimate form of public discourse and is therefore worthy of rhetorical study. Second, they both establish a dramatic genre which is separate from literature by identifying a unique blend of elements which is inherent in all dramas. By using those elements identified by Olson and Heffner to guide the analysis, it should be possible to determine if rhetorical dramatists manipulate those elements either substantively or stylistically in such a way as to warrant a claim for a specific genre of drama. The schema for analysis will revolve around four major elements: plot structure, character, diction, and form.

Elder Olson presents a detailed outline of the inherent factors of plot structure in Tragedy and the Theory of Drama. This outline will be used to guide the examination of the first area of analysis. Olson defines plot somewhat differently from most traditional sources. It is defined as "a system of actions of a determinate moral quality."¹³ In developing a system of actions there are a number of features that the playwright can vary. The analysis of plot will consist of an evaluation of the playwright's choice of features in structuring the action of the

work. The evaluation will focus on the features of magnitude, threads, nature of proof, and pattern of arrangement.

The magnitude is the relationship between the number of characters and the number of situations. There are four specific possibilities:

- 1) the activity of a single character in a single situation;
- 2) the activity of two or more characters in a single closed situation;
- 3) the activity of two or more characters in a series of situations centering about a single principal event;
- 4) the activity of two or more characters in a series of situations involving more than one principal event.¹⁴

Threads are the various lines of action within a play. A play may contain a single thread or multiple threads. The threads may also vary in terms of importance to the overall structure of actions. As a result of the variety in importance of lines to the plot, they will vary in the direction they run to the major action. Threads will diverge, converge, or run parallel. Olson presents the relationship in the following way. "If you diagram a plot and find two or more lines of action stemming from a single cause or incident, this is divergence. If you find chains of causation concurring in a single effect or situation, this is convergence."¹⁵ It is through the various lines of action that arguments are presented.

Each thread is made up of a series of plot incidents. These incidents serve to prove a playwright's contention that an ill in the current cultural structure exists and that a certain change is needed to resolve the ill. An incident is a single representation of an idea within the plot. It may be a lone action or a group action and thus vary in size.

part of the work. It is introduced and then resolved. If the action of the drama is to see further development, then a new complication must be interjected.

Although plot structure provides a framework for a playwright's ideas it does not provide the means for the actual communication of the message. If a play's inherent ideas are to be communicated, the playwright must provide the work with suitable agents, language, and form. In discussing these three areas, there is a need to adopt Hubert Heffner's structural framework to guide the discussion. While Olson's text provides an in-depth outline of the inherent features of plot structure, he does not discuss the structural features of the remaining elements. Heffner's work does.

The second area of description that will be considered as part of the critical description is character development. In many ways the plot of the play is determined by the characters because a plot is a series of human actions. The actions a character will perform are determined by the traits the playwright has provided him/her. It is the personal traits of each character that distinguish him/her from all others. Heffner argues that characterization occurs on six levels: biological; physical; bent, disposition, and attitude; emotion; deliberation; and decision.¹⁸ A character may be created by a single trait on one level or s/he may be defined by a variety of traits from multiple levels.

The biological level is the most basic trait distinction. At this elemental level the character is provided with the distinguishing traits of the organism, such as man, woman, and animal.

Characterization on the physical level provides the character with traits that distinguish him/her as unique from others. Physical traits include height, weight, and hair color as well as such things as dress, posture, and gestures.

The next level of characterization provides traits that define personality. Bent is the general nature of the character and is generally assumed to be acquired at birth. For example, a character may be personable or inherently evil. Dispositional traits are acquired with age and are very often associated with stereo-typical roles such as the wicked step-mother. Characterization by attitude simply distinguishes the character by his/her beliefs or opinions. It is important to note that these characterizations are generally passive. They exist, but do not require the character to engage in any particular action.

On the fourth level, emotion, the character is given feelings which transform into desires which are dynamic.¹⁹ Desires motivate characters to take certain actions. At times those actions may be unpredictable. When a conflict or problem prohibits the character from acting on a desire, s/he is forced to deliberate and is consequently characterized by the fifth level.

At this next level of development, the character has the power to think about the problems s/he faces in acting. There are two types of thought processes that may occur. Expedient deliberation results in the character focusing only on the way to achieve the object of desire. Ethical deliberation, the second alternative, centers on the good and bad qualities of the desire.

The size of the incident should be based on "all the factors (or causes) requisite to produce the emotion in the desired degree."¹⁶

When used as proof, an incident will occur in one of three styles. It can be inductive action consequently providing the audience with examples from which they can generalize. It can be deductive action and as a result give the audience generalizations that they in turn are to apply to particulars. Or it can be analogical action in which the audience is offered a fable or parable that serves as a metaphor for the playwright's proposition.¹⁷

The final feature of the plot structure the playwright must consider is pattern of arrangement. The first choice evaluates the resolution of the plot complications. The playwright has two options. The ending can be finite with all the complications resolved or it can be indefinite with some issues left unresolved.

The second choice looks at the complexity the playwright uses in presenting consecutive actions. Simple plots move in a single direction from the opening action and complex plots contain changes of direction in the flow of action. If a plot is complex there are two types of forces at work which must be considered: force and counterforce. The force moves the play in the initial direction. The counterforce causes the action to change direction.

The third choice considers the two types of complications which will interrupt the action. A continuous complication is introduced at the beginning of the work and functions throughout the play until its resolution at the end. An incidental complication only functions in a given

When a character attains the highest level development, that of decision, s/he will make choices regarding the type of action contemplated. As on the thought level, a decision can be expedient or ethical. Most often comic characters will make expedient choices. However, when a character makes an ethical decision the issue becomes serious because the character is pronouncing a sentence of good or evil on his/her own actions.²⁰

The third major element to be described is diction. Diction is the pattern of words that a character uses to express thoughts. There are three factors that determine how the playwright chooses and arranges dialogue. The first is the idea that is to be expressed. The second is the nature of the character that will express the thought. The third is the type of effect the words are to produce on the audience.²¹

In addition, there are essentially two demands that diction is required to meet. First the language must be clear and understandable to the audience. Second, the common words must be presented in an interesting and unusual manner.²² This requirement affords the playwright the opportunity to make a number of stylistic choices. The major decision that must be made is whether to use prose, the natural structure of speech, or the highly formalized diction of poetry. Beyond this initial choice, the playwright is free to give attention to more specific stylistic features of language usage that can color diction. The use of speech rhythms, dialects, slang, idioms, symbolism, and metaphors are all examples of stylistic features that will make a character's diction more attractive. However, since this study involves the use of several

translations, only one authoritative evaluation can be made regarding the playwright's choice of language structure. The single comment will center on the playwright's decision to use prose or poetic diction.

The final element of the description is form. Form is an organizational schemata which reflects the playwright's view of the subject. The form most generally is determined by the overall direction of the action. The action will often move between two extremes, like "from happiness to unhappiness or from unhappiness to happiness."²³ There are three basic forms of drama.

The first form is tragedy. Tragedy deals with serious action. Such action occurs when the characters experience a threat to their well being or happiness and are forced to move toward a state of unhappiness. The threat can be trivial or it can be monumental. The success of tragedy is based on the playwright's abilities to make the action of plot and the stature of characters significant enough to arouse the emotions of fear and pity in the audience.

Comedy is the second dramatic form. It is based on emotions that arise because a character possesses some characteristic or trait which is anormal with the accepted social norm. When an anormal trait makes a character appear only slightly maladjusted, the audience feels sympathy toward that agent. As the abnormality becomes greater, however, the character becomes humorous and ridiculous evoking laughter in the audience. At times, though, the abnormality becomes so great that it threatens the essence of human nature. The character is seen as dangerous and villain-like.²⁴ As a result, the audience experiences ridicule. It is through

the emotions of laughter and ridicule and their purgation that comedy is defined. Because these emotions are aroused by abnormalities of character, which are delineated unacceptable by a specific culture, comedy always is of a social nature.²⁵

The third form of drama is melodrama. In melodrama the conflict is seemingly very serious, at least temporarily. Characters which are sympathetic to the audience are threatened by the actions of an inherently evil villain. As a result the audience experiences fear and hate and a desire for the resolution of the threat. It is because of this desire that melodramas generally contain double endings. The good characters are rewarded for their actions and the bad ones are justly punished for theirs. Since melodrama is defined somewhat by the character extremes of its agents, the roles are generally static.²⁶ All of the agents' moral decisions have been made before the onset of the play and while the audience may learn new information about the character as the play progresses, the characters' fundamental natures won't change.

With the discussion of Olson's framework for plot construction and Heffner's guidelines for character, diction and form complete, it is time to focus attention on the real work of this study, the generic description of five deliberative dramas. The remaining portion of this paper will consist of six chapters, one for the analysis of each play and one for comparison and closing remarks.

Notes

¹Karlynn Kohrs Campbell and Kathleen Hall Jamieson, Form and Genre: Shaping Rhetorical Action. (Falls Church, Va.: The Speech Communication Association, n.d.), p. 20.

²Campbell, p. 23.

³Campbell, p. 24.

⁴For sample generic studies on the American eulogy and apologia see James O. Payne, "The American Eulogy: A Study in Generic Criticism" Thesis. University of Kansas 1975 and B. L. Ware and Wil A. Linkugel, "They Spoke in Defense of Themselves: On the Generic Criticism of Apologia," Quarterly Journal of Speech (October, 1973), 273-283.

⁵Jackson Harrell and Wil A. Linkugel, "On Rhetorical Genre: An Organizing Perspective," Philosophy and Rhetoric, 11, 4 (Fall, 1978), 262-281.

⁶Harrell, pp. 274-277.

⁷Harrell, p. 274.

⁸Harrell, p. 274.

⁹Campbell, p. 26.

¹⁰Walter R. Fisher, "A Motive View of Communication," Quarterly Journal of Speech (April 1970), 131-139.

¹¹Elder Olson, Tragedy and the Theory of Drama. (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1961).

¹²Hubert Heffner, Samuel Seldon, and Hunton D. Sellman, Modern Theatre Practice, 5th ed. (New York: Meredith Corporation, 1973) and Hubert Heffner, "The Nature of Drama," in An Introduction to Literature. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1959), pp. 339-351.

¹³Olson, p. 37.

¹⁴Olson, p. 41.

¹⁵Olson, p. 43.

¹⁶Olson, p. 64.

¹⁷Olson, p. 71.

¹⁸Heffner, "The Nature of Drama," pp. 348-349.

¹⁹Heffner, Modern Theatre Practice, p. 82.

²⁰Heffner, Modern Theatre Practice, pp. 82-83.

²¹Heffner, Modern Theatre Practice, p. 84.

²²Heffner, Modern Theatre Practice, p. 85.

²³Heffner, "The Nature of Drama," p. 344.

²⁴Heffner, Modern Theatre Practice, p. 56.

²⁵Heffner, "The Nature of Drama," p. 345.

²⁶Heffner, Modern Theatre Practice, p. 57.

CHAPTER II

AN ENEMY OF THE PEOPLE

Henrick Ibsen wrote An Enemy of the People to call public attention to the hypocrisy in the actions of the liberal press. In a personal letter to Georg Brandes on 3 January 1882, Ibsen wrote, "What is one to say of the attitude taken by the so-called liberal press? These leaders who talk and write of freedom and progressiveness and at the same time allow themselves to be slaves of the supposed opinions of their subscribers!"¹ Ibsen had increasingly come to the resolution that the association of an individual with any group that branded itself as having a particular political persuasion, either conservative or liberal, was dangerous to the spirit of the human soul because ultimately the self interests of the group were placed before truth and right. It was the rare intellect, whom Ibsen called "the minority,"² that dared to seek truth by "forg[ing] ahead in territory which the majority had not yet reached."³ Ibsen believed that the only way to increase this "aristocracy of intellect,"⁴ was to breed it into children through their education. Consequently, these positions led Ibsen to write and publish his eighteenth play, An Enemy of the People.

In developing the plot structure, Ibsen elected to use multiple characters in a series of situations to present his principal argument against the liberal majority. All of the action centers around the majority's refusal to help Dr. Thomas Stockmann in his quest to purify the water systems supporting the local health baths, once it is learned

that the corrections to the system will only come at the expense of their own self interests.

There are basically two threads of action that occur in An Enemy of the People. The first is the major story line of the play. At the opening of Act One, Stockmann receives a letter from a university chemist supporting his suspicion that the local baths have been polluted by hazardous bacteria that have developed in the water system as a result of upstream dumping of the tannery. Immediately, Stockmann gains the support of the liberal press and the middle class majority, who see this occurrence as an opportunity to underscore the incompetence of the currently in power conservative party. When the liberal party realizes that the necessary water system improvements will not be paid by the stockholders but by themselves through higher taxes and that the completion of the improvements would mean a two to three year shut down of the baths, the majority quickly withdraw their support, branding Stockmann an enemy of the people for attempting to force such woe upon his home community.

The second thread, which is used to argue the need for change in the current style of education, is very small, but significant. The first glimpse of this thread surfaces early in Act One. Petra, the school teacher daughter of the Stockmann's, argues at a small gathering of liberal friends that "there's so much fear of the truth everywhere!"⁵ She continues the support of this argument briefly by exemplifying the school situation where teachers are forced "to teach [students] all kinds of things we don't believe in ourselves."⁶ The line of action, however,

is dropped and does not reappear until the end of Act Four, when at a town meeting Stockmann himself drops his major argument for improvement of the baths to argue the need to breed intellect into the human animal. Finally, in Act Five the threads surface briefly in the closing minutes of the play when Stockmann resolves to withdraw his sons from traditional education and teach them himself to be free thinkers who are unafraid to seek truth and right.

Essentially because these two threads initially begin as separate thoughts and eventually become intertwined as part of Stockmann's singular cause they can be said to converge on each other.

As support of the two major arguments, Ibsen uses a combination of two types of incidents. The most frequently used is the inductive incident. Ibsen's story line is very specific. The characters are placed in a concrete situation, trying to protect or accomplish very real or tangible things. The interaction of the characters and the emotions they experience are all a direct result of the threat produced by the immediate situation. For example, Stockmann, as a medical officer, has the health interest of townspeople and tourists foremost in his mind and he acts to improve the polluted water system which threatens the others' health. His brother is somewhat the opposite. Peter Stockmann is the mayor of the community and member of the Public Bath Committee. He is seeking to gain credit for bringing prosperity to a dying community through the booming tourist business which will occur because of the public baths built under the supervision of his administration. Then there is Hovstad, editor of the People's Tribune, the liberal voice of the common people. Hovstad outwardly gives the impression, that he will lead the common

majority into power, by printing anti-establishment doctrine on the front pages of the paper, but who inwardly is concerned with turning a profit and as a result runs, on the inner pages, idealistic novels which are directly opposed to the preachings of the front page news, to keep the subscription constituents reading. The specificity with which Ibsen writes makes it very clear that he is concerned with realism and wants to make sure the audience clearly understands the arguments embedded in the plot structure. Only on one occasion does he break away from the use of inductive action to support his positions.

During the fourth act, Ibsen uses analogical action as Stockmann addresses a meeting of the townspeople. Seemingly Stockmann has called the meeting to make public the conditions of the baths. He elects, however, to attack the intellect and reasoning of the community, through two propositions which occur in the form of figurative comparisons. In the first instance, the weakness of mind that occur because of traditional education are presented in a metaphor of dog breeding. Stockmann compares the abilities possessed by mongrels and greyhounds, contending that the difference is in their training. He argues, "It's the pups of these cultivated animals that trainers teach to perform the most amazing tricks. A common mongrel couldn't learn to do such things if you stood it on its head!"⁷ Later in the address, Stockmann announces a new discovery he has made about the majority. He likens the members of the self serving public to houses that are devoid of oxygen because "the rooms aren't aired and the floors swept every day," and as a result have lost "the capacity for moral thought and moral action."⁸

Finally, the arrangements Ibsen uses in structuring the plot are quite complex. In terms of the ending, one would have to argue that it was indefinite. Although Stockmann resolves to do something about the public baths having been given the controlling stock interests by his father-in-law, the audience does not learn what the course of action will be. The only hint that is provided is Stockmann's decision to withdraw his sons from school and to cultivate them himself into true intellectuals.

In presenting the episodes of action, Ibsen elected to use a complex structure that contained three shifts in direction. The initial direction of the play is set into action by the receipt of an outside letter condemning the condition of the public baths and a demand for water system improvements. The initial direction is furthered along by the power of the liberal press and majority who wish to underscore a blunder of the powerful conservatives. Interestingly enough, Ibsen skillfully uses the power of the initial force as the power behind the counterforce which shifts the direction of the play. When the liberals learn that they will be denying their own interests if they support Stockmann, they hastily agree to adopt the position of the conservative party and to work against the doctor in his quest. The final shift in direction comes in the fifth act when the doctor's father-in-law purchases controlling interest in the stocks of the public baths and gives them to Stockmann. At this point the beaten doctor, who is preparing to take his family to the New World, experiences another shift in public sentiment. The press and the public majority leader, once aware of the doctor's control in the baths offer to help Stockmann correct the problems in the water system

for a fee. This time, however, the doctor refuses to help these special interest groups fulfill their own needs. He chooses instead to continue the battle alone, with only the support of his family and a single close friend.

As is probably clear from the discussion thus far, Ibsen elects to use a continuous complication pattern to move the incidents of plot along. All the episodes within the play occur because of the emotions and desires the characters experience in their interaction with each other as a result of Stockmann's confirmed suspicion and announcement that the newly completed public baths are health hazards.

Probably the greatest strength of Ibsen's in An Enemy of the People is his depth of characterization. Although the script is somewhat vague in assigning any specific physical traits other than a biological trait to the characters, Ibsen had in his mind specific physical traits for each role and he made those ideas plainly known to Hans Schroeder, director of the Christiania Theatre.

On 14 December Ibsen wrote:

Whatever the circumstances Hovstad must always wear a depressed appearance, somewhat shrunken and stooping, and uncertain in his movements; all, of course, portrayed with complete naturalism. Billing's lines are so worded that they require an east-coast and not e.g. a Bergen dialect. He is, essentially an east coast character. Captain Horster has been ridiculously misunderstood by a Danish critic. He characterizes Horster as an old man, Dr. Stockmann's old friend, etc. This is, of course, utterly wrong. Horster is a young man, one of the young people whose healthy appetite delights the Doctor, though he is an infrequent visitor at the house because he dislikes the company of Hovstad and Billing. Already in Act One, Horster's interest in Petra must subtly and delicately be indicated, and during the brief

exchanges between him and her in Act Five we must sense that they now stand at the threshold of a deep and passionate relationship.⁹

While the script may be vague in specific physical characterization, it does provide characters at all levels with the traits of bent, attitude, and disposition. Even the citizens present at the town meeting in Act Four are provided traits on this level as a group. In the sixteen opening lines of the act the members of the public express the dispositions of rudeness and narrow-mindedness as they plot to heckle the doctor before hearing his address. They further confirm their opposition to the doctor by expressing the belief that he is wrong because two external sources which they hold in great esteem, the People's Tribune and Aslaksen, the majority leader, say so. It is these dispositions and attitudes that lead them to respond emotionally to the content of Stockmann's address.

Ibsen's extraordinary ability at characterization is specifically underscored in the creation of Stockmann and Hovstad. Both of these characters are extremely complex and are defined by traits from all levels of Heffner's hierarchy. Stockmann serves as the protagonist of the play. As the protagonist Stockmann is used to fulfill a symbolic function. The doctor is created to represent the human capacity for moralistic thought and moralistic action. The opening dialogue establishes Stockmann as a freethinker, who readily lifts his pen to write an opinion on controversial issues. He is warm and hospitable to all who enter his home, especially those who are unafraid to speak their mind. However, he refuses to tolerate those who are narrow-minded and seek to fulfill only their own immediate needs at the expense of truth, as is his brother the mayor. Stockmann's

lack of tolerance for narrow-mindedness quickly transforms into the emotions of anger and disgust when he learns that all the members of the local community, including the liberal press with which he had been so closely associated, will deny the truth and right to freedom of expression at the benefit of their personal selves.

To a large degree, Stockmann is motivated to action because of his desires. However he is forced to engage in deliberation on several occasions throughout the course of the play. Sometimes the thought processes are expedient, as is the case in Act Three when Hovstad and Aslaksen refuse to publish his manuscript on the condition of the health spas. At that point, Stockmann is concerned only with securing a way to make his report public. Other times, and most frequently, his thought processes are ethical in nature. Such an instance occurs at the end of Act Two when the mayor threatens to dismiss the doctor from his position at the spa if Stockmann's report is made public.

As a result of his moral deliberations, Stockmann makes four major decisions throughout the play as well as a number of less significant ones. Because of the symbolic nature of Stockmann, all of his decisions are of an ethical nature. He continually chooses to act morally at the potential expense of his family and himself. All of his choices are serious and have serious ramifications, such as the decision to attack the character of the press and the educational system at a public meeting. This single decision alone results in his dismissal from his job, the eviction of his family from their home, and the dismissal of his daughter, Petra, and close friend, Captain Horster, from their jobs.

The character of Hovstad provides a nice contrast to that of Stockmann. While there are many characters who act to undermine the doctor, Hovstad is clearly the leading antagonist in An Enemy of the People. Like Stockmann, Hovstad is a symbolic character. He represents the evil being in all humans who profess to believe in moral thoughts and actions but act in amoral and selfish ways. Hovstad's characterization is as complex as his protagonist counterpart.

Having been poverty stricken in his youth, Hovstad contains anger, hate, and distrust for the established local government which has always seemed incompetent and uncaring. His attitudes have created in him the desire to lead the local majority in revolution against the system, a task which he will use the People's Tribune to begin. The newspaper is seemingly a good way to "win people over to [his] views of freedom and progress,"¹⁰ but he instinctively knows without subscribers, there can be no fighters and funds. Consequently when Hovstad senses a threat to his readership, he experiences the emotion of panic and is forced to rethink the initial course of action.

The opposite of Stockmann, Hovstad is so consumed by the idea of revolution, that his deliberations are only expedient. For example in Act Three, Billings and Hovstad discuss the "nuisance [of] not having any capital,"¹¹ to print the newspaper. In this brief segment they consider other sources which might be more beneficial than Aslaksen who gives them credit for printing and paper, but who desires restraint in the Paper's work. Hovstad again finds the need to engage in expedient thought at the end of Act Three when the mayor confesses that it will not be the

stockholders who pay for the improvements, but the local property owners and tradespeople, who comprise the core readers of the People's Tribune.

Hovstad's expedient thoughts lead him to make expedient decisions. There are two choices of consequence. The first is his decision not to print Stockmann's manuscript which provides the ammunition to attack the incompetence of the local government because it could potentially hurt the local subscribers financially, which in turn would hurt himself. The second choice comes when he realizes that Stockmann has become major stockholder in the public baths. Hovstad sees Stockmann as the additional source of income that he earlier pondered and decides to offer the Tribune as a medium of print for the rejected manuscript for a small gratuity.

Ibsen has successfully underscored the controversial issue embedded in the plot structure by creating a protagonist and an antagonist that symbolically reflect the two sides inherent within the conflict. Stockmann represents the fundamental good in freethinking. While Hovstad by contrast represents the evil that comes from too close an association with special interests. There is a life-like quality to the two major characters because Ibsen has clearly defined the physical and mental being of each and has provided each with the capacity to think and act.

The language form Ibsen uses to express the ideas within An Enemy of the People is prose. Stylistically, this choice was strong since the natural prose form of speech complimented Ibsen's efforts to stress realism.

The dramatic form of An Enemy of the People is melodrama. The nature of the conflict is serious, but it maintains the potential to be resolved. Since the major characters are created in a static fashion, the emotions

necessary to the melodramatic form are easily aroused. The audience feels fear for Dr. Stockmann and hate for Hovstad, the press, and the so-called moralistic groups of the community. These emotions are created because the latter group poses a physical threat to Dr. Stockmann's personal security, integrity, and well-being.

The only departure in the play from the melodramatic form is the ending. The conflict is not completely resolved, and thus the good are not rewarded and the evil punished. Ibsen, however, creatively implies the potential for this ending. He leaves the audience with the responsibility for carrying out the ultimate action to restore Stockmann's losses and bring about the moralists downfall. As the play's structure clearly established, only a willing and free thinking majority can bring an end to the evils of the press and the special interests of political groups.

Ibsen has skillfully combined the elements of plot structure, character, diction, and form to attack the amorality in the press and in political parties. He has clearly called, in his anger, for a change in how children are taught to think. It is Ibsen's strongest desire that any person who seeks to find right and truth should be considered a friend of the people, not an enemy.

Notes

¹Michael Meyer, Intro., An Enemy of the People, by Henrick Ibsen in Ghosts and Three Other Plays (Garden City, New York: Anchor Books, Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1966) p. 201.

²Meyer, p. 201.

³Meyer, p. 201.

⁴Meyer, p. 202.

⁵Henrick Ibsen, An Enemy of the People, trans. Michael Meyer, in Ghosts and Three Other Plays (Garden City, New York: Anchor Books, Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1966) p. 235.

⁶Ibsen, p. 236.

⁷Ibsen, p. 294.

⁸Ibsen, p. 296.

⁹Ibsen, pp. 213-214.

¹⁰Ibsen, p. 268.

¹¹Ibsen, p. 266.

CHAPTER III

ENEMIES

During the first decade of this century, Russia was in a state of political unrest. There were continuous strikes and demonstrations by the working class, which climaxed in 1905, when imperial soldiers shot hundreds of workers as they marched in protest to the Tsar's palace. As a result of the attack, the Russian working class resolved to lodge a full scale protest against the government's actions. The protest climaxed in October, when the workers successfully staged a national strike. To bring an end to the strike the Tsar promised to establish a state of "political freedom and a parliamentary government,"¹ but he never fulfilled the terms of the promise.

It was during this period that Maxim Gorky achieved public fame as a literary master. He was especially popular with the intelligentsia, the recently established lower-upper class, for the revolutionary quality that his works contained. Gorky, himself however, was not happy with the intelligentsia's superior attitude toward the working class and his personal activities and his writings reflect this particular sentiment. He actively sought to destroy the power of this group in the political arena by participating in the Left Wing of the Marxist Social Democratic Party under the leadership of Lenin. In 1903, Gorky was jailed for his socialist activities. It was during this period of imprisonment that Gorky began writing a series of four political dramas which attacked the intelligentsia for not assisting or allowing the workers to become

equal members in society and demanded that they step aside and permit the formation of a socialist state. After being released, Gorky left Russia for eight years because he feared more arrests. During this period, Gorky completed his four dramas of which Enemies was the last.

As the curtain rises on Enemies, the workers in the factory owned by Zakhar Bardin and Mikhail Skrobotov have threatened to strike unless an abusive foreman is dismissed. While Zakhar readily orders the firing, Mikhail demands that Zakhar reconsider the action. He argues that the real question at stake is not whether the foreman deserves firing, but who are the masters of the factory. As an alternative to meeting the factory workers' demands, Mikhail convinces a reluctant Zakhar to shut down the factory to demonstrate their own authoritative control. In addition, to support the factory closing, Mikhail wires the lieutenant governor asking for the assistance of troops. These actions naturally create an uprising with the workers, and it is soon learned that Mikhail has been shot and killed by one of them. The remainder of the play focuses on the criminal and political investigations which stem from Mikhail's death. Ultimately the socialists are rounded up and brought before a makeshift tribunal, but it is obviously the socialists' victory as the menacing and blundering efforts of the gendarmerie have only helped to strengthen the roots of the seeds of socialism.

Gorky chooses to make his arguments in Enemies by using a number of characters in a series of actions surrounding a single event. In this case the principal event is the murder of a factory owner and the ensuing investigation. The characters come from a variety of classes and

positions, and their various responses to the murder and the investigation move the play's plot along.

There are basically two threads of action inherent in the plot structure. The first is the major story line in which Mikhail Skrobotov is murdered. His death leads to a criminal and political investigation. As a direct result of the investigation stemming from Mikhail's death, the gendarmeries make the arrests of several key socialists who are brought to trial before Captain Boboyedov in Zakhar's home.

The second thread covers the efforts of the socialist leaders to organize the working class majority against the intelligentsia. Although this line of action is subordinate to the Skrobotov murder line, it is crucially important because Gorky makes several statements about the nature of the socialists' cause. This line of action surfaces when several of the workers are assigned to guard Zakhar's house from the other factory workers. Once Gorky has made the line part of the major action, he uses it sporadically to make specific statements about socialism. First, the destructive nature of money is argued as Levshin, an elderly worker, consoles Nadya who is the niece of Zakhar.

Second, Gorky uses the line to establish that the attack must be against all members of the intelligentsia no matter their position or interest. Early in Act Four the guard of workers refuse to directly answer Nadya's questions of curiosity.

Nadya. Is he kind [Zakhar Bardin]? Or does he--
treat you badly too?

Levshin. We don't say that.

Yagodin. They're all the same to us--the stern
and the kind ones.²

Finally, Gorky uses the line to address the nature of personal commitment each person must make to the cause. It is clearly evident that the cause must be more important than the self. Zakhar Bardin agrees to reopen the factory if the workers agree to turn over Mikhail's murderer. Although the workers agree, they plot to substitute a dummy murderer who is less important to the cause than the real one.

Yagodin. Don't be in a hurry. Think it over.

Ryabstor. What is there to think about? We killed a man, so somebody has to suffer for it.

Levishin. Truly spoken. Somebody has to. And if one doesn't take it on himself, many others will be bothered--some of the better men among us, men who are more important to our common cause than you are, Pavel.³

Gorky initially introduces this second line as part of the action of the first line. After the uprising at the factory and the shooting of Mikhail, Bardin requests that a group of respected workers guard his home estate from potential fires. From its initial introduction, however, the line diverges from the main story line until the final act when the socialist party members are arrested and brought before the tribunal.

The incidents which Gorky uses to carry out the action of the two lines serve as inductive proof for his arguments. The actions of the play are very specific and represent a very realistic and literal recreation of the situation between the intelligentsia and the working class. Consequently, it was very easy for audience members to take the incidents created by Gorky and apply them directly to their own personal conditions. In fact, the comparative relationship between the two was so blatant that

the "production of Enemies was forbidden by the Tsarist censorship and the play did not see the footlights in Russia until 1933."⁴

In arranging the incidents of his arguments, Gorky elected to leave the ending indefinite. While the play ends with the establishment arresting the socialist leaders of the factory and uncovering the plot to hand over a mock murderer, the victory is clearly a temporary one. The government has not been able to totally destroy the work of the socialist leaders. The ideas of socialism have been firmly established in the minds of the working class members; and, as Levshin warns, nothing can stop its inevitable growth.

Levshin. You can't throw us out, oh, no! No more of that. We've lived long enough in dark lawlessness. We've caught fire now, and you'll never put that light out. No matter what you do you'll never stamp us out with fear-- never!⁵

In building the action to the indefinite ending in Enemies, Gorky chooses to arrange the consecutive actions in a simple pattern. From the opening lines of the play, the action moves steadily forward as a result of a continuous complication. All the action is presented in a simplistic manner. There are no counterforces or secondary complications to interrupt the flow of action. From the murder of Mikhail, the play moves in a single direction through the investigation to the arrests. The bulk of what occurs in the action of Enemies is due to the responses of all its characters to the whole affair.

Gorky does some very interesting things with his characterizations. First, there is neither an individual protagonist or antagonist around whom the action revolves. Gorky clearly wants to argue that the plot's

inherent struggle affects all people. The war is one which is between two classes of people, not individuals. As a result, the two sides are established in the major positions as unified groups. The working class fills the role of the protagonist, while the antagonist's role is portrayed by the intelligentsia.

Second, although Corky assigns each agent his/her own set of personal and distinguishing traits, the bulk of each character's personality is bound by the universal traits which reflects his/her appropriate class. It is the common group traits that ultimately lead each agent to act as a unified member of his/her class. For example, the workers share their relationship as protagonist because they firmly believe that the Russian people should all be treated equally in both economic and social perspectives. They also believe that a socialist state is the only hope for that possibility. Consequently, the workers act in the most expedient fashion to bring about the socialist revolution. This unified action of movement is most readily seen in the group's effort to frame a dummy murderer to protect a promising young leader of the cause.

On the other hand, the intelligentsia are bound by a different set of common traits. First, they are afraid to share their newly acquired wealth with anyone but themselves because they believe that the masses are trying to strip them of everything they have worked so hard to earn. In addition, the intelligentsia see their abilities to earn wealth and to cultivate themselves as a sign of superior personage. They feel the masses represent a state of unruliness and lack of culture. Consequently they believe that Russian soil is an inappropriate place for socialism and they

act in the most direct fashion to prohibit its coming. This sentiment is clearly expressed in a brief discussion between Mikhail and Polina, Zakhar's wife, as he waits to request Zakhar's permission to close the factory.

Polina. You know, in Russia people are more diverse than in other countries.

Mikhail. Say more perverse--viciously so--and I'll agree with you. I've had people taking orders from me for fifteen years. I know what they are--those kind Russian people so painted up in the priestly literature--

Polina. Priestly?

Mikhail. Of course. All those priests' sons, the Chernishevskys, the Dobrolyubovs, the Zlatovratskys, the Usperskys--(Looks at his watch.) Zakhar Ivanovich is a long time coming out.

Polina. Do you know what he's doing? He and your brother are finishing last night's chess game.

Mikhail. And down there they're planning to quit after dinner. Believe me, Russia will never make good. That's a fact. It's a land of anarchism. There's an ingrained distaste for work and an utter incapacity for order. Respect for law is absent.⁶

Third, since Gorky collectively gathers the agents of the play into the two groups, he is able to assign the symbolic traits of goodness and evilness to the representative group. The socialists are pictured as being inherently good. Throughout the play they are characterized as well behaved, intelligent and cultured people, who acted violently only when a gun was turned on them. In reparation for this unfortunate incident, they willingly agree to sacrifice one of their own people. The

intelligentsia, however, are portrayed in the opposite perspective. They are inherently evil because of their ultimate absorption with money and selves. Gorky pictures the evilness of such indulgences by coloring the members of the intelligentsia as spineless, violent, blundering, and selfish.

Up to now the description of characters has focused on the attitude traits and choices*of agents made by the group; however, a few words need to be said regarding how Gorky bridges the motivational gap between these two levels. Gorky skillfully provides the individual characters with their own emotions and capacities for thought. This artful action on the part of Gorky points out that people can be defined by the attitudes of the group, but the motivation for their involvement must ultimately be justified by their own emotional commitment and meditations. Consequently, Gorky's characters experience a variety of emotional responses to the events of action. The emotional response in turn requires each character to thoughtfully reflect on the relationship of that feeling and his/her position to the group action. For example, Polina, being kindly in nature, experiences anguish at the choice to close the factory because it will leave many families without money to buy bread. Yet since her family is owed respect by the workers, she finds it difficult to deny support from the choice. As a result of these emotions, she thinks out her position to justify her ultimate support of the group decision. Because Polina engages in weighing the good and bad qualities of the issue, her choice is moralistic rather than expedient. By making agents a blend of self and group, Gorky successfully accomplishes creating characters who possess life-like depth.

Gorky chooses to enhance the realistic qualities of his characters by providing them with a natural pattern of diction. Consequently, the structure of the language form is prose.

The form of the play is melodrama. The problem in Enemies is only temporarily serious. Gorky provides an answer to the problems created in the main story line through the ideas presented in the subplot. The play's characters are presented as universal figures and are therefore static. They do not acquire any new attitudes as a result of the action. The universality of character also permits Gorky to create the two emotional states required by the form. At the onset of the play, the action causes the audience to experience pity and sympathy for the oppressed workers in the factory. These initial feelings however turn to fear for the workers' rights as the intelligentsia becomes more firmly committed to treating the workers and their families as inferior. As the audience's positive emotions toward the workers increase, the second counter emotion of hate also develops toward the intelligentsia. This negative emotion grows stronger with the audience each time the intelligentsia acts to strengthen its grip on the subordinate class.

The only deviation that Enemies contains from the melodramatic form is the ending. Because it ends indefinitely, the audience does not have the chance to see the good rewarded and the evil punished. Gorky does, however, leave such an ending possible, but it is up to the audience to make it happen. It is clearly implied that action by the masses to instill a state of socialism in Russia would be to the betterment of all classes.

Gorky's Enemies was a clear and direct message to those liberal Russians who truly failed to live up to their revolutionary backgrounds. Gorky masterfully used a simplistic plot with complex characterization to make an attack that the upper class would not take lightly for over thirty years. As a result of his careful writing, however, modern Russia has crowned Enemies as an eternal masterpiece on the structure of the class system and its inevitable downfall at the turn of the century.

Notes

¹Alexander Bakshy, "The Theatre of Maxim Gorky," in Seven Plays of Maxim Gorky, ed. Alexander Bakshy and Paul S. Nathan (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1946), p. 4.

²Maxim Gorky, Enemies, trans. Alexander Bakshy, in Seven Plays of Maxim Gorky, ed. Alexander Bakshy and Paul S. Nathan (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1946), p. 165.

³Gorky, pp. 178-179.

⁴Bakshy, p. 7.

⁵Gorky, p. 201.

⁶Gorky, p. 148.

CHAPTER IV

THE RED ROBE

Eugene Brieux wrote The Red Robe in 1915 to protest the condition of the magistracy in France. The play serves as evidence that Brieux felt the judicial system in France was a mockery. In several places within the play, Brieux states that the tradition of appointing justices to the red cloaked magistracy based on their merits as a member of the profession had become subordinate to less desirable appointments, which were based on political favors or the avoidance of scandals. Seeing both of these latter conditions for promotion as abominable, Brieux chose to attack them in his play and called for the immediate downfall of the French judicial system in the most direct way possible.

As Act One opens, it is the evening following a court session closing. Vagret, the Public Prosecutor for the court at Mauleón, and his wife are preparing to entertain the court's members for dinner. While both Vagret and his wife express the hope that the end of the session will bring his long deserved promotion to the red cloaked magistracy, they are both aware that it is an unlikely possibility. Vagret has no personal acquaintances who can politically motivate the promotion, and the last court session has not been very successful for him. His prosecutions have resulted in three acquittals by the jury, and he has been unable to appoint a chief investigator who can catch the Irissarry murderer. More bad luck seems to strike just before the dinner guests arrive. Delorme, the chief investigator, forces Vagret to accept his resignation from the Irissarry case. The

pre-dinner talk, however, raises new hope for capturing the elusive criminal. Mouzan, a younger member of the court, suggests that the problem thus far in the investigation is that Delorme has been intent on finding the suspect among the vagabonds. Mouzan argues that given the known facts, the murderer is more likely to have been a relative, a friend, or a debtor of the deceased. At Vagret's request, Mouzan takes Delorme's place as chief investigator for the Irissarry murder. Mouzan soon discovers that the dead man was owed a good deal of money by Etchepare who had previously been convicted four times of assault and battery. Consequently, Etchepare is arrested and accused of the murder. Unfortunately for Mouzan, however, Etchepare maintains his innocence and his wife Yanetta refuses to testify otherwise. Because her past also involves a criminal record, Mouzan arrests her for complicity, and the case goes to trial. In court, Vagret brilliantly prosecutes the accused and everyone excitedly anticipates the first death sentence in the district. Vagret, however, doubts Etchepare and Yanetta's guilt and elects to bring those doubts before the jury. This action results in their acquittals and costs the just Vagret an appointment to the magistracy. Instead, Mouzan, who has destroyed Etchepare and Yanetta's chance for a happy homelife, is slated for the promotion because his own personal conduct has created a potential scandal for the district.

In making a demand for reform in the French Magistracy, Brioux skillfully lodges multiple arguments against the court justices by using a plot structure that is made up of multiple characters engaged in a series of actions around a principal event. In this instance the principal event is the resolution of the Irissarry murder. This choice of events allows

Brieux to do two things. First a major criminal investigation gives the plot line movement. Each discovery or development justifies the action which leads to the next. Second, the outcome of the principal event involves serious consequences for the court's members. A guilty verdict in the case means the death sentence for the accused. Such a sentence would raise the already low esteem of the Mauleón justices to a level where they would automatically be considered for promotions. By using the actions which naturally flow from such an important criminal case, Brieux has the opportunity to underscore the questionable character of the French courts' members.

The plot consists of two parallel storylines that are tied together by the single principal event. In each case the thread focuses on a would be magistrate and his efforts to be a true defender of society. The first line, which centers on Vagret, opens the play. Vagret has patiently waited for his appointment to the higher magistracy, but it has been too long in coming. The exposition reveals that throughout his career, the prosecutor has truly tried to defend society by seeking truth and justice. Most recently, however, such actions have brought him a disgraceful three acquittals and an onslaught of attacks from the press. His wife argues that he has been so insistent in doing right that he has failed to meet the upper magistracy halfway on his promotion.

Vagret. But I have the definite promise of the
Attorney-General and of the Chief Justice.

Madame Vagret. It's the the Deputy's you need.

Vagret. Oh!

Madame Vagret. Certainly. Until now you have waited for advancement; you must meet it halfway, my dear. If you don't do as others do, you are only a simpleton.

Vagret. A man of principle, you mean!

Madame Vagret. And for the very reason that you are a man of principle you ought to strive to attain to higher duties. If the independent and capable magistrates let others outstrip them, what will be the future of the magistracy?

Vagret. There is some truth to that.¹

Agreeing with his wife, Vagret initially decides to focus on his own responsibility in Etchepare's murder trial. He orates the state's case flawlessly, ignoring to call the jury's attention to some potential weaknesses. Being a man of principle, however, he cannot let an innocent man die. Instead of calling for a verdict at the end of his closing arguments, Vagret asks for a recess during which he decides to bring those weaknesses before the jury at his own personal expense.

The other storyline focuses on Mouzan. This line is picked up at the end of Act One when Vagret appoints Mouzan as chief investigator in the Irissarry murder case. Unlike Vagret, Mouzan is only concerned with getting the conviction as rapidly as possible. As he accepts the position, he promises, "I retract nothing of what I have said, within three days the murderer will be arrested."² He wastes no time in getting a suspect. Mouzan learns that the victim was owed a large sum of money by Etchepare, who has had four criminal convictions for assault and battery, and immediately assumes that Etchepare is the guilty party, and issues a warrant for the arrest. Etchepare has no verifiable alibi, but he maintains

his innocence. Since Etchepare refuses to confess, Mouzan plots to weaken the defense by blackmailing Etchepare's wife, Yanetta, with her secret criminal past. This effort fails too, and he arrests Yanetta as an accomplice. This act ultimately destroys Etchepare and Yanetta's marriage, as the trial reveals Yanetta's criminal conviction for complicity to theft. As the trial is winding up, Mouzan is accused of immoral conduct on a recent trip to Bordeaux. There is even evidence to suggest that he attempted to use his position as a magistrate to prevent charges being filed against him. Rather than punishing Mouzan by a trial which would place the magistracy in the center of a scandal, the judicial hierarchy elects to remove him from the district by promoting him to a red robe position at Pau. By using both of these storylines, Brioux is able to point out that the French court's problems are not created by a few questionable members, but rather by the system. He successfully argues in the final conversation between Vagret and the Judge of the Assizes that the very nature of the system turns its members into animals of prey and that as long as the system remains intact it will be the people of France who will be the victims.

The incidents of both plot structures are very specific and must therefore be considered inductive proof of Brioux's claims. It is very obvious that Brioux intended for the incidents of the play to be careful and accurate correlations to those occurring in real life. In fact, Brioux's accusations against the real magistracy are at times so direct and blatant that they stand apart from the normal flow of action. One such example happens at the end of Act Two, when Mouzan arrests Yanetta for complicity to murder.

Yanetta. Ah! You are furious, aren't you, eh, not to have gained your point! Oh! You have done everything you could, though--except to have us burned with slow fire! You have pretended to be kind--you spoke gently! You wanted to have me send my husband to the scaffold! It is your trade to furnish heads to be cut off . . . you must have victims! You must have them at any price. When a man has fallen into your claws he is lost. One enters here innocent, he must go out a criminal. It is your trade, it is your glory to succeed in it. You put questions which don't seem to be anything and which may send a man into the other world, and when you have forced the wretch to convict himself, you feel a cannibal's joy!³

Brieux's choices for arranging the incidents of his arguments are very fundamental with one exception. That exception is the choice of ending. The ending is indefinite, but in an unusual way. Although the play's basic action comes to a specific close with the acquittals of Etchepare and Yanetta and the appointment of Mouzan to the Court at Pau, Brieux closes the play with a new complication. A victimized Yanetta murders the evil Mouzan. By introducing this final action, Brieux does two things. First he reminds the audience that the major issue of the play, the wickedness of the French magistracy, has yet to be resolved. Second, he symbolically suggests what ought to be done to resolve the problem. Through Mouzan's murder, Brieux argues that the only way the injustices of the court system can be stopped is for the people to seek the permanent destruction of the system itself. Outside of this unusual flair in the ending, the remaining pattern of arrangement in The Red Robe is relatively simple.

The consecutive actions of the play move in a single direction toward the natural conclusion of the play. The action begins with Delorme's

resignation from the Irissarry case and moves through Mouzan's appointment to the case, his investigation, and the ultimate trial of the accused. The force which moves the action is the continuous complication created by the Court of Mauleón's need to solve the Irissarry murder.

While the plot structure provides Brioux with a format for making his arguments, it is his careful depth of characterization that makes his arguments strong. With only one or two exceptions, Brioux's characters possess at least biological, physical, and attitudinal traits, which they maintain throughout the play. Such depth allows Brioux to speak through any character he desires. For example in Act One the physical and attitudinal traits of La Bouzule, a relatively minor character, allow him to credibly access and evaluate the weaknesses of the French magistracy.

The greatest depth of characterization comes in the three leading characters of the play. These characters are Mouzan, Vagret, and Yanetta. All three experience emotions which motivate them to deliberate and ultimately to make decisions.

For practical purposes, Mouzan is the play's antagonist. He represents all the evil qualities which Brioux believed were part of the French magistracy. Like the other magistrates, Mouzan hopes that he will receive an appointment to the higher council. Once he accidentally makes a favorable impression on the Deputy Mondoubleau, his hope transforms into a strong motivating desire. Throughout the remainder of the play, Mouzan engages in expedient deliberation and choices in order to secure his promotion. The first occasion happens in Act Two when Mouzan seeks to repair his own personal blunder by bribing Yanetta.

Mouzan. Ah, if I only didn't have this headache! I have just put my foot in it.

Clerk. Oh, your honor!

Mouzan. I did, just the same! I was wrong to show him the weakness of his new story . . . It is so absurd that it would have ruined him. Whereas, if he continues to assert that he didn't leave the house, if his maid persists, if his wife says the same thing it will be enough to cast a doubt in the mind of the jury . . . The question, now, is how to repair the damage! Let us reflect . . . if I succeed in making his wife confess that he was out until morning, we get back the ridiculous story of the lost horse--I'll catch him twice in a lie and I have him! . . . Yes the thing now is to put the woman through the third degree and it will be a wonder if I don't succeed. What did I do with the police report from Paris about the Etchepare woman?⁴

Unlike Mouzan, Vagret represents what justice should be. Although he also has the desire to be promoted to the red cloaked magistracy, his humanistic bent prevents the desire from becoming passionate. He argues that if there is any doubt, "it is better to let ten guilty men go free than to punish one who is innocent."⁵ As a result, when Etchepare and Yanetta's defense attorney leaves certain holes in the court's case unaddressed, he cannot in good conscience call for a guilty verdict. Vagret's fear of a false conviction leads him to moralistically deliberate whether to point out the case's weakness or to do his job by simply calling for a guilty verdict. Ultimately he chooses to act morally and thus questions the defendants' guilt at his own personal loss.

Yanetta represents the play's protagonist. Her loyalty and dedication to her husband after his arrest reflect her fine disposition of

character. Unfortunately, she finds herself unjustly victimized by the court when the public learns that her past involves a criminal record for complicity. Once her husband leaves with the children, Yanetta experiences anger and anguish. As a result, she is forced to engage in thought and to make a choice. For her, the thought and choice are moralistic.

Mouzan. A magistrate is not responsible.

Yanetta. Ah, you are not responsible! Then you could, just for a whim, arrest people, on a shadow of suspicion, even without suspicion; you might bring shame and dishonor on whole families, torture the unhappy, . . . rob a mother of her little ones! And after that, like Pontius Pilate you would say and would believe that you were not responsible! Not responsible! Before your law, you may not be responsible, as you say, but before justice itself, before the justice of decent people, before God's own justice, I swear to you that you are responsible and that is why I have come to bring you to account! [Sees upon the desk of Mouzan, whose back is turned, the dagger used as a paper-cutter. Seizes it and lays it down again.]

Mouzan. I order you to go.

Yanetta. Listen to me . . . how do you propose to get my children back for me.

Mouzan. I have nothing to say to you; I owe you nothing.

Yanetta. You owe me nothing! You owe me more than life. [Seizes the knife.] Yes! Now look at your work, all you wicked judges: Of an innocent man you almost made a criminal, and of an honest woman, of a mother, you have made a murderess! [Strikes him, he falls.]⁶

It is Brieux's depth of characterization that makes his arguments against the magistracy very strong. The beings of the agents are so

vivid that they naturally cause the audience to emotionally respond to them in some way.

Brieux enhances the emotional attraction of the audience to the characters by using a realistic structure for their diction. The dialogue is written in prose form.

In addition, Brieux extends the play's emotional appeal by using the melodrama form. The action in the play is very serious. Brieux himself points this out in the final conversation between Vagret and the Judge of the Assizes.

Vagret. It's an atrocity, I tell you that it [the court] is permitted to throw up to a prisoner, innocent or guilty, a fault which he committed ten years before and which he has expiated. Yes, sir, it is revolting that after having punished, the law does not pardon.⁷

The threat that the French magistracy poses to the just and innocent characters of the play is very strong. Because the characters remain fundamentally the same throughout the play, the audience emotionally identifies with each. The emotion felt toward Vagret and Yanetta is fear because the system threatens to destroy each. The emotion felt toward Mouzan is hate because he is a defendant of an inherently evil system of justice.

The ending of The Red Robe deviates, however, from the typical melodrama ending. While the play ends with Mouzan being punished for his actions, the good also are punished. Vagret does not receive an appointment to the District of Pau and Yanetta is left without a home and a family. Brieux's choice to end the play in this manner, however, permits him to re-emphasize the rhetorical intent of his drama and to compel the

audience to destroy the judicial system. The action of the play may end, but the issue of the French magistracy is unresolved, leaving the audience as potential victims until change occurs.

The Red Robe is a very strong attack against the French magistracy which existed in the earlier part of this century. Brieux carefully used the dramatic elements of plot structure and character to make many pointed arguments about the court's weaknesses. However, it is the emotional power which Brieux created through the manipulation of the dramatic elements that gives the play its greatest force.

Notes

¹Eugene Brieux, The Red Robe, trans. F. O. Reed, in Chief Contemporary Dramatists, ed. Thomas H. Dickinson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1915), p. 477.

²Brieux, p. 485.

³Brieux, p. 499.

⁴Brieux, pp. 494-495.

⁵Brieux, p. 511.

⁶Brieux, pp. 515-516.

⁷Brieux, p. 512.

CHAPTER V

WAITING FOR LEFTY

During the late 1920's and 1930's socialism was steadily creeping into the United States. Amongst the movement's supporters were several prominent playwrights. Even though these men all ventured to address the ideas of Marxism in their works, none addressed the theory in the pointed and commanding way of Clifford Odets. In 1935, the relatively unknown Odets astounded the theatre world by having four plays produced on Broadway in a single year. The most formidable of these works was Waiting for Lefty. This play was Odets' "most transparent use of theatre as a weapon in the class struggle,"¹ and by 1938 was being used world wide to encourage strikes within the ranks of the working class.

The setting for Waiting for Lefty is a labor union meeting of New York City taxi drivers. When the play opens, the union members are scheduled to take a strike vote. However, the union's secretary, Harry Fatt, is actively discouraging a pro vote. He argues that what the strike committee wants to do is communistic and that since laborers have a friend in the White House, they ought to support the man.² The workers, though, don't agree with Fatt's reasoning. They call for Lefty, their strike organizer, but Lefty isn't there. Consequently, while they wait for Lefty, each of the committee members takes his turn recalling the instance that motivated him personally to activate a battle against the nation's capitalists. Each speech consists of a personal flashback which is played out before the union members. Each flashback episode shows the working class

people struggling to get money for food, shelter, and medical expenses, while the factory owners, labor bosses, and politicians are stuffing their stomachs, throwing parties and buying jobs for their relatives. In the final speech, Agate Keller attacks what organized labor is doing to its own members. As he makes this speech, the other committee members are forced to protect him from the outraged Fatt and his gunman. Keller argues that red isn't necessarily bad, if it means that the workers unite and treat each other as "comrades."³ He closes by encouraging them not to sit around and wait for Lefty, because he might never come. Almost before the words are out, however, Keller is interrupted with news about Lefty. A worker enters announcing that Lefty has been found dead with a bullet in his head. Immediately the cry goes up for a uniting of the working class, and the strike is called.

Although the individual scenes in Waiting for Lefty make the play seem to have more than one principal event, they all have the same underlying idea, the oppression and abuse of the working class by the wealthy capitalists. Since all the scenes are unified by this major theme, the structural magnitude of the plot can be defined as two or more characters involved in a series of situations centering around a principal event.

To support his position for a socialist state, Odets uses a series of action sublines which are interwoven into the events of the major thread. The major line of action encompasses the events of the labor meeting. Fatt's arguments against striking, the discovery of the labor spy, and Agate Keller's address are all incidents which make up the major thread. Although the play's other four episodes are acted out before the union members, the actions which define each occur within a situational

context of their own that is outside the actual meeting. Consequently, each episode should be considered a separate subplot. There are four subplots: Joe and Edna's family quarrel, Miller's refusal to spy, Sid and Flor's broken engagement, and Doc Benjamin's political dismissal.

The relationship between the major line of action and the sublines is parallel. The context boundaries of each minor line cause it to remain independent of the major one. Basically, each line of incidents serves as Odets's proof that there is a need for a socialist system in the country.

The nature of the proof in Waiting for Lefty is deductive. Odets' episodes provide only outlines of the action occurring. Essentially, the play is attacking the harmfulness of the capitalistic theory to the worker in general, not the specific attitude or actions of an individualized business, organization, or political party. As a result, Odets designed the play's incidents to be symbolically representative of the events occurring in the lives of all working class members.

In developing his arguments, Odets used the episodes to justify the finite action at the play's end. The news of Lefty's murder serves as a bond for the workers as together they decide to strike. The consecutive actions have all occurred in a single direction. As the testimony in each episode occurs, the workers become more motivated to cast a favorable ballot to strike. The force which moves the action along is the single issue being considered at the meeting, the need to strike. This issue serves as a continuing complication and justifies the presence of the outside events as arguments in the meeting.

Odets also uses a more generalized structure in the development of his characters. He does this by dividing the agents into the two groups which are representative of the class struggle, the workers and the capitalists. The workers serve as the play's protagonist and the capitalists serve as the antagonist. Although Odets creates a realistic quality in the characters by giving each agent biological distinction and a few minor physical traits, the nature of an agent's more in-depth traits is assigned on the basis of group association. Even then, the traits assigned to the groups are general, representing only one or two of the group's most universal qualities.

There are four characters who make up the antagonist group. They are Fatt, the labor boss; his gunman; Fayette, the industrialist; and Clayton, the spy. Odets portrays these agents as very shallow. They lack the capacity for emotion, thought and choice. Their actions are a direct reflection of their natural disposition for money and power at the expense of the poor. As a result, their very existence serves as a threat to the survival of the working class.

Odets' characterization of the protagonists, however, is much deeper. On the physical level the workers are defined as individuals of loss and sacrifice. Since Joe is unable to financially provide for his family, he loses his wife's devotion and is threatened with the loss of his family. Sid is forced to give up his girl, Flor, and his dreams of marriage because he doesn't make enough money. Miller must give up his job to keep his personal integrity, since he refuses to spy on a fellow worker. Finally, Doc Benjamin is fired because he does not have the right political connections to remain in charitable medicine.

Even though this group is continually confronted with losses, they continue to believe that everyone has a right to happiness, the basic human needs, and self integrity. The fundamental beliefs have created in them a disposition for survival. However, with the struggle for survival comes pain. The emotion of pain forces them to deliberate a course of action. The thought which occurs is moralistic. The moralistic nature of the deliberation is reflected by both the group deliberation through the speeches made at the meeting and the personal deliberations made in the individual incidents.

The ultimate decision made by each individual and the group is moralistic. Consequently the strike is called and a promise made to better the world for all workers.

Agate. Hear it boys, hear it? Hell, listen to me!
Coast to coast! HELLO AMERICA! HELLO. WE'RE
STORMBIRDS OF THE WORKING-CLASS. WORKERS OF
THE WORLD . . . OUR BONES AND BLOOD! And when
we die they'll know what we did to make a new
world! Christ, cut us up to little pieces.
We'll die for what is right!⁴

Clearly Odets has created characters with universal appeal. By selecting key stereotypical traits, Odets has defined the class struggle in black and white terms. The workers definitely emerge the heroes, while the capitalists are pictured the evil villains.

The language Odets uses to convey his message is prose. This choice adds to the realistic appeal of the characters.

The dramatic form of Waiting for Lefty is melodrama. The major issue behind the action is very serious. The capitalists have oppressed the workers to the point that they barely have money to purchase food and

health care. While new information is continually being revealed about the characters throughout the play, they fundamentally remain the same. Both the capitalists and the workers have made their basic moral decisions before the curtain rises.

Since the two groups essentially represent the opposite extremes of good and evil, Odets easily raises the emotions necessary to the form in the audience. Almost immediately the audience experiences dislike for Fatt and his gunman. In the opening scene they engage in name calling, attacking anyone who dares to question their judgment or who disagrees with them.

Fatt. Now listen, we can't stay here all night. I gave you the facts in the case. You boys got hot suppers to go to and--

Another voice. Says you!

Gunman. Sit down, Punk!

Another voice. Where's Lefty?

Fatt. That's what I wanna know. Where's your pal, Lefty? You elected him chairman--where the hell did he disappear?

Voices. We want Lefty! Lefty! Lefty!

Fatt (pounding). What the hell is this--a circus? You got the committee here. This bunch of cowboys you elected.⁵

The dislike turns to hate as the flashbacks reveal that the strike committee was formed because the labor boss wasn't doing anything to help the workers in their struggle against big business. The flashback episodes also serve to make the strike committee members, their families, and friends sympathetic to the audience. When the guest speaker in Episode Four

turns out to be a labor spy, the audience's sympathy turns to fear. It becomes clearly evident that the capitalists will go to any extreme to prevent the workers from getting their fair share.

The only deviation in the melodramatic form is the ending. Although the action comes to a definite close, with the workers making a decision to strike, the good characters are not rewarded and the evil ones punished. In fact, the workers receive a momentary set back as news comes that their comrade Lefty has been murdered. Rather than breaking the union, though, the news serves to create a new sense of hope. They become angry and as a result are motivated to fight the capitalists. This final action consequently suggests that in time the heroes will be rewarded and the villains punished.

Although Waiting for Lefty is only a one act play, it is a powerful play with a powerful message. Odets has used great skill in manipulating the dramatic elements to create universal characters and episodes that would be easily identifiable by all working class members. Consequently the drama has been responsible for leaving many audiences emotionally charged and motivated to seek the establishment of socialism.

Notes

¹Haskell M. Block and Robert G. Shedd, Masters of Modern Drama (New York: Random House, Inc., 1962), p. 645.

²Clifford Odets, Waiting for Lefty in Six Plays of Clifford Odets, ed. The Modern Library (New York: Random House, Inc., 1963), pp. 5-6.

³Odets, p. 31.

⁴Odets, p. 31.

⁵Odets, p. 6.

CHAPTER VI

ONE-THIRD OF A NATION

One-third of a Nation by Arthur Arent is one of a series of Living Newspapers produced by the Federal Theatre Project during the late 1930's. The intent of the newspaper was to recreate, in dramatic form, documentaries on major social issues confronting America at that time. According to Hallie Flanagan, the Federal Theatre director, the Newspapers were designed to encourage Americans to become involved in a moral war on "a new frontier in America, a frontier against disease, dirt, poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, despair, and at the same time against selfishness, special privilege and social apathy."¹ Although the plays were thoroughly documented and well received by American audiences, their leftist perspective in resolving the issues put the productions under the constant threat of censorship.

One-third of a Nation was specifically designed to investigate the housing problems plaguing the United States. According to housing statistics in 1938, approximately one-third of all people were forced to live in broken down brownstone tenements that existed in the midst of filth and slum conditions.

To build his arguments, Arent divides the play into two acts consisting of eleven scenes. Each scene is equivalent to its own special news story. An omniscient, but unseen narrator, known as the Loudspeaker, is used to unite the actions of the various scenes. The play opens in 1924, with a massive fire that kills thirteen people. The investigation which follows reveals that no one is responsible for the safety conditions

which caused the fire. As the Loudspeaker learns through an interview with the building's landlord tenements built before 1901 are not regulated by current health and safety standards. Since there appears to be nothing in the present that can resolve the housing problem, the Loudspeaker looks to the past for a possible solution. In trying to find the answer, the Loudspeaker explores a number of events and issues. The incidents covered include land speculation, the passage of a variety of tenement laws, increases in juvenile delinquency, the cholera epidemics, and the rent strikes. The action finally resolves in 1938 with delinquency still rising, the cholera epidemics traded for new diseases such as tuberculosis and meningitis, and federal appropriations to clean up the slum conditions woefully insufficient.

Although the plot consists of a collective group of scenes, they all share the same underlying idea. Consequently, the action reflects a plot magnitude of multiple characters engaged in a series of actions which center on a principal event. The script for One-third of a Nation calls for one hundred ninety-seven different agents to act out nineteen actions about the tenement conditions in the United States.

In developing his living newspaper, Arent uses eleven threads of action. Each line is relatively brief and constitutes one scene in the play. The threads are woven together as continuous action by verbal transitions which are provided through the discussions of the Loudspeaker and the Little Man. The eleven lines of action include the tenement fire, the fire investigation, Trinity Church's acquisition and divestment of a large portion of land in the city, the land speculation of landowners, tenement life in the Middle 1800s, the renting of tenements, the creation

of new laws to govern rentals, tenement life since 1901, the expense of privately constructed housing developments, government housing, and a solution to the problem.

For the most part the lines of action run parallel to each other. The scenes generally have no bearing on each other and are only united because they represent some aspect of a greater problem, the housing issue. In two instances, however, there is a diverging relationship between the two lines of action. The first instance occurs at the beginning of Act One. The investigation of the tenement fire in scene two begins as a result of the fire in the preceding scene. It quickly diverges, though, to its own line of action, the regulations governing safety and health standards in the tenements. The second occasion occurs at the end of Act One. Scene Six begins because of the final event in Scene Five. Scene Five focuses on tenement living in the 1800s. It ends with an outbreak of cholera and the deaths of 2500 people. As a result, the landlords are left with a large number of vacant apartments. In Scene Six, the tenement vacancies are justified by the epidemic in the previous scene, but the action moves to center on renting practices.

The incidents which make up the lines of action are fictional, although they were designed to be actual reproductions of events that had or were happening in every tenement. Arent documents this fact in the opening scene of the play. As the tenement burns, the Loudspeaker announces three such fires that really occurred.

Loudspeaker. February, 1924--This might be 397 Madison Street, New York.* It might be 245 Halsey Street, Brooklyn,⁺ or Jackson Avenue and 10th Street, Long Island City.⁺⁺²

Arent continues to use this format for structuring incidents throughout the play. He uses specific characters involved in specific events, factually documenting the actions to have universally happened. Since the specific actions of the play can easily be generalized to real events, the incidents serve as inductive proof for the playwright's arguments.

Arent basically arranges the play's events in a chronological time line. The only exception is the two opening scenes. The fire and its subsequent investigation, which occur in the present, are needed for beginning exposition. They establish the existence of a housing problem and justify the following historical adventure. Since the play basically consists of eleven mini-studies on the housing problem, there is no way to bring the action to a finite close. The play ends indefinitely, when Arent's studies have exhausted discussion on the major issues and a potential solution. The initial complication, however, is still a cold reality.

The basic arrangement of the consecutive actions is complex. Throughout the play, the housing problems are blamed on landowners and landlords, who are trying to make money off of the financially disadvantaged. Initially the action implies that these businessmen should be held responsible for bringing about the improved living conditions. Toward the end of Act Two, however, a counterforce interrupts the flow of action. The government becomes the agency targeted for correcting the housing problems. This shift occurs in Scene Three when a landlord makes the humanistic gesture to construct improved housing. His efforts are stilted because the profit motive in big business and government taxes make the project

economically unfeasible. The landlord then suggests that a more viable solution to the slum clean-up would be government sponsored housing. This suggestion serves to initiate the counterforce which operates throughout the remainder of the play.

Both the force and counterforce of the play function from a single continuous complication. The single complication is introduced in Act One, Scene Two, when the action reveals that there are no provisions for correcting the dangerous conditions existing in the tenements.

The mini episode structure of One-third of a Nation also influences the nature and depth of character development. It is obviously very difficult, in a play of one hundred ninety-seven distinct characters, to create agents who have depth enough to create an emotional response in the audience. This is especially true in One-third of a Nation. The Loudspeaker, the play's major agent, doesn't even have biological distinction. It is clearly evident, by the lack of detailed character development, that Arent hoped constant exposure of the audience to the tenement conditions would sufficiently create the emotion needed to motivate action in the viewers. To some degree, this does occur. Arent's characters, however, are not devoid of distinction and as a member of a larger group they too eventually have the power to make an emotional appeal.

Agent begins his characterizations by dividing the agents into three groups, the tenants, the business people, and the officials. He then makes each group's membership representative of society by distributing among the agents a wide variety of biological and physical traits which are typical of their particular group. Finally each agent, based on group association, is provided with a few key attitudes and emotions. It is

Arent's constant use of these universal distinctions that eventually causes each group to collectively have emotional power.

The tenants are all extremely poor. They believe that the landlords are taking advantage of them, but they also realize that they have to have a place to live. As a result the tenement residents are often frustrated and experience the emotions of anger and despair.

Mother. Tom, is this what we left Ireland for? Is this what we gave up a cottage and green grass and the good hot sun for?

Father. There's no famine here, Kate. Plenty of potatoes and bread and meat, if you can afford to pay for 'em. And I've been working steady a whole year . . . a whole year.

Mother. Sure, but where does it all go? To the landlord, to the butcher! Mary was right. What do we pay rent for anyhow?

Father. Because we've got to have a place to live.

Mother. Does it have to be here? Does it have to be here where your own daughter's got to take her clothes off in front of your eyes, in a place that smells so you can't even eat! Look! Roaches! I scrub and I clean and nothing happens. Just filth and vermin and garbage, and, and . . . I tell you, I can't stand it! (She falls back into the chair weeping.)³

The business people are all relatively well off. This category consists of the landowners, the landlords, the clergy, and the general businessmen. Unfortunately for the renters, this group of agents has greedy dispositions. They are motivated by fear of financial loss and as a result always act expediently to secure their fortunes.

Landowner (to all the Prospects). Sorry, folks, that's all there is . . . All rented and busy as a beehive, that's what we are. (The Prospects start to exit.)

Landowner (he calls the last man, who is very fat; Fat Man stays behind as others exit). Say-- wait a minute! . . . (His roving eye has lighted on a few blades of green grass still visible at the far end of the carpet. He bends down to see it, then, with a slight push, he forces all in the first row to topple over) . . . There you are, sir, the last parcel! Almost missed it, I did. (As Fat Man bends down to look at it) It is a little small, but it is right in the heart of the business section. The lucky man who rents this won't have to walk far to work . . . It'll cost you ten dollars a square foot for this.⁴

Finally, the officials have a disposition for passing the buck and doing nothing. When a catastrophe occurs, they are quick to show their concern by calling an investigation, but their ultimate response is always the same.

Little Man. What happened after he handed the report in?

Loudspeaker. Everybody said it was a shame and something ought to be done about it.

Little Man. Did they do anything?

Loudspeaker. No.⁵

There are only two characters in the play, besides the indefinable Loudspeaker, that stand out as distinct. They are the Little Man, Mr. Buttonkooper and his wife, Mrs. Buttonkooper. These two characters are tenants, who come out of the audience to question and comment on the issues raised about the tenement problem. Like the other renters, the Buttonkoopers believe that the landlords are taking advantage of them. They also are unable to do anything about the situation, and as a result, they naturally experience frustration, anger, and despair. Unlike the other agents, however, Arent uses them for a specific purpose. They are designed as role models for the audience. Consequently they engage in the

behavioral acts that Arent hopes to motivate in the real audience. They participate in both moralistic and expedient thought and decision. The majority of their stage action constitutes moralistic deliberation. Their constant questions, reflections, and comments ultimately lead them to make their first major decision in the play's final scene. The decision is moralistic. They resolve that it is time they did something about the housing conditions, because "according to what we've seen here tonight people have been going around for a hundred years or more--taking notes, making surveys--but nobody's ever done anything!"⁶ This decision in turn leads them to expediently deliberate an appropriate course of action, which ultimately leads to an expedient choice in the closing lines of the play.

Mrs. Buttonkooper. You know what we're going to do--you and me? We're going to holler. And we're going to keep on hollering until they admit in Washington it's just as important to keep a man alive as it is to kill him!⁷

While Arent's characters lack total development, they are powerful. By introducing the audience to such a large number of similar but different agents, Arent is able to underscore, through the Buttonkoopers' verbal deliberations, the vastness of the housing problem and the importance of immediate action.

Since the Newspaper is designed as a factual replication of the housing problem, it is only logical for Arent to have used the people's language form in constructing the dialogue. As a result the diction in One-third of a Nation is prose.

Although the play's style deviates from the traditional melodrama form, One-third of a Nation is a melodrama. First, the actions of the play are

very serious. The living conditions of the renters are life threatening. However, there is no inherent obstacle that would prevent appropriate action from solving the problem even though it has existed for more than one hundred years.

Second, the drama, to a lesser degree than most others, does evoke the emotions of fear and hate. Although the audience does not have the opportunity to attach itself to a single sympathetic agent, the opening fire which leaves thirteen people dead makes the audience initially sympathetic to the tenant class. The sympathy turns to fear for human life, as Arent repeatedly exposes more abuses and hazardous conditions. These incidents also cause the audience to experience disgust, when it becomes evident that nobody intends to assume responsibility for correcting the problems. As time makes the problems increasingly worse, the audience's emotion intensifies, turning first to anger and ultimately to hate for the system which forces so many Americans to exist in such vile conditions.

Third, the characters in the drama are all static. Each was designed to fulfill one of three roles, and as a result, Arent has made all their fundamental moral choices before the action begins.

Fourth, the solution suggests that there is a possibility that the drama can end in the traditional style, if the right actions are initiated. By destroying the slums, all of society would be rewarded through a decrease in disease, filth, crime and delinquency.

It is no surprise that One-third of a Nation was well received by the American people. Arent made creative use of the dramatic form in

writing his living newspaper. He artistically blended historical events and facts, plot structure, and collective characterization to produce a powerful rhetorical argument, which served as both a motivating force for the audience and an educational tool for the people.

Notes

¹Hallie Flanagan, Introd., Federal Theatre Plays, ed. Pierre de Rohan (New York: Random House, Inc., 1938), p. xiii.

²Arthur Arent, One-third of a Nation in Federal Theatre Plays, ed. Pierre de Rohan (New York: Random House, Inc., 1938), p. 13.

³Arent, pp. 47-48.

⁴Arent, p. 34.

⁵Arent, p. 44.

⁶Arent, p. 118.

⁷Arent, p. 120.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSIONS

A comparative examination of the descriptions in this study suggests that there is indeed reason to make a generic claim for deliberative drama written between 1882 and 1938. As the descriptions reveal, each play contains a common underlying emotion which indicates the author's motivational precedent for writing the argument. In addition, each work shares with the others a blend of five inherent structural elements.

The motivational precedent for the works is anger. In each work the playwright establishes this precedent through his protagonists' character development. All of the protagonists, whether individual or group, experience anger toward the acts of the antagonist or the surrounding physical conditions. For example, Stockmann, in An Enemy of the People, is angered when the liberals refuse to publish his health report on the Baths. The workers, in Enemies, are angry because the intelligentsia treat them as subordinate members in society. Yanetta is angry at Mouzan, in The Red Robe, for making her a victim of an unjust court system. In Waiting for Lefty, the hacks are angry at the industrialists who refuse to pay the drivers enough wages to purchase life's basic needs. Finally, the tenants in One-third of a Nation experience anger because they are forced to live in life threatening conditions. As a consequence of anger, each protagonist is motivated to address the issue of concern.

The five common elements shared between the plays serve as the distinguishing traits of deliberative drama. Each element is essential to the

basic structure of the genre. The absence of any one of these elements would ultimately alter the nature and persuasive intent of the drama.

The first characteristic of the genre is that all works should contain a plot magnitude of multiple characters engaged in a series of actions about a principal event. By using a single principal event, namely the issue of concern, the playwright is able to channel the audience's attention fully on the argument. In addition, the use of multiple characters demonstrates that the issue is of concern to more than just a few individuals. Consequently by using multiple agents, the playwright is able to denote the issue's significance.

The second distinguishing trait is that the play's consecutive actions should operate from a single continuous complication, which remains unresolved at the end of the action. The single complication should represent the major problem(s) created by the central issue. While additional complications may be added to the argument to give the issue more magnitude, it is essential that the action only suggests a possible resolution. An ending, which leaves the complication's resolve indefinite, serves as the playwright's plea for action from the audience. If a play ends with its characters correcting the problems, then the audience remains without responsibility to act.

The third characteristic is that the incidents and dialogue should be realistic. A deliberative drama is an argument. Consequently, it must be understandable and recognizable to the audience, if it is to have any motivating power. Should the playwright engage in things such as excessive stylism, figurative analogies, and poetic verse, there is a risk that the

play's message will be swallowed up in the language.

The fourth element is a protagonist who is capable of emotion, thought, and decision. The protagonist's role in the deliberative drama is not only to be threatened by the play's inherent issue, but to fight back against the problems it creates. Such a role demands higher levels of characterization in the agent. Essentially it is the protagonist's duty to serve as the playwright's advisor for the audience. Consequently, the protagonist must act as a fictional counterpart, or role model, for the audience. If the playwright wants the audience to feel certain emotions and to think in a particular way and to make definite choices with regard to the issue, he must create a sympathetic protagonist who does the same.

The final distinguishing trait of the genre is its dramatic form. The form should be melodrama, but the ending cannot see the good rewarded. Naturally, the action must be serious if it is to warrant the audience's concern. However, the serious nature of the action must be reversible. The audience must feel that appropriate action will resolve the problem and return all to a state of harmony. Otherwise, the drama will only serve to create in the audience more frustration with regard to the issue itself. The argument must also make it clear which actions are and are not appropriate. This distinction occurs through characterization. Consequently, since deliberative dramas are melodramatic, the agents must be designed as representatives of good and evil. These extremes of characterization in turn elicit the motivating emotions of the play, fear and hate. Finally, although the drama may suggest that the adoption of its inherent proposal will result in rewards for the good, the agents must not

receive such benefits within the action. As part of the argument's motivational power, the playwright must leave the audience feeling that it is their action that will bring about such an end.

Since this study successfully establishes a genre for deliberative dramas which are built on the motivational precedents of anger and which share a common fusion of five distinguishing traits, it is possible to suggest two directions for future generic studies in this form of public argument.

First, future studies should complete the final two stages of Harrell and Linkugel's framework for generic criticism. This study was only designed to participate in the first stage, description. However the results of the study have established the necessary base for rhetoricians who wish to engage in generic participation and generic application.

Second, future studies may wish to look for sub-genres of deliberative drama. There is evidence to suggest that the plays used in this study are potential members of more defined classes of deliberative drama. For example, the dramas dealing with socialism tended to handle the development of the issue and the characters in a slightly different manner than the others. Another possible sub-class exists in the Living Newspapers produced by the members of the Federal Theatre Project. Should a rhetorician elect to pursue a study in this direction it will be necessary to engage in further generic description. In either choice of direction, however, there is plenty of work remaining to be done in the classification of deliberative dramas written between 1882 and 1938.

Having conducted a generic study in the first stage of Harrell and Linkugel's framework for such criticism and having suggested further directions for research, it seems appropriate to close with an evaluation of the Harrell-Linkugel "method."¹ Fundamentally the Harrell-Linkugel approach to generic criticism is weak because it is too broad to serve as a guide for criticism and because there are previously established resources available to accomplish the same goal, the founding of a genre.

"On Rhetorical Genre: An Organizing Perspective" is not a methodology as Harrell and Linkugel claim. The perspective is simply much too broad. Essentially, in developing the methodology, Harrell and Linkugel divide what would be the logical and sequential direction for generic criticism into three fundamental operations. However, they provide no insight into how these three divisions of research are operationalized. Consequently, if critics are to conduct generic criticisms, they must go beyond the work of Harrell and Linkugel for a concrete methodology. Ultimately, "On Rhetorical Genre: An Organizing Perspective" does little to advance the field of rhetorical criticism. As should be evident from reading this study, the discovery of a genre was made possible not by the work of Harrell and Linkugel, but by the works of Elder Olson and Hubert Heffner.

Consequently, while this study was fruitful in accomplishing its end goal, the founding of a genre of deliberative drama, it was necessary to alter the original structure of the research to accomplish the goal.

Notes

¹Harrell and Linkugel, p. 263. Although this study treats Harrell and Linkugel's work as a framework in which to conduct generic criticism, Harrell and Linkugel refer to their strategies as a method.

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DELIBERATIVE DRAMA: THE GENERIC ELEMENTS

by

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AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S THESIS

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Playwrights have frequently used the stage to make persuasive statements. Since this practice is relatively common, there is justification for critically examining a collection of such works to determine if they share common elements which would constitute a genre of rhetorical discourse.

A genre is a group of public addresses which share both a common motivational precedent and a blend of structural characteristics. In 1978, Jackson Harrell and Wil. A. Linkugel established a framework for conducting generic criticism. The first stage of the framework focuses on establishing a genre through critical description.

Five deliberative plays were reviewed to determine the potential characteristics of the genre. The descriptions are guided by the works of drama critics Elder Olson and Hubert Heffner and cover four major structural features: plot, character, diction, and form.

The plays used are Henrick Ibsen's An Enemy of the People, Maxim Gorky's Enemies, Eugene Brieux's The Red Robe, Clifford Odets' Waiting for Lefty, and Arthur Arent's One-third of a Nation.

A comparative study of the five descriptions yields information that gives reason for making a genre claim. First, the plays all share a common motivational precedent of anger. Second, the works all have a common blend of five characteristics as an inherent part of their structure. First, all have plots composed of multiple agents engaged in a series of activities around a principal event. Second, the plays' consecutive actions operate from a single complication, which remains unresolved at the end of the action. Third, the incidents and dialogue are realistic.

Fourth, the play's protagonists are capable of emotion, thought, and decision. Fifth, the dramatic form is melodrama, but must leave the audience responsible for carrying out the final action.